

Evaluation of an online course for young immigrant and refugee workers In the United States on occupational safety and health.

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Introduction

- NJ Safe Schools Program (NJSS) assists secondary schools to reduce occupational safety and health hazards (S&H) at school and work.
- NJSS provides work-based learning trainings and professional development for teachers, and student trainings.
- Student-oriented course developed on the introduction of occupational S&H, wage and labor laws, and general workplace skills and knowledge. Course was set-up in response to teacher requests for an introductory curriculum for their work-based learning students.
- Investigating how to suit needs of, and make course available to young newcomer (including immigrant and refugee) students and workers.

Objectives

- 1 Provide students with a clear, concise, and engaging curriculum to expand awareness of specific S&H issues and provide relevant resources and information on securing work.
- 2 Provide a low to no cost and easy to navigate online course for teachers to administer curriculum to students.
- 3 Create opportunities and implement strategies to ensure course is available to newcomer students and workers.

Methodology

- Approval: Rutgers University/RBHS IRB, Exempt (021997W0383)
- Course available on Rutgers Canvas learning management system.
- Free online course offered to NJ public, charter and private school students, and personnel, who earn a certificate upon completion.
- Students are graded on knowledge checks (KC) following each module, as well as a course reflection and evaluation.



Student Performance

- Between 2018-2020, 410 students from eleven schools have registered.
 - Course has been administered to students in comprehensive and career and technical secondary schools. Newcomer populations within participating student body were not disclosed.
- In 2018-2019 school year (SY), of the 181 students who registered for the course, 162 began the course, and 130 students completed the course.
- To date for 2019-2020 SY, 229 students registered and 60 completed.
- Presented results are from the 2018-2019 SY.

Table 1: 2018-2019 Knowledge Check Grades

Assessment	# of students to complete assessment	% to complete who completed course	Average Final Score	Average First Score	Mean (min-max) # of attempts
KC 1: FLSA & Young Workers	130	100%	81%	66%	1 (1-3)
KC 2: Work Hours & Wage	130	100%	84%	70%	1.6 (1-6)
KC 3: Employee and Employers	130	100%	90%	78%	1.5 (1-6)
KC 4: Workplace Hazards	128	98%	70%	69%	1 (1-2)
KC 5: Controlling Hazards	129	99%	95%	94%	1 (1-2)
KC 6: Workplace Violence	130	100%	99%	95%	1.1 (1-3)
KC 7: Soft Skills	129	99%	100%	100%	n/a
Cumulative Reflection	130	100%	100%	n/a	n/a
Course Evaluation	130	100%	100%	n/a	n/a
Cumulative (1-7)			88%	82%	

*Knowledge Check 7, the Cumulative Reflection and Course Evaluation are P/F based on completion. Completion of these portions receives full credit.

Course Evaluation

- Course evaluation was completed by 133 students across seven schools in North, South and Central New Jersey.
- Eighty- six percent of students said they would recommend this course.
- About 58% of students were able to complete the course in 1-3 hours, 26% took less than one hour and 16% took more than three hours.
- When asked what they liked about the course, students stated it would help them in working world (19%), content was clear (17%), and they learned new and important information (15%).
 - Students also liked modular format, text to voice accessibility, and videos.
- Eighty- eight percent of students had no suggestions for improvement but some wanted more videos, diagrams and pictures (9%).

Table 2: Student Course Evaluation

How satisfied are you with the overall course?		
	n	%
Very Satisfied	50	38%
Satisfied	64	48%
Neutral	18	14%
Very Dissatisfied	1	1%
How satisfied are you with the course content?		
Very Satisfied	56	42%
Satisfied	58	44%
Neutral	19	14%
Dissatisfied/ Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
How satisfied are you with the knowledge check quizzes?		
Very Satisfied	42	32%
Satisfied	58	44%
Neutral	31	23%
Dissatisfied/ Very Dissatisfied	2	2%

Student Testimonial

"I enjoyed reading and informing myself on all of the different aspects of working and hazards I may come across in the workplace. It has opened my eyes in the sense of getting a better understanding of all of the things that could go wrong and also how to manage these things from happening again and taking care of issues."

Teacher Testimonials

"I liked the simplicity of presentation. I have special needs students and I can visualize them completing most of this course on their own. The videos were very appropriate and motivating."

"The course outline covered essential material for young workers."

Discussion

- Frequently incorrect questions suggest greater need in education on:
 - Identifying and categorizing occupational hazards.
 - Especially "other hazards" like stress, ergonomics, clothing, etc.
 - Minimum wage
 - Fair Labor Standards Act & Child Labor Laws.

Strengths

- No cost to NJ K-12 education schools/staff.
- Easy to complete for participants given modular format.
- Clear, simple, and brief presentation.
- Comprised of videos, short readings and short answer and multiple choice question styles to accommodate various learning styles.

Limitations

- No follow-up survey assessing effectiveness of information retention.
- Unable to yet provide translations of course and course materials.
- Reaching newcomer populations:
 - Teachers in English as a Second Language (ESL) & English Language Learning (ELL) programs had difficulty accessing computers & laptops.
 - Small to large, full-time ESL & ELL programs in NJ require 100+ minutes weekly (< 10 students) or one period daily (> 10 students) of ESL instructor led teaching. This course may help meet requirements.

Conclusion

- For the 2019-2020 school year:
 - Provide an expansion and more examples of workplace hazards.
 - Create second companion course "Introduction to Risk Assessment and Hazard/Exposure Agents Identification for Young Workers."
- NJSS continues to promote this new course in 2020-2021.
- NJSS reaches out to other groups, organizations, and programs assisting newcomer student and worker populations.

Related Initiatives

- Free online courses to high school students and supervising staff on:
 - Personal protective equipment to better inform safety practices.
 - Cyber safety and security.

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