



CentroNía: A Best Practice in DC

Overview

CentroNía is a nationally recognized, award-winning educational organization providing affordable, high quality education, professional development and family-support services in a bilingual, multicultural environment to more than 1,500 children, youth and families in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Their early childhood program provides breakfast, enrichment in art, music and movement, lunch, naptime and daily outdoor activities as well as ample opportunities for learning, exploration, creativity and communication. They have applied their philosophy of enrichment to the nutrition and health of their children. They cook their own meals of whole fresh foods four times a week. Launching a new campaign on obesity awareness, teachers and parents receive training in nutrition and physical activity. A partnership with Wolftrap, a foundation of the performing arts, brings creativity to the physical activity program.

Obesity Awareness Workshops

Parents are invited to workshops on nutrition topics such as anemia, fruits and veggies and the importance of physical activity. Teachers are required to go to such trainings twice a month.

Improved Menu

The new head chef at CentroNía has revamped their menu. She cooks and serves fresh food that she purchases from the wholesale produce nearby four times a week. One day of the four the menu is completely vegetarian. The fifth day is catered. Foods include brown rice, quinoa, spinach, romaine, fresh fruits, black beans, garbanzo beans and lentils. Snacks are fresh and innovative such as steamed sweet potato.

Being Physically Active Can Be an Art

For the past 5 years Wolftrap (a foundation for the performing arts) has been conducting 12 sessions a year on dance and movement at CentroNía. Artists meet with teachers to explain the purpose of the program and make sure to connect lessons to the current curriculum. Teachers are eventually guided in how to lead some sessions. This helps in the sustainability of the project.

Partners and Funding

- CentroNía participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). CentroNía is also funded by a number of foundations and corporations listed online at:

<http://www.centronia.org/html/ThankYou-Foundations.html>

- The nutrition education classes and accompanying pamphlets are funded by a grant through the DC Office of the Superintendent, the state agency that administers CACFP.
- The Wolftrap program is funded jointly by Wolftrap and CentroNía.

Overcoming Challenges

The biggest opposition to the new menu is not the children but the child care providers. They dislike the new food because they are not accustomed to it. CentroNía is trying to overcome this through their nutrition workshops.

Future

In the future, CentroNía hopes to cook and serve their food 5 days a week.

For more Information, Contact:

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