

## *Tips for Including* **Nutrition Education in Summer Meal Programs**

### **Make Nutrition Education Shine in Summer Programs**

Nutrition education is a good fit for summer feeding programs -helping children stay healthy, and keeping them engaged doing something productive. Studies show that children gain more than *twice* as much weight during the summer than they do during the school year, a likely consequence of too little physical activity and poor nutrition during the break. Those at greatest risk are youth in low-income communities where access to healthy food and safe places to play is limited when school lets out for summer vacation. Fun, healthy activities will also encourage families to come to your site; which will increase your meal participation.

Be sure to select the kind of nutrition education that is easy to offer at your site. Find something that is fun for your staff and the families! One way to keep it fresh is by using rotating themes on a weekly or monthly basis. You can vary the activities within the theme, and then change your theme.

Remember to keep the nutrition messages simple, practical and positive, and focused on concrete ideas. Research shows that school-age children learn best when they can be active and work together on an activity that they can use right away in their lives. For example, a tasting activity with different kinds of milk will be more successful than a lesson on how the calcium in milk builds strong bones and teeth. Children enjoy activities that are hands-on.

### **Kinds of Nutrition and Health Education**

#### ***Promotion and Messaging***

- Bulletin Boards, posters, flyers, and signs displaying nutrition information
- Nutrient Information about the foods being served



#### ***Self-Directed Activities***

- Nutrition puzzles, matching games, coloring sheets, placemats
- Interactive displays, such as guessing the amount of sugar in beverages or self-directed nutrition art projects
- Weekly food and activity logs (with incentives for completion)-such as Walk Across America

#### ***Staff-Taught or Guided “Classes”***

- Stand-alone activities, such as food tastings, cooking experiences, label reading activities, food-related crafts or nutrition picture books
- A class series, often focused on nutrition basics
- Projects such as gardening or murals

#### ***Events***

- Nutrition decathlons, health festivals, bike rodeos or nutrition-related contests
- Multicultural Food Events, barbeques, or picnics, themed salad bars, or farm stands



## **Considerations:**

- **Site Set-up** (room capacity, arrangement of space, seating and worktable arrangements, display areas, access to outdoors if gardening)
- **Equipment** (audio-visual, kitchen utensils and serving dishes, refrigerators or coolers, sinks, microwaves, stoves, ovens, gardening tools)
- **Time** available to provide nutrition education (consider preparation and cleanup too)
- **Schedule** for education (how often, type, topics)
- **Budget** for nutrition education
- **Materials** needed (handouts, books, pens and pencils, art supplies, groceries)
- **Audience** (size of group, kinds of activities the most interesting for the age group, is it a mixed-age groups, are parents attending, cultural appropriateness)
- **Staffing** (how many staff are available, interest, confidence and knowledge in subject)
- **Training/Support** for Staff (how will you provide, how often)
- **Partnerships** (help with promotion, materials, equipment and staffing)
- **Parent Resources** (what kinds are needed, what languages would be helpful)
- **Evaluation/Feedback** (how will you know its successful-what kinds of feedback and from whom)

## **Resources for Selecting Materials**

**California Department of Education's Nutrition Education Resource Guide** for California Public Schools, kindergarten through grade twelve at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/nerg.asp>

- Provides guidance on how to implement effective, standards-based nutrition education programs for students. Includes descriptions, activity highlights and alignment to standards on over 50 nutrition education instructional resources.

**California Healthy Kids Resource Center** maintains a comprehensive collection of reviewed health education materials for use. These materials are available for loan from their library, with free delivery in California at [www.californiahealthykids.org](http://www.californiahealthykids.org)

## **Steps to Great Nutrition Education**

1. **Assess your site** (see considerations above)
2. **Select education** (type, source)
3. **Schedule activities** (calendar the activities)
4. **Ask for help** (volunteers, presenters, funding, materials)
5. **Prepare** (staff training, materials and equipment, clarify roles)
6. **Promote** (decide how-flyers, menu backs, website, newspapers)
7. **Conduct education** (set up in advance)
8. **Evaluate** (get feedback from staff, children and parents)



## **Nutrition Education Resources**

Many excellent, nutrition education resources are available for free or at low-cost. Here is a list of a few sources for materials that can be used successfully in summer food program settings.

### ***California Department of Public Health, Network for a Healthy California Resources***

**Harvest of the Month** - seasonal food tastings, simple cooking activities, recipes, family newsletters, literature links and more. Activities can be shortened or enhanced and lend themselves to many different settings.

<http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/>

#### **Children's Power Play Campaign**

Easy to use activities focused on nutrition and physical activity. Formatted in a Ready, Set, Go format. Activities are targeted to grades 4-5 but can easily be adapted to mixed age groups. Activities can be found here:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/ChildrensPowerPlayCampaign.aspx>

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/PowerPlayResources.aspx>

To partner with your local *Power Play!* campaign, please contact your region's *Power Play!* manager. Their information can be found here:

[www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/PowerPlayRegionalContacts.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/PowerPlayRegionalContacts.aspx)

#### **Re-Think Your Drink**

Campaign to raise awareness of healthy beverage choices. Materials can be used for promotion and messaging, self-directed interactive displays, or adapted for use in brief classes.

**Materials** can be accessed on the Bay Area Collaborative website (BANPAC)- <http://banpac.org/>

### ***California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division***

#### **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Photo Cards**

Set of 142 full color photo cards with nutrition information that encourages students to eat more fruits and vegetables. Cards can be used in summer programs for promotion, bulletin boards/display, signage on foods served, special events, or nutrition education. [www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/ap/pubcat.aspx](http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/ap/pubcat.aspx)

#### **Nutrition to Grow On**

An innovative curriculum for grades four through six that offers teachers a direct link between the garden and nutrition education. Best used for teacher directed activities. Uses the garden as basis for activities.

[www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/nrttogrow.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/nrttogrow.asp)

#### **Kids Cook Farm-Fresh Foods**

A seasonally based activity guide that links academic content standards to the real world through gardens, nutrition, cooking, recycling, and the environment. The activities could be shortened for summer programs, especially if the site has a gardening program. [www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/kidscook.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/kidscook.asp)

#### **Garden based learning**

Gardening activities can be very successful in summer programs, particularly container activities. This webpage lists many garden related lessons and resources that can be adapted to summer programs.

[www.healthyschoolenvironment.org/training-resources/nutrition-education](http://www.healthyschoolenvironment.org/training-resources/nutrition-education)



## Other Organizations

### **California Agriculture in the Classroom**

Many of these agriculture-focused lessons can be shortened or adapted easily to fit your timeframe and setting. Also includes a bookshelf of recommended agriculture focused nutrition picture books. The Resources for Every Season contains a searchable database of lesson plans and resources.

<http://www.cfaitc.org/wegarden/>

### **California Farm to School**

The curricular and publication resource pages have many education resources, including a guide to using local foods in summer and after school programs. <http://www.farmtoschool.org/ca/>

The link to national farm to school webpage contains a webinar archive which includes an excellent PowerPoint on how to organize student cooking stations and experiences, with an emphasis on farm to school recipes. [www.farmtoschool.org/files/webinars\\_659.pdf](http://www.farmtoschool.org/files/webinars_659.pdf)

### **California School Garden Network**

Online Garden Education Database that can be sorted in multiple ways, including a search for literature and storybooks that could be used for summer activities.

[www.csgn.org/curriculum](http://www.csgn.org/curriculum)

### **Dairy Council of California**

Free Resources are available or downloadable. Summer programs may find the adult education materials useful for take home messages.

Fuel Up To Play 60 (FUTP60) – Includes ideas for Milk Mustache contests, taste test days, and poster contests. [www.dairycouncilofca.org/Educators/FuelUpToPlay60.aspx](http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Educators/FuelUpToPlay60.aspx)

Parent Resources/Tip Sheets - [www.dairycouncilofca.org/Tools/Downloads.aspx](http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Tools/Downloads.aspx) and Adult Nutrition Education Pieces - [www.dairycouncilofca.org/HealthProfessionals/ClientPrograms/](http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/HealthProfessionals/ClientPrograms/)

Interactive Nutrition Programs/Games/Educational Tools – Adults – Have adults take the food personality test. <http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Tools/AdultLearningTools.aspx>

School Nutrition Services resources - <http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Educators/SchoolFoodService/>  
Includes some classroom cooking resources and tips.

Rethink Your Drink Power Point Presentation and resources - <http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/Health-Wellness/LunchandLearn/RethinkYourDrink/Rethink-Your-Drink.htm>



### ***USDA Food and Nutrition Services***

This federal agency provides children and adults of all ages with nutrition education materials on how to improve their diets and their lives, including My Plate, Team Nutrition, and Eat Smart Play Hard. Resources to “Team Nutrition” programs include free nutrition posters, lesson plans, and other materials useful to summer feeding programs. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/nutrition.htm>

### ***Wisconsin Department of Health***

**Got Veggies?** is a garden-based nutrition education curriculum with seven lesson plans, a series of shorter garden-based activities, fun recipes and helpful tips for cooking and eating in the garden. [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/gotveggies.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/gotveggies.htm)

