

A Culinary Medicine Pilot for Elementary School Families

Stephanie M. Lopez-Neyman, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D., L.D.¹, Alyssa Frisby, M.S., R.D., L.D.², Nicole Chandler³, Tess Bentley², Nancy White^{3,4}, Gloria Richard-Davis, M.D., M.B.A., N.C.M.P, F.A.C.O.G.², Michael R. Thomsen, Ph.D.¹

Center for the Study of Obesity, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, AR¹, Culinary Medicine, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, AR², Chicot Elementary School & Early Childhood Center – Little Rock School District, Little Rock, AR³, FoodCorps, Little Rock, AR⁴

ABSTRACT

- Purpose:** to report on a family-based program that educates community members on healthy dietary patterns while also offering hands-on, culinary skill instruction that appeals to the whole family.
- Aim of pilot:** to amplify the impact of the nutrition supports being provided through the school by providing education on healthy-meal preparation and by encouraging all family members to engage in preparing and consuming healthier meals together in the home.

BACKGROUND

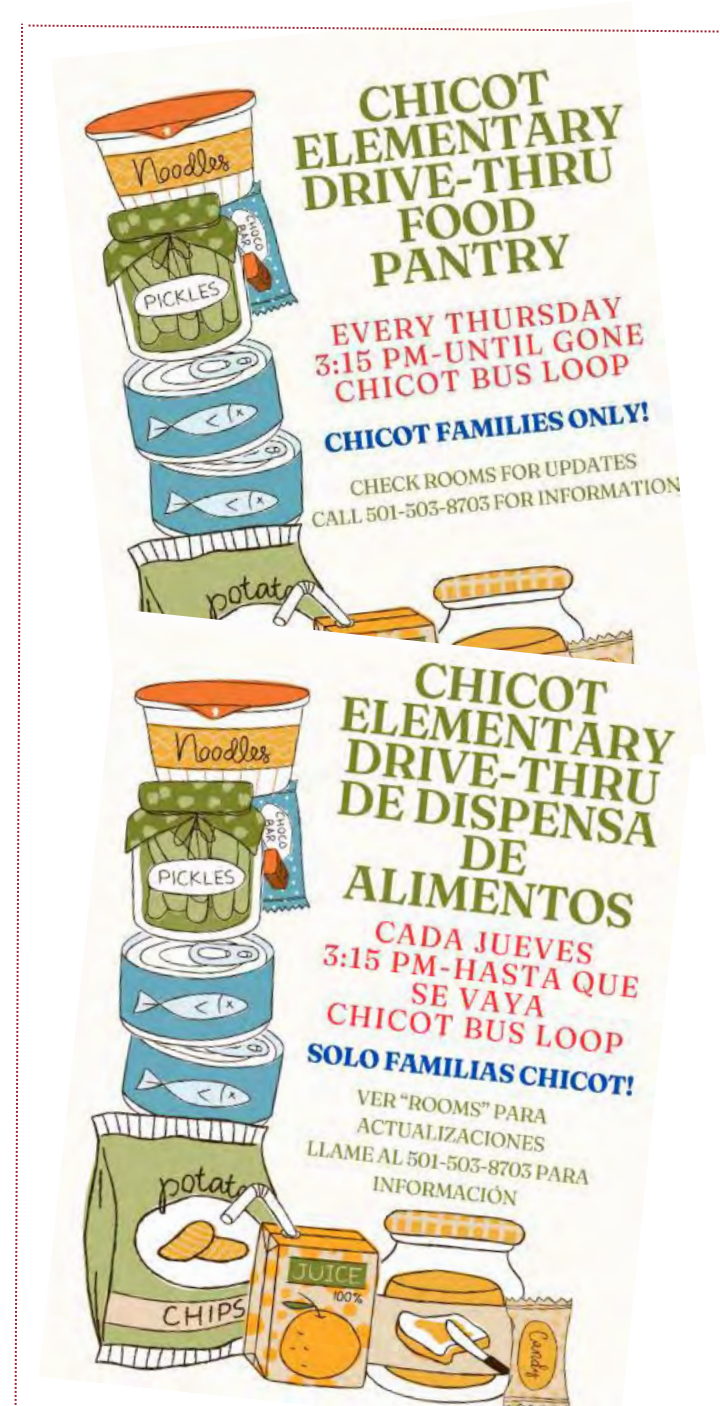


- Culinary medicine holds promise in supporting community-based programs.
- One such program, Little Rock Community Schools, aims to support student and family wellbeing.

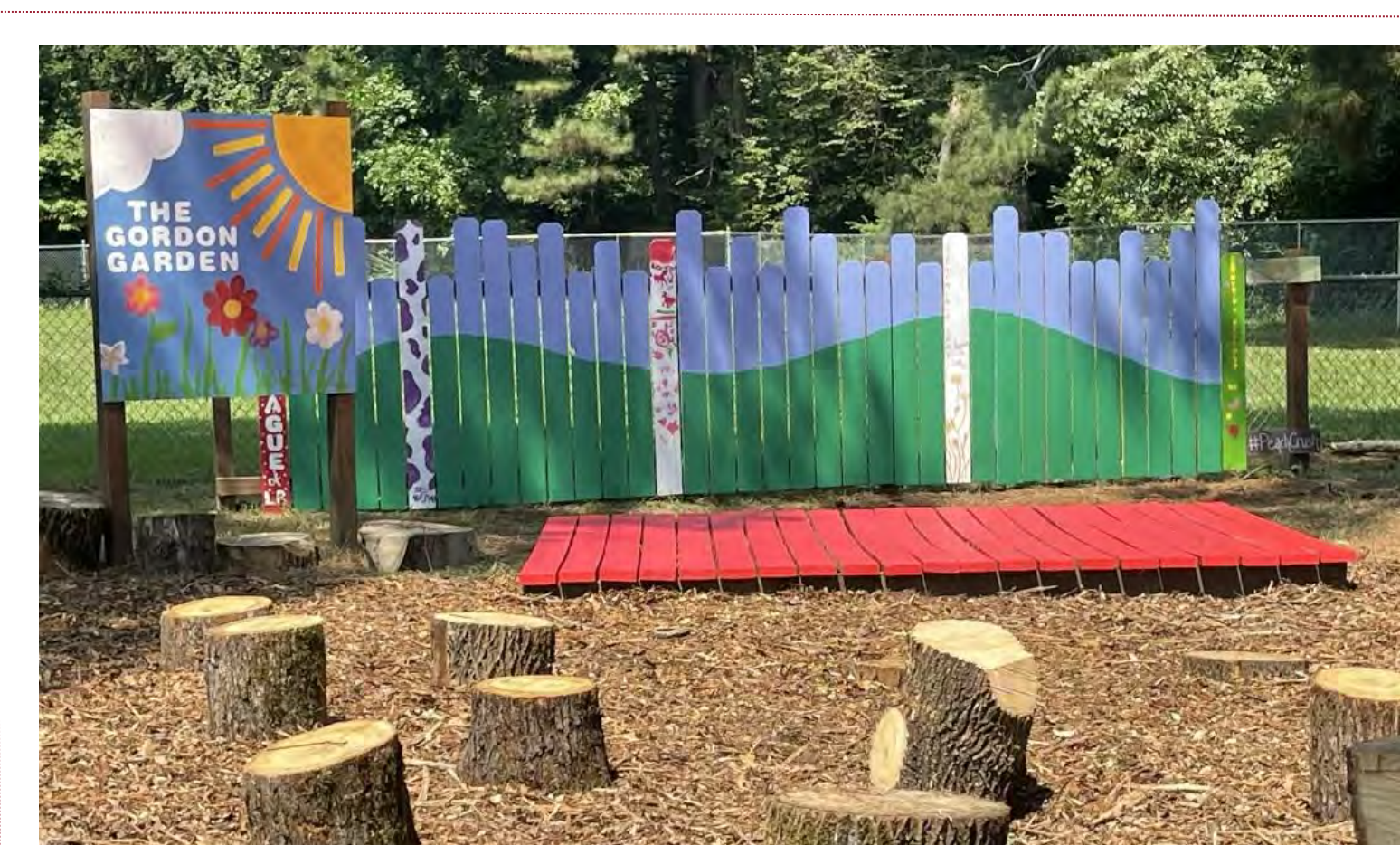


Chicot Elementary School's efforts to promote student and family wellbeing as a community school.

- In a collaboration, Chicot Elementary School (community school), UAMS's Culinary Medicine Program and Center for the Study of Obesity piloted a series of evening cooking classes to complement the school's on-site food pantry, school-based garden program, and nutrition education efforts.



A Chicot Elementary School's food pantry flyer advertising a drive-thru food pantry day.

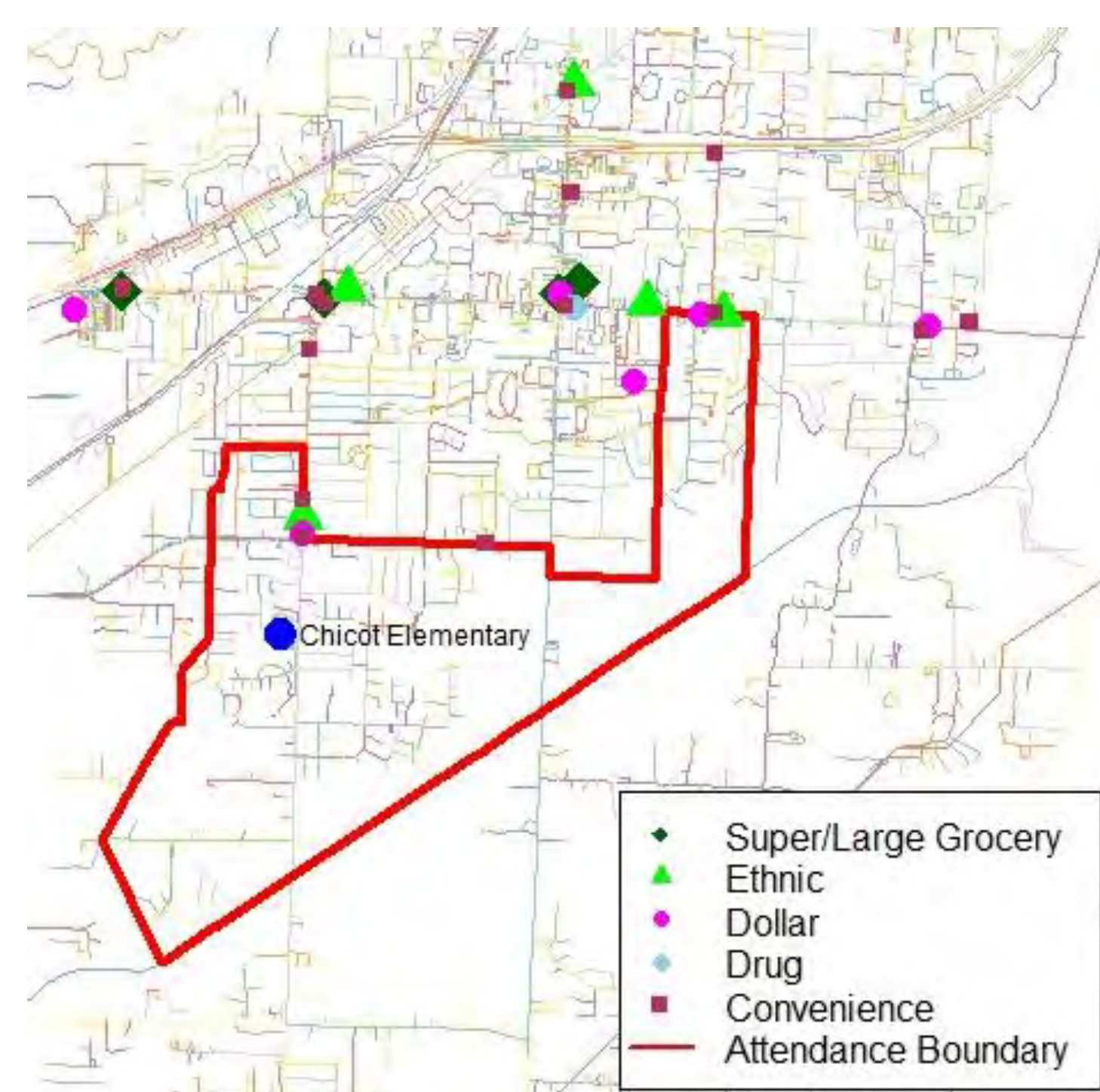


Chicot Elementary School established the Gordon Garden in 2021, a learning space for students to grow various products distributed through their food pantry and nutrition education classes. The Gordon Garden was the 2022 School Garden of Year.



METHODS

- Pilot project** involved 3-evening cooking demonstration classes in **English** and **Spanish** (March 12, 19, and 26) in Little Rock, Arkansas, for families in the community school.
- Classes** coincided with National Nutrition Month, with each class having a **theme**: (1) heart-healthy cooking, (2) developing quick, but healthy, family meals, and (3) incorporating fresh produce into family meals.
- Team assembled** for this pilot was comprised of registered dietitians, a physician, and a behavioral scientist. The team also included the community school site coordinator and garden educator.
- Classes** designed to appeal to all ages.
- Data collection:** participant registration and pre- and post-evaluations.



Zone map. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program stores within 1 mile of Chicot Elementary School attendance zone were identified to ensure recipe ingredients were available in the local food environment.

- Short-form Corner Store Audit Tool (SCAT).** To be responsive to unique barriers to healthier eating that confront families in this school, community stores were audited (n=27) with SCAT.
- Most of audited stores** were convenience stores (n=14), followed by other stores (typically dollar stores) (n=7), and grocery stores (n=6).
- Super Stores** (n=3) were not audited in person given they meet each of the seven items on the SCAT.



References

RESULTS

Participant Registration.



- 10** of ≥ 20 registered families, randomly selected, participated.
- 32** registered participants.



- Most families** shopped at Walmart (n=7), followed by the Dollar General (n=6), and Kroger (n=6).



- Half of the families** (n=5) used local food resources such as food pantry (n=5) and farmers market (n=3) and **knew** that K-5th grade students at Chicot Elementary School had gardens and nutrition classes with FoodCorps.

Class Series*.



- March 12** | Theme: **Heart Healthy** | Recipe: Veggie & Rice Stir Fry
- 4** families, n =17 participants

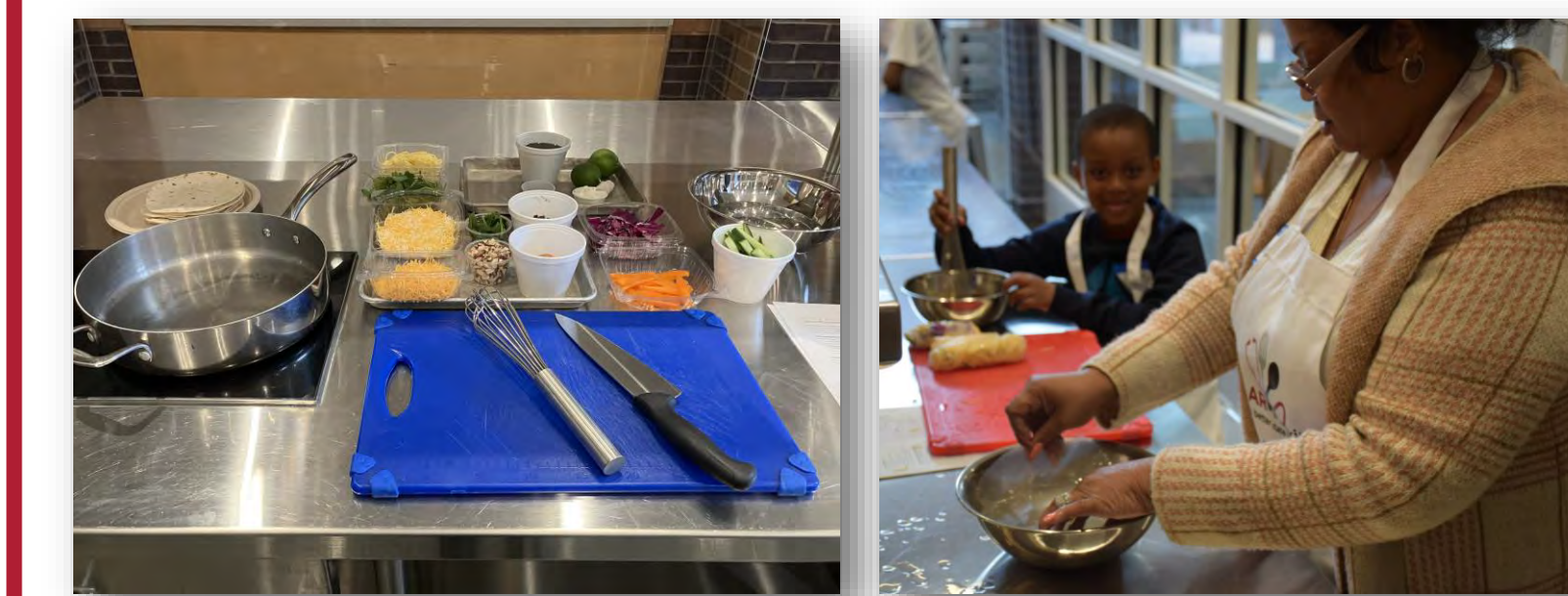


- March 19** | Theme: **Quick Meals** | Recipe: Quick Beef Casserole
- 5** families, n =18 participants



- March 26** | Theme: **Fresh Foods** | Recipe: Quesadillas, Salsa, Spring Rolls
- 6** families, n =25 participants

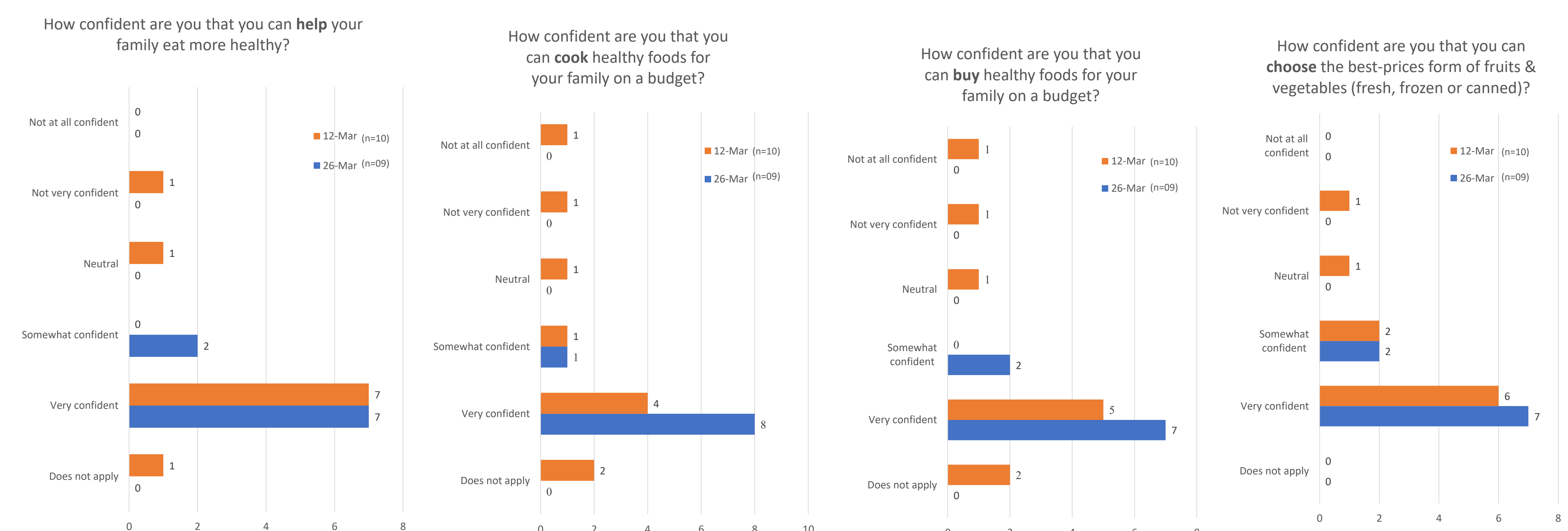
Class Series – March 26 Class.



“This was very interesting. The spring wrap is very new to work with to me. This meal was light and I'm sure low calorie, which is good for watching weight.” - Parent

*Cultural and economical friendly recipes selected | Recipes provided in English and Spanish.

Pre- (Mar 12) & Post- (Mar 26) Cooking Demonstration Classes Evaluations.



Evaluations
* Source: Cooking Matters® | Pre- & post-evaluations not matched | Completed by participants preparing recipes (≥ 11 years).

CONCLUSIONS

- Culinary medicine can expand into the community through joint partnerships with elementary schools. In particular, culinary medicine can support a community-school's model by providing families with the confidence and skills that amplify the impact of school-based nutritional supports to enhance nutritional security. Moreover, the family-based program reported here provides a strategy to engage the whole family in healthy meal preparation.