

Bridging the Gaps



Summer Health Lessons for Growing Middle School Students in Philadelphia

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Community Preceptors: Lorraine Thomas, Operations Manager, Southwest Community Development Corporation

COMMUNITY PARTNER

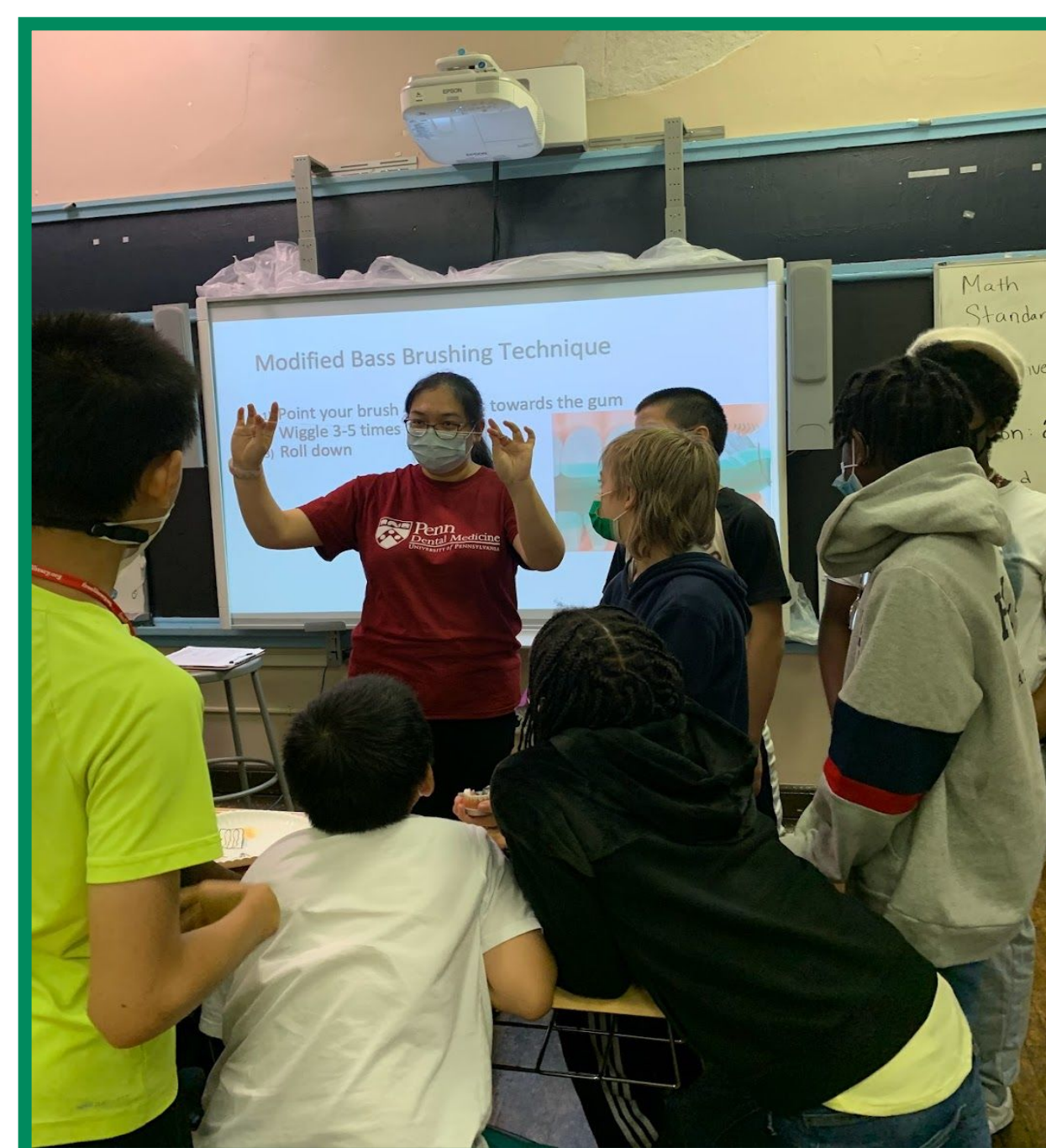
Southwest CDC is a community-led organization focusing on improving the quality of life of the community members of Southwest Philadelphia. They do so through programs such as housing assistance, after school programs and job assistance. This summer, Southwest CDC provided an out of school time (OST) program to 5th through 7th graders at Girard Academic Music Program (GAMP).

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual school has been a necessity but the realities of the pandemic resulted in a degree of disrupted or interrupted learning and development. This is exacerbated by social determinants of health, so that high-poverty students were more likely to experience food insecurity and losses of loved ones due to COVID-19 (Turner, 2022). At the same time, the children also exhibited an understanding that learning also happens through relationships and in their communities, not just in a traditional school setting (City Year, 2021). The OST provided both a free summer camp for families as well an important opportunity for academic and social enrichment.

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

The Bridging the Gaps students came from four different disciplines: Social Work, Public Health, Veterinary Medicine, and Dental Medicine. They combined their knowledge bases to plan and administer creative lessons around STEM and social-emotional learning to 5th through 7th graders who attended the OST program. Specifically, the lessons focused on topics such as nutrition, oral health, the immune system, the brain, climate change and summer health. The children learned and applied new skills, exhibited teamwork, and had fun. The BTG team's goal was to honor and empower each child's strengths. The lesson plans and activities will be a resource for future Southwest CDC OST and After School programming.



Shi-Yu leads our oral health lesson by demonstrating the proper way to brush and floss.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/ JOYS



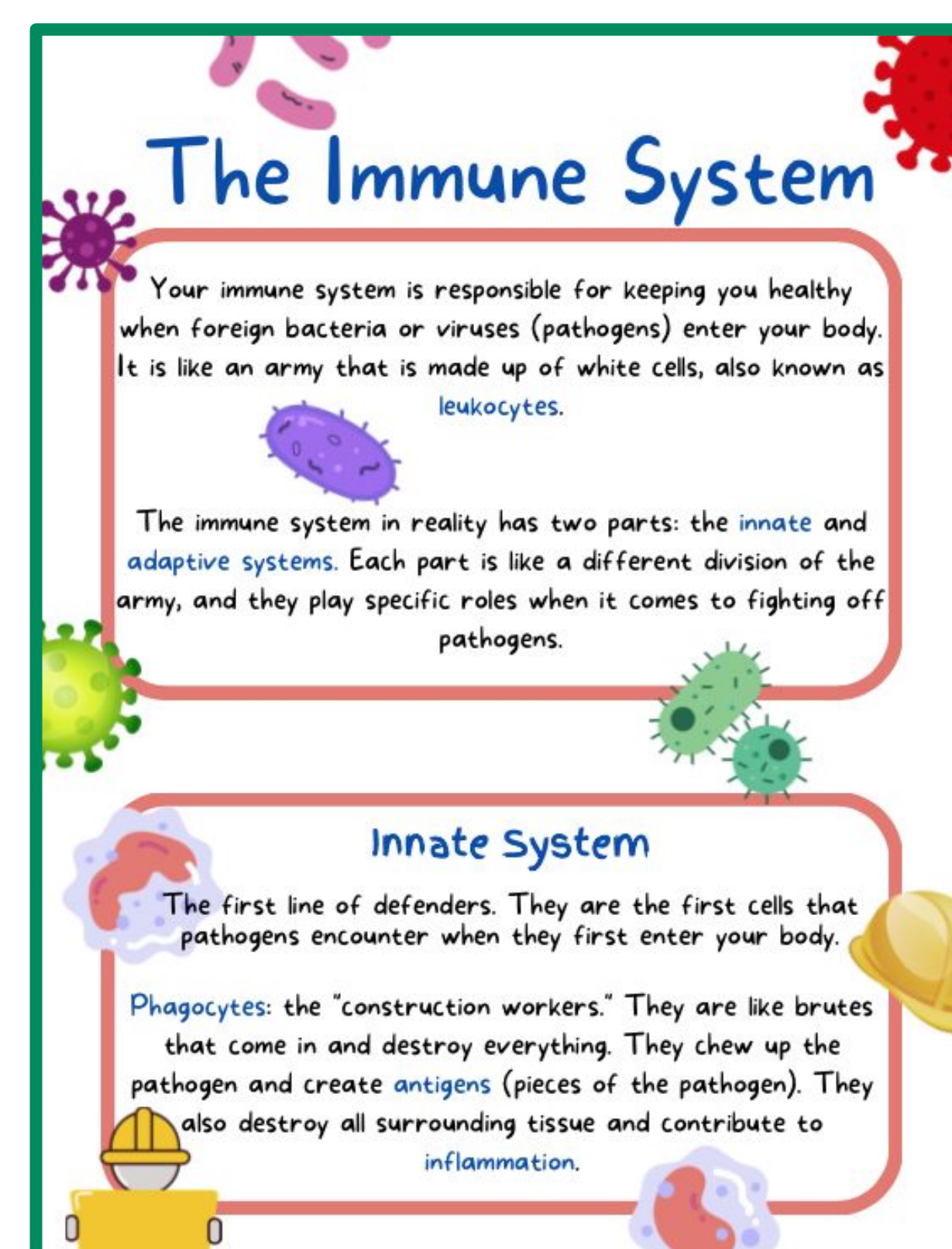
Students eager and in action for our outdoor Immune System lesson.



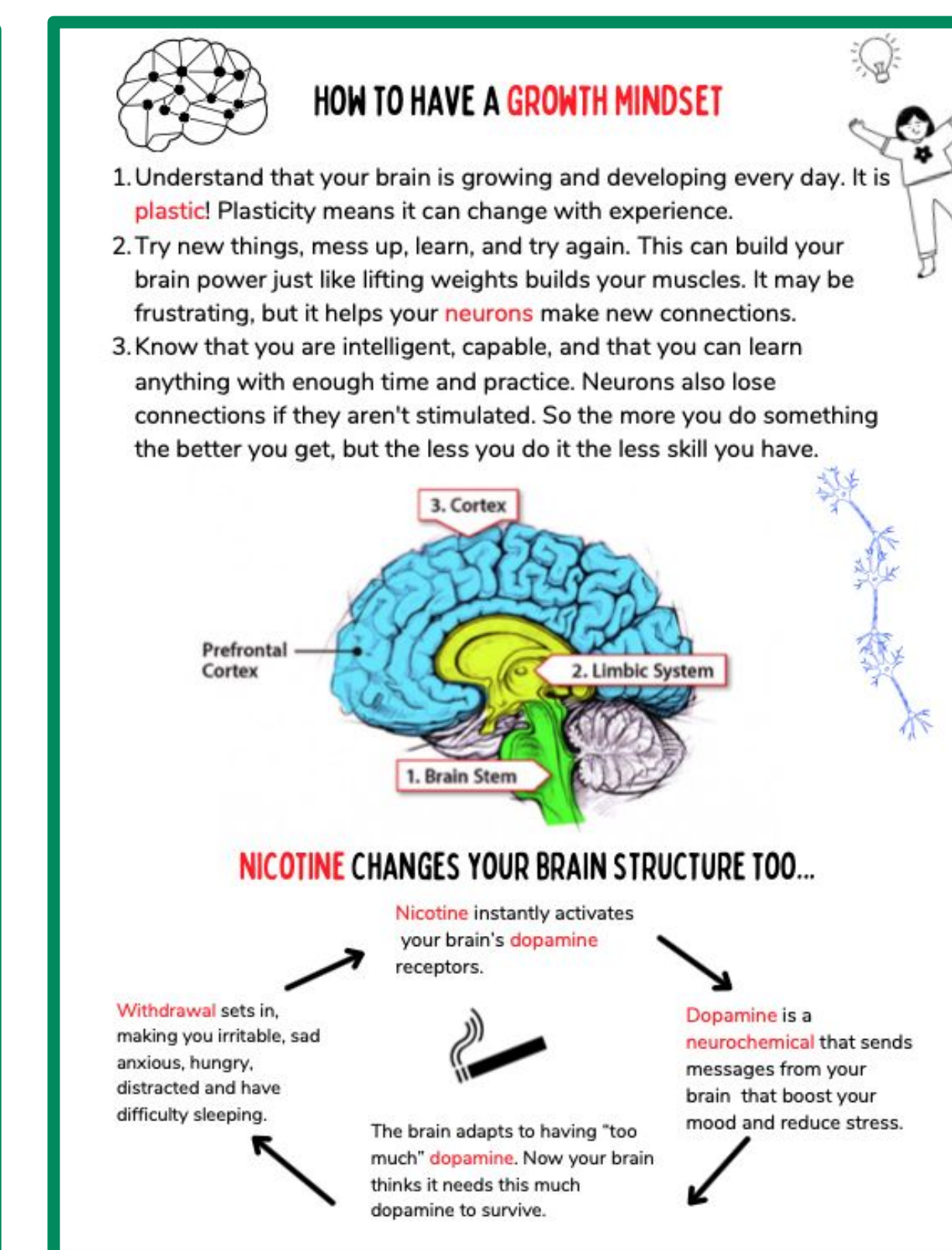
A student shows her "MyPlate," during our nutrition lesson about portion sizes.

REFLECTION

We are very grateful for the opportunity that BTG CHIP and Southwest CDC gave us to teach middle school age students the importance of topics relating to STEM, health, and social-emotional learning. We were so surprised by the kids' humor, intelligence and excitement to learn and have fun. It was rewarding to connect with the kids, which allowed us to bring out our own inner child. Through our interdisciplinary collaboration, we were able to learn and experience the necessity of connection and teamwork between the different health professions and communication in health care. We also learned how important it is to be flexible and being prepared with back-up plans. Every week we faced a new challenge but we were able to deliver our lessons as best we could and to the enjoyment of our students. We hope they had a fun, educational and interactive experience that will forever last in their minds.



Images of handouts given to students during the The Immune System and Growing Brain lessons.



The BTG intern team in front of the Girard Academic Music Program in South Philadelphia.

References

- Turner, C. (2022). "6 things we've learned about how the pandemic disrupted learning," NPR.
City Year (2021). "Why we don't use the term 'learning loss,'" City Year.