



How-To Guide: Oral Health Education Programs for Pre dental Clubs



Introduction

Even with proper access to affordable oral health care, some individuals may not understand the importance of oral health to overall health. This is often due to a lack of proper oral health education and oral health literacy. Oral health literacy represents the capacity of individuals, policy makers, and health care providers to obtain, understand, and use health information in order to make correct decisions. Improving oral health literacy is critical in addressing barriers to obtaining dental care. For more on oral health literacy, see the US National Alliance for Oral Health Third Colloquium Summary: <http://usnoha.org/content/oral-health-literacy-pathway-health-equity>.

Educational events provide a great opportunity for pre-dental students to start interacting with the public about oral health topics, take a leadership role in their community and address an important dental public health issue.

Before the Event

First, your club will have to decide when you would like to hold the event. Do you want to visit during school hours or after school? It can be difficult to plan events during the day because of conflicting class schedules of committee members. In addition, you will have to determine what time of year you want to go. It may be a good idea to visit in February, which is National Children's Dental health Month, or in October, which is National Dental Hygiene Month. Some pre-dental clubs visit the same classroom multiple times a year and are able to build relationships with the students and teachers.

After determining when you want to host an event, you will need to contact a school or program. If you'd like to visit an elementary school, you can contact local school districts to get in contact with teachers. Educational outreach, however, is not only focused towards young children. There is a huge lack of education amongst the special needs population so perhaps you can contact your state's Special Olympics program or special needs classrooms within schools. Another good idea is to talk to high school sports coaches to promote mouthguard use amongst the athletes. Activity directors at nursing homes are also great people to contact because elderly people are often unaware of the importance of oral health, especially in the case of dentures. Once you have an idea of who you would like to contact, reach out. You may also want to provide examples of activities you will do with the attendees.

Here is a template email to get you started:

Dear _____,

My name is _____ and I am a member of the University of _____'s Pre-Dental Club. Our organization focuses on preparing students for dental school. One of our main goals is to volunteer and give back to the community. One of the ways we like to do this is through educational outreach. There is a lack of oral health education among all age groups, and our goal is to change that. We would love to visit and teach your students about the importance of oral health through games and educational presentations.

If you are interested in having us visit, please let me know what days and times work with your schedule. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity! I look forward to hearing back from you.

Thank you for your time,

Pre-Dental Club's Educational Outreach Committee Member

After you get a response, the next step is to discuss event logistics with the staff member you are planning the event with. Be sure to ask how many attendees there will be and their age range. Also, it is important to ask if there's a limit on how many committee members they would like there. Children often get nervous when a lot of new adults come into a room, so the teacher or supervisor may only want a couple pre dental students in a classroom at a time. Lastly, it is vital to confirm the location and times so your committee members can arrive on time and make a great first impression. Here is an example of what a response email might look like.

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for getting back to us. I have a few committee members who are interested in visiting that day. We can't wait! A few pieces of information that would help us are how many (students, athletes, kids, people, etc.) will be in attendance and the age ranges of these attendees. We'd like to know so we can plan appropriate activities. Also, let me know if there is a maximum number of committee members that you would like to be there. Finally, could you give me the specifics of your location so I can tell my members exactly where to go on the day of the event. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you again for the opportunity,

Pre-Dental Club's Educational Outreach Committee Member

At the Event

Now that you have finished with the initial preparation for the event, the fun part begins! Deciding on activities to do and which handouts to give away in goodie bags can alter drastically depending on your audience. Make sure to consider the following questions when you are planning the activities in order to make them age and time appropriate.

- 1) How old are the children?
- 2) How many children will be at the event?
- 3) How much time do you have?

Next, you and your educational outreach committee will have to develop a schedule of games and presentations for the event. Take a look at successful educational outreach events put on by other pre dental clubs that are featured at the end of the guide. Feel free to organize your

event based off of these examples or create an event all on your own! There are additional website links with resources for planning oral health education events in Appendix 1.

After the Event

Reflecting, assessing the impact, and receiving feedback on your outreach initiative is key to improving and developing new ideas for your program. Be open to receiving feedback on your initiatives and flexible to make adjustments as needed. Here are some tips for assessing the impact and gathering feedback on your initiative.

Assessing Impact

Make sure to accurately log all the information you can about your event in a central location accessible to individuals involved in your initiative (Google Docs, Dropbox, etc.). Record information such as the hours of service, location, number of volunteers and number of participants. You can even include general information about your participants, such as grade level, age group, and other general information.

You could also administer formal oral health literacy assessments before and after the initiative to your participants to gauge the change in oral health knowledge. Be creative with the assessment and make it fun and interesting! You can also be creative with gauging how much your group learned, such as asking questions to the group as a whole. This is an especially important consideration with a younger audience that may be less receptive to taking a formal assessment.

Receiving Feedback

You should gather feedback on your project from the participants. Similar to assessing the impact of the initiative, you can creatively ask your outreach event attendees for feedback on the event. Depending on the age of your group, ask them at the end what they liked about the event and what they would suggest for improvements or administer a short feedback survey.

Create a standardized form to gain feedback from your event. In addition to asking your project participants, make sure to gain feedback from your event volunteers and the individuals in charge of the group you visited (i.e., teachers, staff coordinator). Clarify before the event with the staff and your group if you'd like to verbally get feedback or email the feedback form to the individuals in charge.

Virginia Tech Predental Club

How old were the children? Ages 6-7 (1st grade)

How many children were at the event? 55 children

How much time did you have? 1 hour

Event Details/Activities: The Virginia Tech Predental Club utilizes the ADA's new Mouth Healthy website below to educate an entire first grade class about the importance of oral health. They present *Tiny Teeth Do Big Jobs, Keeping Teeth Bright and Healthy*, and *A Visit To The Dentist*.

www.ada.org/en/Home-MouthHealthy-Kids/educators/smile-smarts-dental-health-curriculum/

The club bought five stuffed animals, also known as dental education puppets that have a full mouth of teeth and come with mini toothbrushes. As a part of the presentation, they teach the children how to correctly brush their teeth. The children are able to sit in small groups with a predental student and practice brushing on the stuffed animal.

There are many types of stuffed animals/education puppets that your predental club can purchase. They vary in cost of approximately \$25 to \$100 depending on size and style. You can purchase the stuffed animals through most dental supply companies and other companies such as Amazon.com.



In addition, the VT Predental Club plays a game where the children had to sort "food" as healthy or unhealthy for your teeth. The predental students made two poster boards labeled as "healthy" or "unhealthy" along with paper cut outs of foods ranging from fruits and vegetables to soda and candy. The predental students help the children place the paper "food" on the respective poster boards.

Copies of handouts that were used:

The predental club hands out three worksheets: *How to Brush Your Teeth, Child and Adult Toothbrushes*, and *Old and New Toothbrushes* from the ADA Mouth Healthy website: www.mouthhealthykids.org/en/activity-sheets/oral-health-made-easy

They also distribute the *Count and Color* worksheet and give the children markers to draw how much toothpaste should go onto each toothbrush (a pea size amount!) from the following link: <http://www.mouthhealthykids.org/en/activity-sheets/color-and-count/>.

University of Wisconsin Predental Society

How old were the children? Ages 2 - 4 (Early Child Care Center)

How many children were at the event? 15 children

How much time did you have? 1 hour

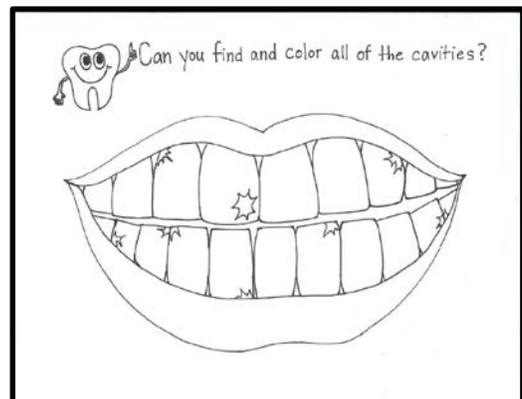
Event Details/Activities: The University of Wisconsin Predental Society begins an event by discussing the basics of oral health and encourages the students to participate in the conversations. The predental students focus on basic oral health concepts such as hygiene and anatomy. They ask the children questions such as:

- Where are your teeth?
- Why do we need teeth?
- When do you brush your teeth?
- Why do you brush your teeth? (to get rid of the sugar bugs!)
- Which foods make your teeth “happy”? (fruits and vegetables)
- Which foods make your teeth “sad”? (sugary snacks and drinks)

Since the children are so young, usually around three years old, the predental students’ main goal is to create a positive outlook on going to the dentist. They do this by incorporating games and hands-on activities into each lesson.

Just like Virginia Tech, the University of Wisconsin Predental Society uses an education puppet to demonstrate how to correctly brush. Each of the children are able to come up to “Allie the Alligator” to show how they brush their teeth. The predental students make sure to give feedback such as, “Make sure you get the back teeth.”

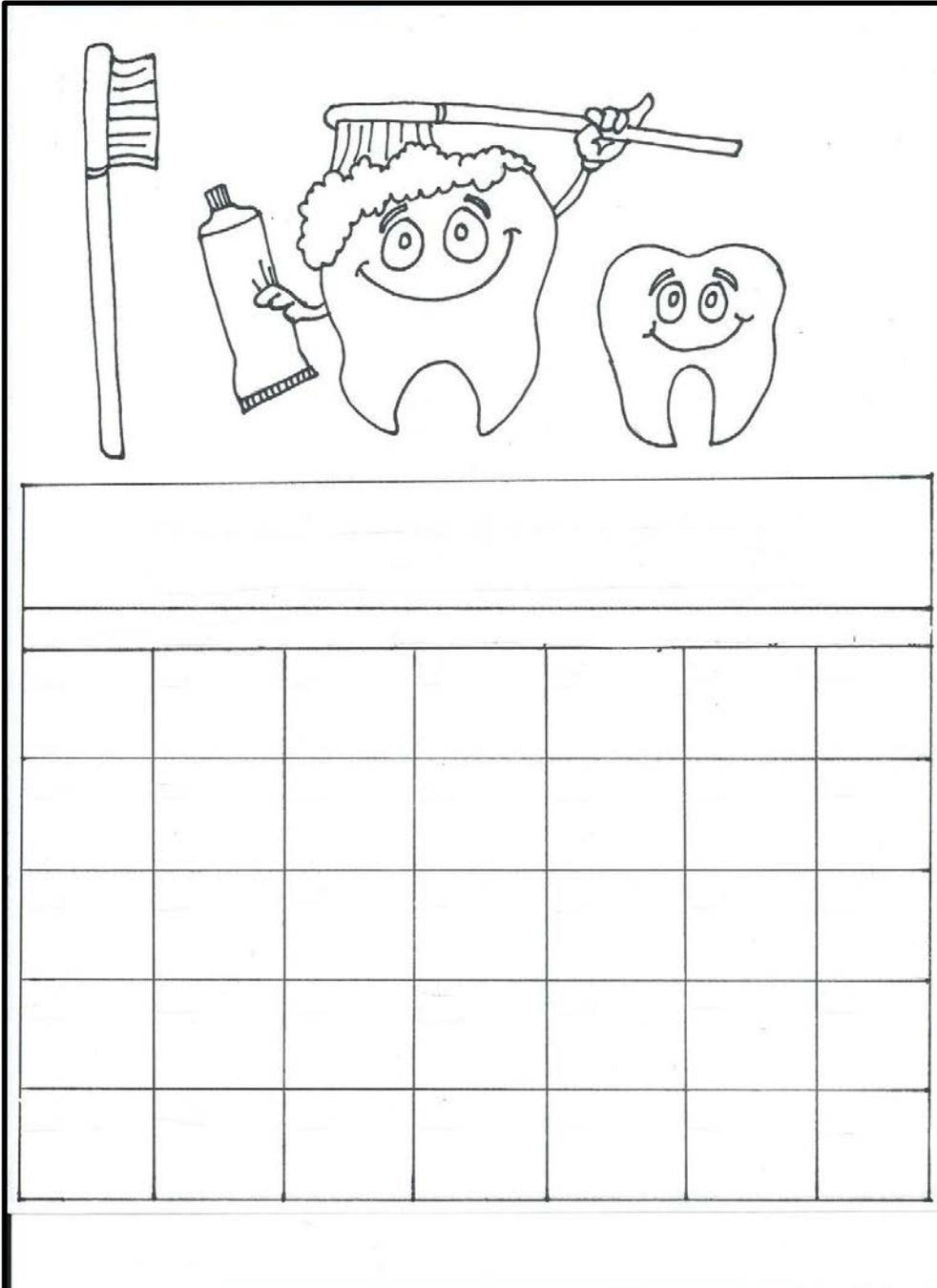
There are many great activity sheets on the internet that you can download for free to distribute at your event. Or, if you are feeling creative, you can design your own worksheets just like a predental student at the University of Wisconsin did (see Appendix 2 for sample worksheets)! The children love to take an active role in their learning. The predental students help the children color in their worksheets and talk about relevant oral health topics. If your club decides to do a coloring activity, make sure to provide crayons or ask the teacher when planning the event if it is okay to use the art supplies already in the classroom. More of these worksheets can be found in Appendix 2.



Goodie bags and handouts that were used: The UW Predental Society hands out goodie bags including a child-sized toothbrush, toothpaste and floss that they purchased from the local dental hygiene school. The society was also able to get oral health supplies donated by local dentists.

The UW Predental Society also distributes an activity calendar where children can keep track of every day they brush. The predental students show the children how to color in each day that they brush their teeth twice. If your club is able to, it may be a good idea to provide stickers to mark since

for
to
the



each day,
it can be
difficult
the young
children
color
within
lines.

UCLA Predental Student Outreach Program

How old were the children? Ages 5 - 12

How many children were at the event? 50 students

How much time did you have? 1 hour

Event Details/Activities: The Happy Teeth Program is a series of educational outreach events put on by the UCLA Predental Student Outreach Program (PSOP). Predental students visit the school nine times throughout each year. The PSOP has done such a great job educating young students that they have been returning to the schools for over three years!

The program provides an overview of basic dental anatomy, nutrition, cavities and oral hygiene to local elementary school students. There are approximately 25 children in each class and the predental students usually present to two classes at a time. The event is based on four stations that the students rotate through: dental anatomy, dental hygiene, cavities and nutrition.

The first station has the children examine a typodont (a type of tooth model) that the club purchased on Amazon.com. These models can be purchased for \$20 to \$50 depending on the make and model.

The second station focuses on oral hygiene by demonstrating and practicing brushing and flossing on a large model. The children each get a turn to practice.

The third station is the coloring activity station where the students color the different layers of the tooth: pulp, dentin, and enamel. There are other coloring picture on the worksheet, as well as crossword puzzles and mazes for the children to complete.

Lastly, the nutrition station consists of sorting healthy and unhealthy foods. For the nutrition sorting activity, the predental students bring in a magnet board with pictures of a "happy, clean smile" and a "sad, cavity-filled smile." They give the children magnets with pictures of different vegetables, fruits or sweets on them and the students decide which smile to place the magnet on.

Goodie bags and handouts that were used: The children are sent home with their activity sheets and a toothbrush.

Appendix 1: Additional Resources

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. There are many helpful resources available to your club when planning an oral education outreach event. Below are websites for some of these resources:

American Dental Association - Mouth Healthy Kids

<http://www.mouthhealthykids.org/en/>

Children's Oral Health Institute - Lessons in a Lunch Box

<http://mycohi.org/lunchbox.html>

Colgate - Bright Smiles Bright Futures

<http://www.colgate.com/app/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/Program-Materials/For-Educators.cvsp>

National Children's Oral Health Foundation - America's ToothFairy

<http://www.ncohf.org/resources>

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services - Oral Health Education Materials

<http://insurekidsnow.gov/professionals/dental/index.html>

National Education Association - National Children's Dental Health Month

<http://www.nea.org/grants/National-Childrens-Dental-Health-Month.htm>

Ohio Department of Health's Oral Health Education Resources

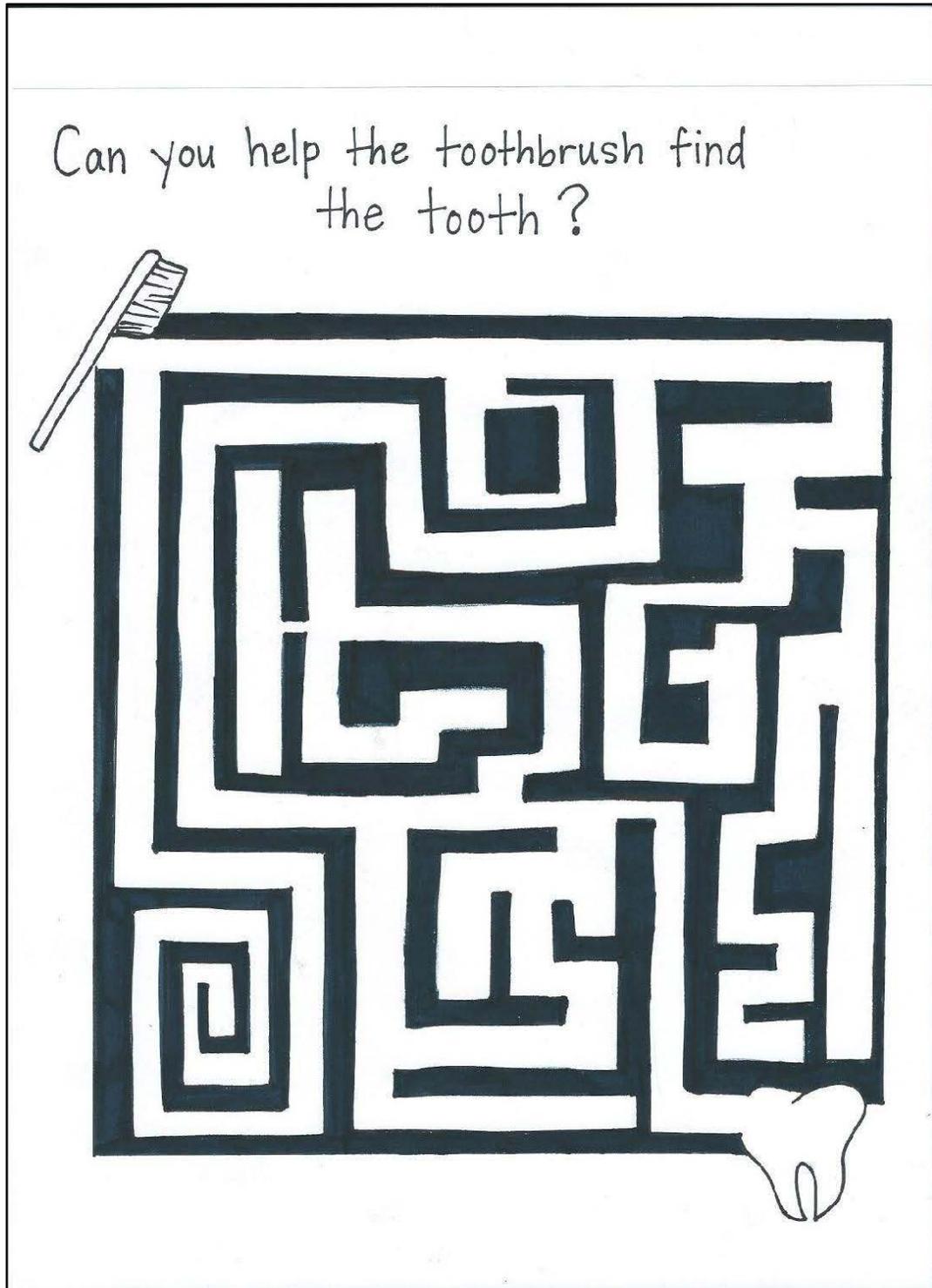
<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/ohs/oral/oral1.aspx>

Maine Department of Health, Oral Health Section

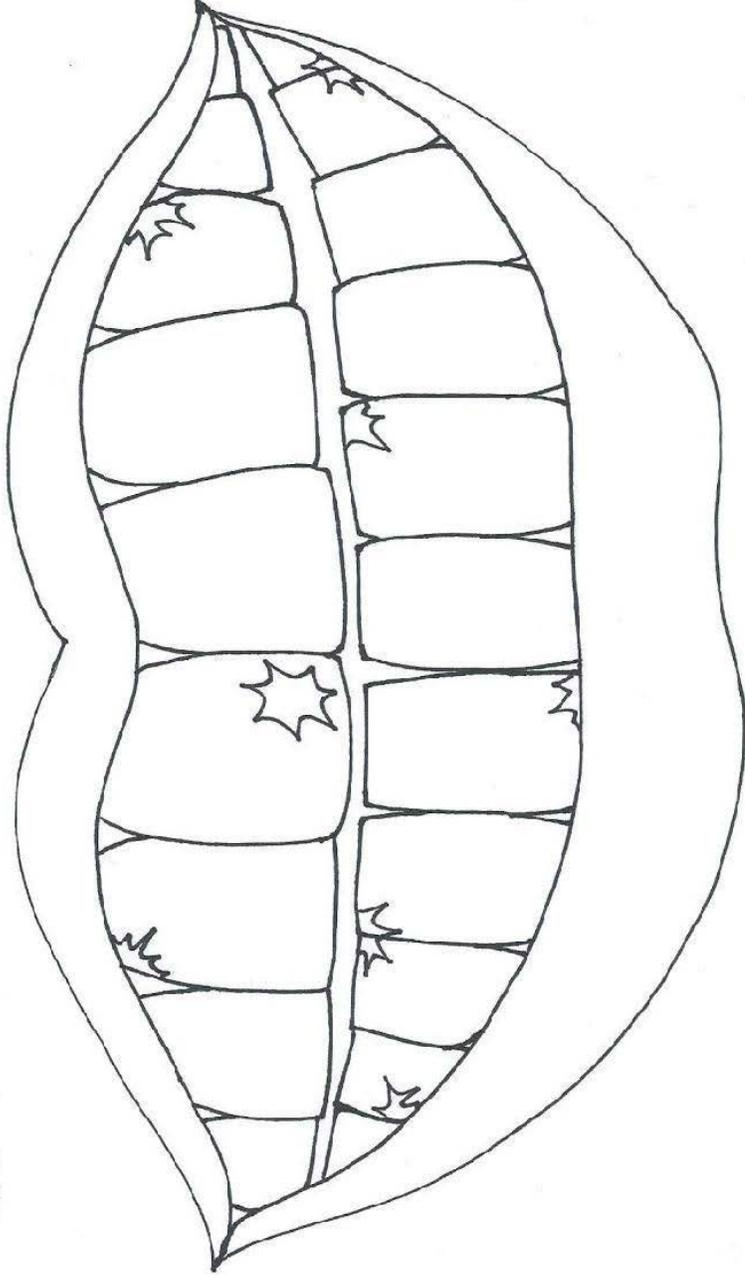
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/odh/resources.shtml>

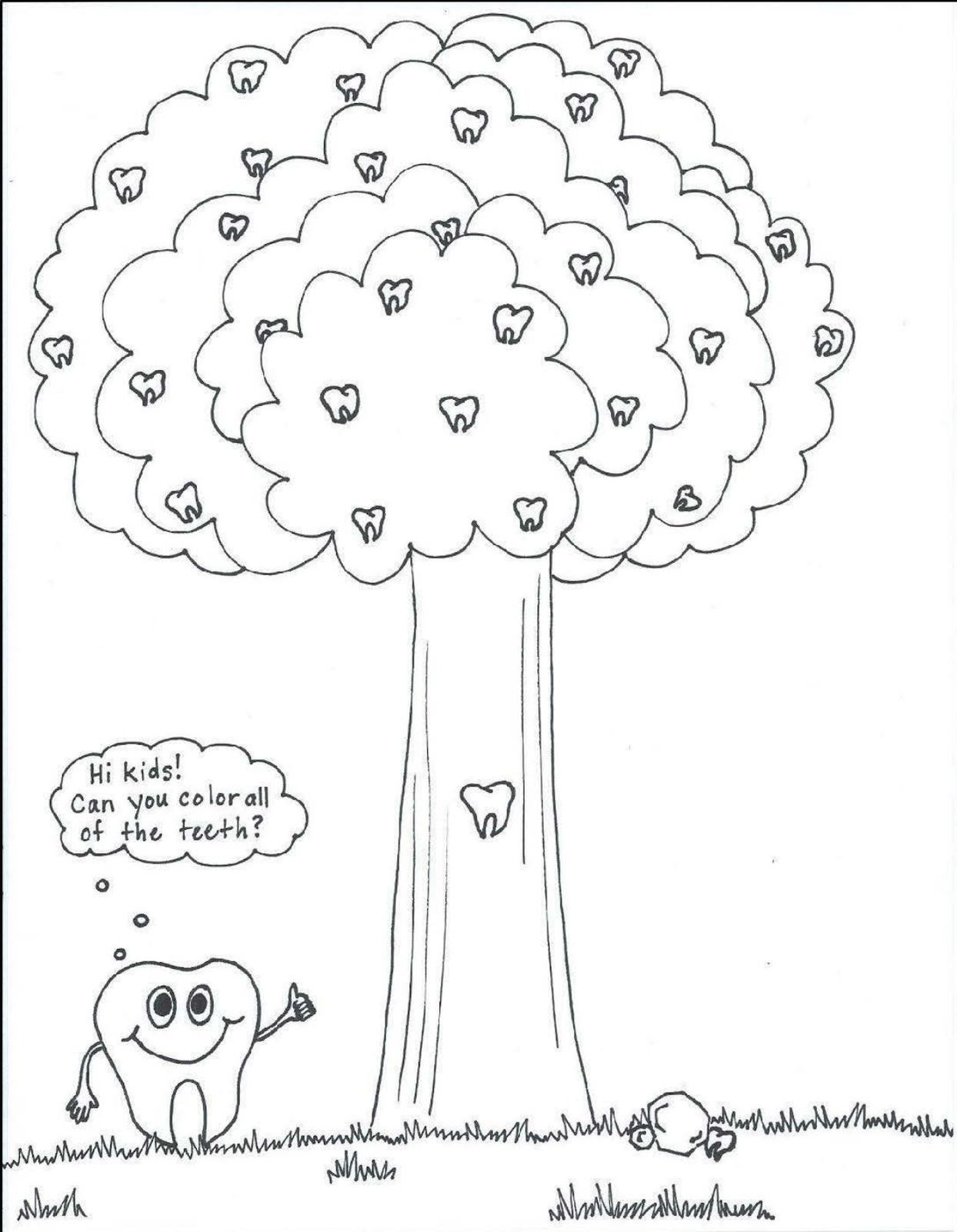
Appendix 2: Oral Health Activity Sheets

The following worksheets were created and used by the University of Wisconsin's Parental Society Education Outreach Committee.



Can you find and color all of the cavities?





Hi kids!
Can you color all
of the teeth?

