



Nutrition Education

Preschool Classrooms

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This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* with funding from the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. In California, food stamps provide assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For food stamp information, call 877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.cachampionsforchange.net.

Merced County Office of Education

- **100% funded by the *Network for a Healthy California***
- **Local Incentive Awardee since 2003**
- **Special Education audience**
 - **Work with all disabilities age 0-22**
- **Preschool to 8th grade added in 2005**
- **Over 400 staff participating in program**



Harvest of the Month (HOTM) Goals

- **Objectives for students:**
 - Increase fruits and vegetables consumption
 - Increase preference for fresh produce through classroom activities and taste testing
 - Participate in daily physical activity and understand it's importance
 - Increase the knowledge and familiarity of California grown fruits and vegetables and the rich agricultural bounty of the State



HOTM

- **Do you know what the HOTM elements are?**
 - Educator Newsletter
 - Family Newsletter
 - Community Newsletter
 - Menu Slicks
- **Do you know where to find them?**



Merced Preschools

- **PRO'S**
 - Introducing different fruits and vegetables to eager learners
 - Integrate language arts through monthly storybooks about produce
 - Involving children in taste testing
 - “Food Experience”
 - **NEW** is exciting!
 - More than 89% are the target population



Merced Preschools

- **CHALLENGES**

- 3 hour day (AM & PM sessions) with a required curriculum schedule
- Nutrition education is viewed as an “EXTRA” subject to teach
- Difficulty finding ways to integrate nutrition into other subject matters
- No “COOKING” in the classroom



Merced Preschools

- **Solutions**

- Evaluated the program for the 2004-2005 school year and made changes based upon teacher feedback
- Hired the MCSD Preschool Literacy Coach
- Integrated *HOTM* materials into Houghton Mifflin’s “Where Bright Futures Begin” curriculum
- Defined “COOKING” per district rules
 - No skillets, hot plates or microwaves



Preschool Staff

- **Teachers are trained bi-annually**
- **Attend staff meetings regularly to review *HOTM***
- **Provide classroom nutrition education items to assist with integration**
- **Provided an Early Childhood SPARK physical education and wellness training**



Preschool Activity Packet

- **Educator**
 - Received 2-5 books/month about *HOTM* produce
 - Integrated features into storybook activities



Small Group Activities

- **Resources provided:**
 - **Books, puzzles and games that reinforce fruits and vegetables**
- **Curriculum areas vary (Art, Math, and Science)**
- **Incentives for students**
 - **Stickers and bookmarks**



Preschool Activity Packet

- **Food Experience**
 - Taste tests are simple recipes that the children can help prepare in the classroom
 - Each child can do some preparation on their own plate
 - Encourage food safety practices, hand washing and use of all senses



Parent Component

- **Parent Newsletter**
 - English, Spanish and Hmong
- **Food experience recipes are included**
- **Meet with parents 1-2 times per year**
 - Parent Advisory Committee Meetings



SUCCESS!

- **Support from Administration**
- **Support from Curriculum/Literacy Coaches**
- **Improved Daily Snack Menu**
- **Birthday celebrations once a month**
- **Teachers are SPARK Trained**
- **Other Preschool programs in Merced County have requested materials and to be part of the program**



How to use the packets

- Access from www.mercednutrition.org
- Integrate the activities in to required curriculum
- Start with taste test food experience
 - Add in recipes as time and ability permit
- Appropriate for child care centers, daycare centers and preschools



How do I find the packets?

- www.mercednutrition.org
- www.harvestofthemonth.com
- http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/nut/LACOLLAB_Files/documents/HOTM/HOTM%20Resources.htm

