

Healthy 4 Life :
The Development of a Theater-Based
Nutrition and Physical Activity
Intervention for At-Risk
African-American Adolescents



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Childhood Overweight in Georgia



- Georgia Childhood Overweight Prevalence Study (GCOPS)
- 20.2% of sample overweight
- 36.2% of sample overweight or at risk for overweight
- Non-Hispanic black girls at highest risk for overweight

(Lewis, 2004)

Project Goals



- 1) Increase student and parent **knowledge** about the importance of making healthy food choices and increasing physical activity.
- 2) Influence student and parent **intentions** and **behaviors** related to making healthier food choices and increasing physical activity.



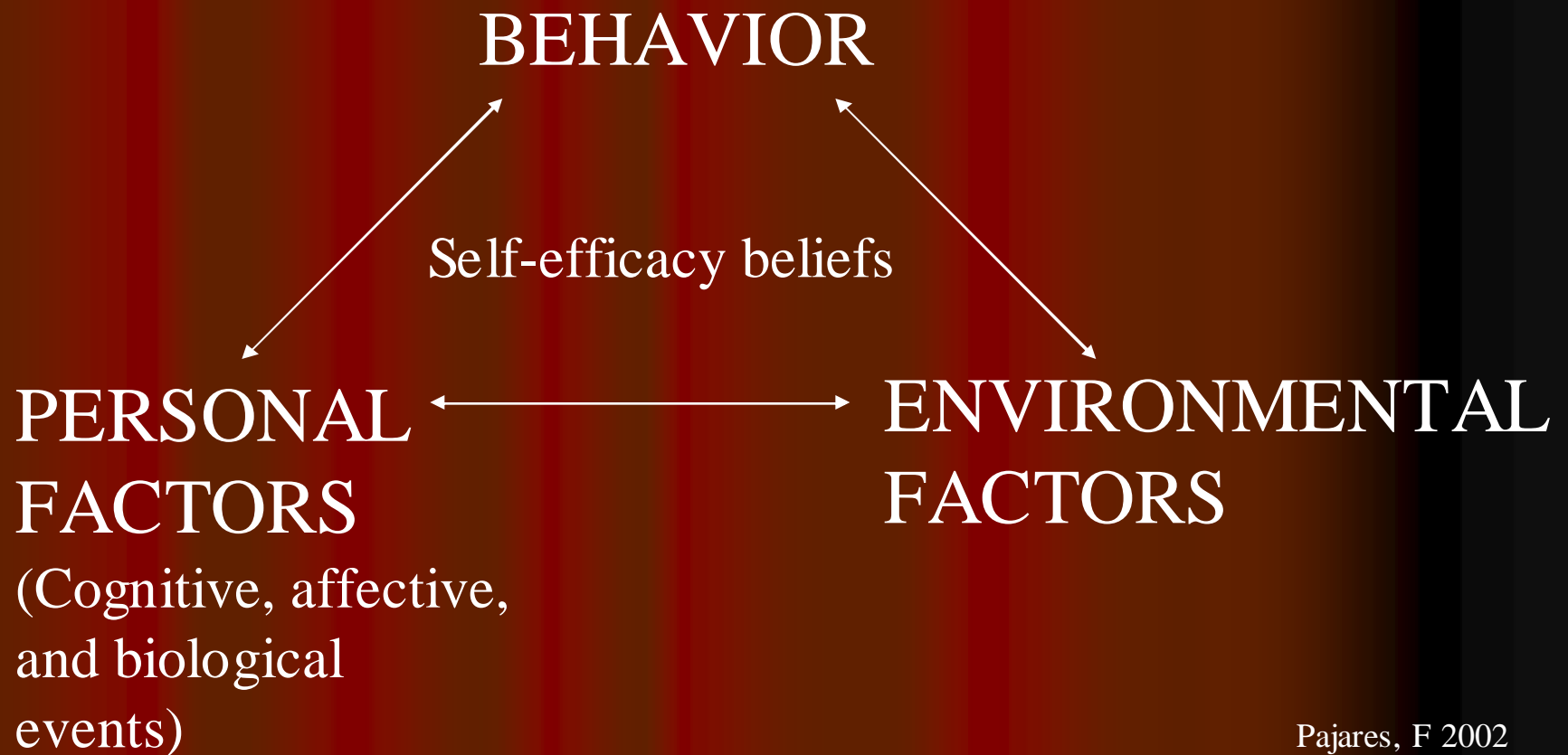
Use of the Arts in Education

- Dance, Art, Poetry, Music, & Theater are innovative ways to educate youth
- Arts education programs have been shown to yield increases in:
 - student motivation
 - achievement in reading, writing, & math

Think back to your own childhood experiences
with the arts.....

Theoretical Basis of Intervention

Social Cognitive Theory



Teaching Strategies for Adolescents



- Reliance on peers for standards in appearance and behavior
- Increase in capacity for abstract reasoning
- Effective teaching strategies may include:
 - role playing; use of “what if” scenarios to foster abstract thinking skills
- Peer involvement, behavioral focus, community involvement

(Hoelscher et. al 2002)

Use of Dramatic Writing in Education with Adolescents



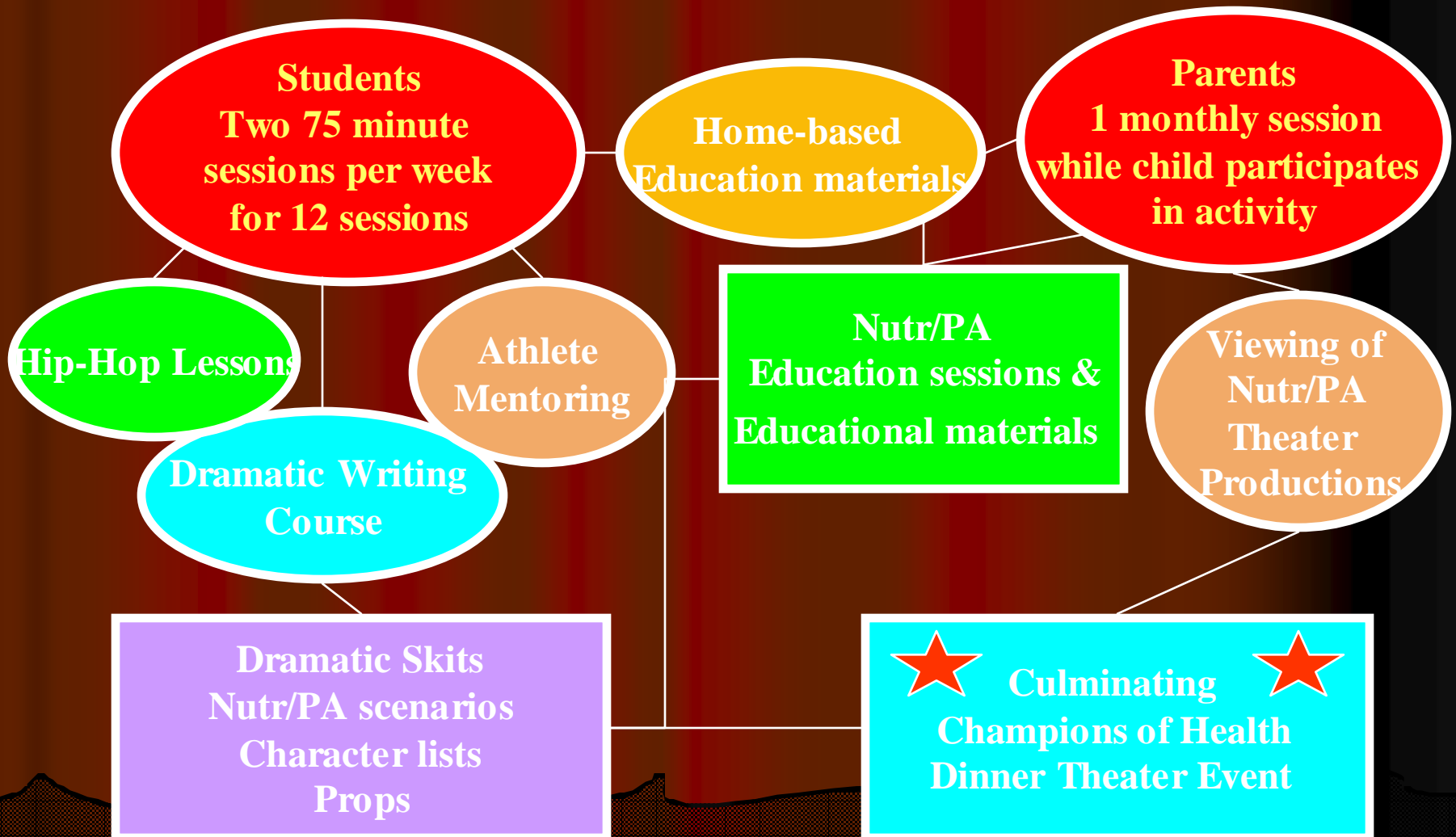
- Limited research to date, especially with at-risk African-American adolescents
- In Your Face Gorilla Theater (Windsor, VT)
- No published studies on use with Nutrition and Physical Activity Interventions

Focus Group Findings



- Students enjoy hip-hop, r&b, and country music
- Students would like to be the stars in the play
"We've seen enough stars, this time we want to be the stars."
- Play setting: their own Middle School and their own community
- Healthy 4 Life All-Stars (H4L)

Healthy 4 Life: Intervention Design



Intervention Environment: Urban Middle School



- Campers (N= 20) attending Camp Summer Spree Horizons, Inc., in Athens, Georgia during June 2005
- Grades 6-8
- New Administration
- Desire to increase student performance and test scores
- Desire to increase parental involvement
- 2005 Football, Basketball, Soccer Champions

Preliminary Findings



- 80 % (N= 15) of participants reported positive changes in food choices and physical activity choices

For each pair of foods, circle the picture of the food you would choose to eat.



Low-fat Milk

OR



Soda

- Theater-based interventions can potentially contribute to positive behavioral changes
- Students also reported about asking parents to buy more fruits and vegetables and reading nutrition labels

Intervention Highlights



- Students referred to the intervention as the “Health Club” and I am the “Nutrition Lady/ Caring Caree”

Students were most excited about:

- Attending sessions
- Preparing recipes and tasting new foods
- Hip-Hop dance lessons and community health mentors
- Acting and Dancing in play

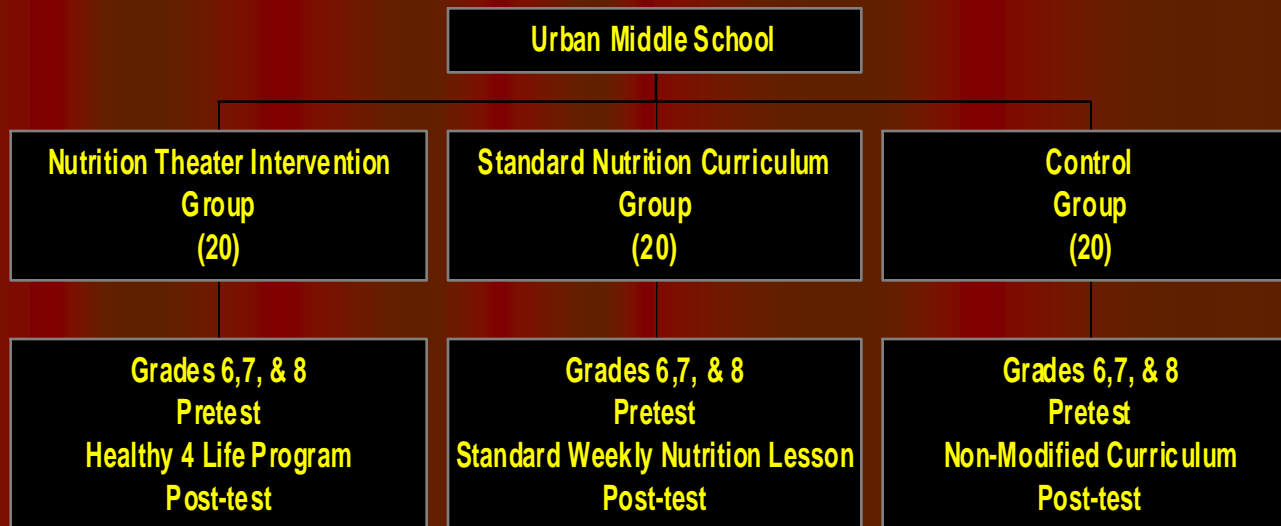
Intervention Challenges



- Small sample size, however consistent
- Competition with other after-school activities (i.e. track, softball, basketball)
- Poor School Attendance
- Low Parental Involvement
- Transfer of Drama Teacher

Program Revisions

New Study Design



Program Revisions

- Community Liaison network
- 10-week intervention
- Changed format of performance into variety show
- Attendance of Cuttin' Up at Alliance Theater
- Collaborated with PTA on performance date





A Special Thank You:

We sincerely appreciate the Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation for having the vision to support projects that promote the healthy development of our youth!!!

