



## Providing Nutrition Education

Nutrition education is an important way to encourage healthy eating, build good lifelong habits, and combat our country's childhood obesity epidemic. Unfortunately, in many schools, nutrition education has been squeezed out of the curriculum.

Afterschool programs provide a vital opportunity to fill this void. Participation in any of the federal child nutrition programs can support nutrition education by introducing children to new foods, especially fruits and vegetables.

In addition, since nutrition education often includes reading recipes and preparing food, it can be an interactive approach to reinforce reading and math skills that children learn during the school day.

It is easy for an afterschool program to add nutrition education to its activities. Numerous nutrition education curricula exist that afterschool staff can use, and many communities can draw on local nutrition education resources. In addition, state child nutrition agencies may have nutritionists on staff who can provide suggestions on education materials or local resources for afterschool program's activities.

### *Nutrition education curricula*

Nutrition education curricula provide activities and information that afterschool staff can use to teach children about healthy eating. They are usually designed for use with specific age groups and vary in length and in type of activities, which makes it possible for an afterschool program to choose a curriculum that best meets its needs.

Below are examples of the curricula available. Many materials are free and some may involve a charge.

- **The Power of Choice: Helping Youth Make Healthy Eating and Fitness Decisions** is an afterschool nutrition education kit that provides 10 interactive sessions based on six posters. There is a recipe booklet, nutrition fact cards, a CD Rom, which contains additional activities and materials, and a training video for the adult leaders. *The Power of Choice* was developed by the Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA also has a number of other nutrition education resources available on its website, primarily through Team Nutrition, a project that provides nutrition education materials for children and families. [www.fns.usda.gov/tn](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn)

- **Action for Healthy Kids** designed the program *ReCharge!* for students in grades 2-6 to learn about and practice good nutrition and physical activity habits. The program includes an easy-to-use kit with lesson plans, equipment and more. <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/recharge/>
- **California Project Lean** offers important information on promoting healthy eating and physical activity and on strategies to create a healthier environment within the after school program. [www.californiaprojectlean.org](http://www.californiaprojectlean.org)
- **Exploring the Food Pyramid with Professor Popcorn** is a curriculum with lessons for each individual grades 1-6. The lessons include visuals, handouts, recipes, and evaluation forms. <http://extension.missouri.edu/fnep/standards/profpopcorn.htm>
- **SuperKids** offers fun ways to teach students about the importance of fruits and vegetables. It provides activities and lessons in language arts, math, music, science and social studies tailored to grades 3-4. There is a toolkit, recipes and an informative teacher's guide. <http://www.dole.com/SuperKids/Educators/tabid/744/Default.aspx>
- **FOODPLAY** is a nutrition media company that offers free materials and links to other resources. It offers hundreds of activities for all age groups on nutrition, fitness, body image, and several other topics. [www.foodplay.com](http://www.foodplay.com)
- **Generation Fit** was developed by the American Cancer Society. Generation Fit is for youth age 11-18. It has a set of five service-learning projects that focus on nutrition and physical activity. [www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED\\_1\\_5X\\_Generation\\_Fit.asp](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_1_5X_Generation_Fit.asp)
- **Cooking with Kids** uses nutrition education activities for grades K-6, which allows students to explore, prepare and enjoy fresh affordable foods from around the world. <http://cookingwithkids.net/>
- The **California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness (CANFit)** Program provides resources on improving the nutrition and physical activity status in low-income communities and communities of color for youth ages 10-14. [www.canfit.org](http://www.canfit.org)
- **Nutra-Net, Inc.** provides curricula that teach nutrition through food preparation activities. There are twenty food-related children's stories paired with recipes for ages 3-7. There are one hour cooking activities done with small kitchen equipment for children ages 7-14. [www.nutra-net.org](http://www.nutra-net.org)
- The **Center for Collaborative Solutions** developed the guide *Changing Lives Saving Lives*, which is a step-by-step guide to developing exemplary practices in

healthy eating, physical activity, and food security in afterschool programs.  
<http://www.ccscenter.org/afterschool/Step-By-Step%20Guide>

- The **Washington State Dairy Council** offers nutrition education resources including *Fuel up to Play 60*, *Five Food Group Sticker Activity*, coloring books and several other activities. [www.eatsmart.org](http://www.eatsmart.org)

### ***Local nutrition education resources***

Many communities have local organizations and individuals who will partner with afterschool programs to provide nutrition education. These may include the Cooperative Extension Service, which is based at state land grant universities; nutrition or nursing students from local universities; local affiliates or chapters of the American Dietetic Association, the Society for Nutrition Education, the American Cancer Society, and the American Heart Association; dietitians at public health departments and hospitals; and local restaurant chefs. In a number of communities, these links are already being made:

- The University of Missouri/Lincoln University Outreach and Extension Family Nutrition Program developed a nutrition education curriculum specifically for Harvesters, the Community Food Network, in Kansas City, Missouri. “Kids in the Kitchen” is a hands-on nutrition education curriculum that runs for eight weeks. During each lesson, the children prepare a snack or a meal, which they get to taste. The goal is to teach children healthy eating habits, while learning basic kitchen skills.
- Senior college nutrition students who take a community nutrition class provide nutrition education in the Northern Nevada Food Bank’s afterschool “Kids Cafes.” The High Sierra Chef Association also has adopted the food bank as the recipient of its charitable efforts and provides food and culinary training to the afterschool programs. The chefs teach students how to prepare food with ingredients likely to be found in a family’s cupboard.
- The Nutrition Council of Greater Cincinnati provides nutrition education for afterschool programs at the Norwood Community Learning Centers. The Nutrition Council does a fitness and nutrition program called the Flying Pigs Marathon, which is designed to help children be active, eat well and learn.