



MICHIGAN TEAM NUTRITION

RESULTS FROM 2003-2004 HEALTHY READING MINI-GRANTS

Successfully Integrating Nutrition Education into English/Language Arts and other Core Subjects



WHY INTEGRATED NUTRITION EDUCATION?

Nutrition education for elementary school children is not mandated in Michigan. Although many teachers are interested in providing nutrition education to students, the reality is that many teachers:

- Do not have time to teach nutrition as a stand-alone subject;
- Are not comfortable with their own knowledge about nutrition and health;
- Do not have the resources to provide nutrition education to students.



IT WORKS!

By integrating nutrition education into English/Language Arts (ELA), teachers were able to teach students nutrition, physical activity and overall health concepts while they were teaching to the state-mandated Michigan Curriculum Framework and the State of Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations.

The Michigan Team Nutrition Healthy Reading project was successful because it removed the two main barriers teachers had identified as standing in the way of providing nutrition education to students: competition with other subjects for instructional time and adequate resources.

Teachers did teach students about nutrition as part of English/ Language Arts (ELA) instruction:

- 19 hours per school year was the average number of hours teachers spent teaching nutrition by incorporating nutrition information into ELA instruction using books with positive food and physical activity messages, compared with six hours of nutrition education taught the previous year...an increase of 315%.
- 91% of teachers (at the end of the project) were confident about teaching nutrition concepts to students compared with 61% when the project started.
- All (100%) of the school-based mini-grant coordinators agreed that "nutrition education is a priority at our school" at the end of the project.

Nutrition Education Is Important

- Good eating habits and regular physical activity help children do better in school.
- The number of overweight children has almost tripled in the last thirty years. Unhealthy eating habits and lack of physical activity contribute to the increase in childhood overweight.
- Even moderate under-nutrition can have lasting effects and compromise cognitive development and school performance.



About Team Nutrition

Team Nutrition is a national initiative designed to motivate, encourage and empower schools, families and communities to work together to continually improve school meals and help students and families make food and physical activity choices for a healthy lifestyle. Team Nutrition schools make a commitment to help children eat healthy and be physically active; they receive free resources and are eligible to apply for Michigan Team Nutrition grants. More than 900 Michigan schools are enrolled in Team Nutrition. For more information about Michigan Team Nutrition, go to www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu

STEPS TO SUCCESS

Six Michigan schools, assisted by county Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) staff members, involved 26 K-3 classrooms in a Healthy Reading mini-grant project and were trained on how to integrate nutrition education into existing classroom ELA activities.

Schools that received a mini-grant:

- **Participated in a half-day onsite training** attended by teachers, the school-based mini-grant coordinator, the foodservice director or manager, the building principal and one or more MSUE staff members.
- **Used children's books with positive food and physical activity messages** to teach nutrition during ELA instruction throughout the year. Teachers incorporated nutrition education into group reading, partner reading, read-alouds in the classroom, journaling, book-making, fact-finding and creative writing.
- **Conducted a Nutrition Week** with assistance from MSUE staff members. Nutrition Week consisted of four lessons with a hands-on nutrition/taste-testing activity and a supporting ELA exercise, such as book-making or journaling.
- **Used the take-home Family Nutrition Bookbag** to extend nutrition education and physical activity promotion to parents and siblings.
- **Participated in pre- and post-evaluation of the project.**



Integration Led to Positive Changes in Students and Families

Teachers involved in the grant reported that...

Students made healthier choices...

- "I saw my class bringing in healthier snacks as a result of this grant."
- "I feel the students are making wiser food choices."
- "Students tried some new foods they might not otherwise have tried."

...and became smarter about nutrition!

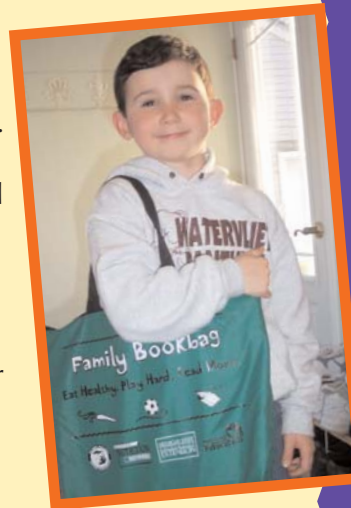
- "My first-graders have become very adept at identifying the food groups and foods that belong to each group."
- "Children learned the importance of good health and healthy food choices."
- "A direct and powerful benefit was the increased awareness of healthy, tasty fruits and veggies."
- "Students learned breakfast is important to eat each day."

For more information about integrating nutrition education into English/Language Arts or about Michigan Team Nutrition contact:

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or visit the Michigan Team Nutrition Web site at www.tn.fcs.msu.edu

THE FAMILY NUTRITION BOOKBAG WAS A SUCCESS!

The take-home Family Nutrition Bookbag was implemented in 26 classrooms and evaluated by over 300 families. The bookbag contained children's books with positive food and physical activity messages, a tip sheet on nutrition and reading, a set of recipe cards and other nutrition-related give-a-ways. Children and their families had fun sharing the bookbag contents at home, practicing developmentally appropriate reading skills and learning about eating healthy and being physically active.



- 33% reported that the Family Nutrition Bookbag increased their family's "usual" reading time. Parents and children spent an average of 92 minutes with the bookbag.
- 85% of parents reported that their children learned something about nutrition or physical activity from the books in the bookbag.
- 84% of families intended to prepare one or more of the healthy recipes provided in the bookbag.

Michigan State University Extension and the Michigan Department of Education in Partnership

This project was funded by a Team Nutrition training grant from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Michigan State University and the Michigan Department of Education are affirmative-action, equal-opportunity institutions. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status or family status.