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Summative Evaluation of FETCH Season III: *Executive Summary*

PREPARED BY

Rucha Londhe, Ph.D.
Helena Pylvainen
Irene F. Goodman, Ed.D.

SUBMITTED TO

WGBH Children's Programming

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FETCH, a children's television series produced by WGBH since 2005, is a competition-based game/reality show for 6-10 year-old children that includes both animation and live action footage. Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG), a research firm in Cambridge, MA specializing in the evaluation of educational programs, materials, and services, served as the external evaluator for the FETCH series in Season Three. GRG's evaluation of the Third season of FETCH included the evaluation of the FETCH Future Scientists Initiative. An overall goal for this evaluation included assessing the extent to which FETCH television shows excite students about science and STEM in general, and STEM related careers, in particular.

GRG used survey method to gather pre- and post-viewing data from students; 57 fourth grade students in Massachusetts answered science content, attitudes, and career survey questions before and after watching five FETCH episodes. Qualitative feedback was gathered from the students as well as the teachers at the end of the post data collection session.

KEY FINDINGS

Similar to the first and the second season, the FETCH series continues to have high appeal for the target audience in its third season.

Most of the students (ranging from 70% to 87%) reported that they "completely loved" or "liked a lot" each episode that they watched. The most common responses about what they liked best about the show were related to the humor in the show (41% of responses), the science content (33%), the animated characters (29%), and the format of the show (27%).

Overall, the expected learning outcomes for the students were achieved after watching FETCH.

Overall, the students showed a significant increase in their scores on the science questions from the pre- to the post-tests, indicating that the FETCH shows were able to achieve the learning goals of the evaluation study.

FETCH was effective at increasing the students' knowledge about specific science content.

As a result of watching FETCH, students showed significant gains in their understanding of four science concepts, namely, animal habitats, chemical reactions, nocturnal animals, and properties of matter (viscoelasticity).

FETCH was effective at increasing the students' knowledge about science careers.

Students also demonstrated gains in their understanding of science careers such that they could more accurately identify the activities in which scientists are involved, more accurately classify careers as science careers, and better describe what tasks specific science careers entail. The open-ended responses of the students also demonstrated that FETCH helped students broaden their ideas about what constitutes a science-based career.

Fetch was effective in bringing about moderate positive change in students' attitudes toward science.

There was a significant increase in student mean approval ratings on the science attitude statement, "*I could see myself working in a job that involves science when I grow up,*" and a significant decrease in the mean approval ratings on the statement "*Science is too hard for me to learn.*" The significant changes on these two statements and the positive trends in the changes in mean ratings on the other science statements indicate a moderate positive effect of the FETCH series on students' attitudes toward science.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above key findings provide evidence of the high appeal for and the achievement of learning goals through the FETCH shows. The students in the study enjoyed the series and showed increase in knowledge about science content and careers. GRG recommends that WGBH continue to address the science content in similar manner in the future initiatives.

GRG also makes suggestions that would further enhance the positive impact of FETCH. GRG recommends that the future seasons of FETCH focus on efforts to encourage students to pursue a science career. Although research indicates that career decisions made in the elementary years are tentative, WGBH can lay the groundwork for later decisions by having FETCH encourage students to think about a science career for themselves. For example, on the show, Ruff often reiterates the concepts explained by the scientists. In future, Ruff could more often address the idea of the cast or viewers themselves taking up the specific science career in future.

Because students enjoy the format and appear to benefit from the fun way in which science information is presented, GRG recommends that WGBH maintain the basic format of the show. Based on our experience that practice and repetition helps retention of concepts, GRG reiterates the recommendation we made at the end of the second season to consider adding a separate section at the end of each episode that reinforces the science (concepts and careers) featured in that episode.

Goodman Research Group, Inc.

Main Office

955 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 201
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Tel: (617) 491-7033

Fax: (617) 864-2399

info@grginc.com

www.grginc.com

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