



YOUTH FOOD STAMP NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

The vision of the *Let's Eat Healthy!* Program, FSNEP (Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program) is to educate food stamp eligible children and parents throughout Placer and Nevada Counties to lead healthier lives through wise food choices and physical activity.

The purpose of *Let's Eat Healthy!* is to promote healthy lifestyles as outlined in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This program targets schools and community programs with large numbers of children from food stamp households. This is done by teaching students about the importance of physical activity, healthy food choices and what these foods do for our bodies. Eligible schools receive UCCE nutrition curricula, resources, and teacher trainings.

This is extremely important in light of the fact that childhood obesity has tripled in the past three decades. One in three Americans younger than 18 is overweight. The likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood cholesterol, and high blood pressure at rates that raise their heart disease risk are greatly increased in the overweight child. The rapid rise in childhood obesity, if left unchecked, could shorten life span by as much as five years.

Physical activity, good nutrition, and good education go hand-in-hand. Well-nourished children have higher test scores, better school attendance, and fewer classroom behavior problems. Research shows that knowledge and skills children learn today help them choose healthier foods tomorrow and into adulthood.



During a label reading lesson, students use the nutrition facts panel to measure out how much sugar is in a granola bar.

Program Highlights

- ◆ Over 4,369 low income Placer and Nevada Counties school children received nutrition education
- ◆ Over 214 teachers implemented the *Let's Eat Healthy!* program
- ◆ Program representatives brought *Let's Eat Healthy!* to 25 preschool and 145 elementary school classrooms
- ◆ \$233,087 USDA grant to provide FSNEP programs to low income Placer and Nevada Counties children and youth



Special Day Class



Students at Woodbridge Elementary have fun playing MyPyramid Bingo.

An email from a teacher: “I do a discussion at lunchtime about what foods are good for their bodies. We talk about what foods they have at home. Some students are verbal and can discuss. This was my first year at this school. I plan to expand on your materials next year since they are excellent. I so appreciate your wanting to serve our students.”

Issue

Children in Special Day classes have a wide range of disabilities from Autism to birth defects. They are often overlooked when it comes to nutrition education. These children can benefit from the information and parents appreciate learning how a healthy diet can help their children.

What Was Done

Program Representatives taught a hands-on nutrition lesson at the beginning of the school year and came back in the spring to play a game as a review. They also provided a snack as part of the learning.

Impact

Teachers incorporate nutrition into daily lessons. Here are two examples:

- Students loved the MyPyramid lesson. The pyramid stays up in the classroom as a daily reminder when we discuss healthy foods at snack and lunch time.
- We use the curriculum to springboard our instruction. Our main avenue for teaching and learning about healthy eating is through our garden. Students took the responsibility for planting, caring for, and picking produce and setting it up on the market stand. Students got to ‘browse’ the stand and ‘buy’ produce to take home. Students got the opportunity to experience how food is grown and taste healthy fresh produce that they may never have tried.



Food Safety with Afterschool

After a skit which demonstrated how to make a healthy sandwich (and included five food safety mistakes) the prepared sandwich was offered to the class. One student stated, “That sandwich is contaminated!” Students were then asked to identify the five food safety mistakes that were made.

Issue

Each year an estimated 48 million Americans become sick due to food borne illnesses. Children are more susceptible than adults to becoming ill.

What Was Done

Food Safety was taught to students in the Hennessy Elementary afterschool summer program. Through several interactive lessons, students learned about germs, how they multiply, and important steps to keep their food safe. Handouts were provided to families in the program that included food safety fun facts along with an activity sheet for students.

Impact

- Over 70 students were educated on the importance of food safety.
- Teachers noted that students were bringing insulated lunch bags to school instead of brown paper bags— a food safety suggestion in the food safety handout.
- Students washed their hands more often especially before lunchtime and after coming in from recess.



Kindergarteners point to the germs that were spread around their classroom during a food safety lesson.



Learning Leads to Healthy Behavior Changes



Students raise their hands to answer questions about where foods belong on the MyPyramid puzzle.

In conjunction with their nutrition study, third grade students at Truckee Elementary School created friendly snack recipes. Students then made a holiday gift recipe book. Several students brought in their creations from home for a taste testing and shared with the class how they prepared the recipe and ingredients.

Issue

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese.

What Was Done

This year 145 elementary and 24 preschool classrooms received an introductory lesson at the beginning of the school year and a review lesson in the spring. Many fifth grade students have received lessons since they started preschool! All teachers received research-based curriculum to continue the learning throughout the school year.

Impact

- Teachers saw a noticeable change in the type of snacks students brought from home. Instead of snacks that were high in fat and low in nutrients, they brought healthier snacks including fruits and vegetables.
- Students influenced their peers in positive ways. A student from Woodbridge Elementary School said to a fellow student, “That is not a healthy snack to bring to school.”
- Other students counted how many groups were in their meals or snacks and discussed what food groups were missing.
- Students take time to read the nutrition facts labels on foods to see how much fat and sugar they contain and discuss healthier choices during class.



Taste Testing

Most students and teachers had never tasted raw sweet potatoes. Many thought they were eating carrots.

Issue

Children who try new healthy foods and who are willing to try the food again are more likely to choose these foods again.

What Was Done

Fliers were sent to First Street and Cirby Elementary teachers encouraging those interested to sign up for a food tasting in their classroom; 32 teachers signed up to participate. Program Representatives went to each classroom; first showing the students raw sweet potato strips and asking if the students knew what they were. Students were then asked to taste and answer six questions. Teachers received a one page fact sheet and recipe for sweet potato fries to discuss with students and copy to send home.

Impact

- 94% of the students tried the sweet potatoes.
- 68% said they would try them again.
- 65% said they would ask for them at home.
- One teacher reported that a student brought sweet potato sticks for a snack the next day.
- Some students said their parents had made the sweet potato fries at home.
- One group of students wanted to include sweet potatoes on the menu for their classroom party.





New Schools

Email from a teacher at Truckee Elementary: "Thank you so much for your presentation. I thought it was excellent, and the students really enjoyed it as well. We have started the lessons already, and I have enjoyed the enthusiastic responses from my class. We are excited about this program."



Kings Beach Elementary School in Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.

"Students are now making better choices at snack time."

Issue

With the down turn in the economy, the number of students participating in schools' free/reduced lunch program has increased. Tahoe Lake, Truckee Elementary, Ready Springs, Kings Beach, and Sheridan Elementary all had more than 50% of the students participating during the 2010-11 school year.

What Was Done

Principals at newly qualifying schools were contacted. A program representative went to a staff meeting at each school to make a presentation explaining the program, showing curricula and discussing the importance of nutrition education.

Impact

- 5 new elementary schools participated in the **Let's Eat Healthy Program**.
- 49 new teachers taught nutrition in their classrooms.
- 1,247 students received nutrition education.
- A 3rd grade teacher at Lake Tahoe Elementary sent the following email: "It is so important students experience healthy, nutritious food in an enjoyable way as part of their education. In the future, when they will face decisions about what to eat, they will know, through their experience, that healthy food can taste great. They were truly excited about what they were learning and eating. Your lessons made a positive difference."