



[Photo] At Triplains USD 275 in Winona, KS, third and fourth grade students learn about the different food groups featured on MyPlate.

About This Booklet

In this booklet, you will find creative ideas and how-to instructions for 20 themed events that focus on nutrition and physical activity. Designed for elementary and middle schools, these events can help:

- Support local school wellness policy goals and implementation (for more information on local wellness policies, visit Team Nutrition’s “Local School Wellness Policy” Web page [visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/local-school-wellness-policy>]);
- Generate awareness about the importance of healthy food choices and physically active lifestyles;
- Engage students, families, school staff, and the community in nutrition and wellness efforts;
- Provide positive experiences with healthy food choices so children will be less reluctant to try them and more likely to eat them again in the future; and
- Provide children with positive role models for healthy behaviors.

A variety of events, both large and small, are included to meet your school’s needs and resources. A calendar also shows ways to incorporate these ideas into existing school activities and holiday observances.

Who Is the Intended Audience?

This book is designed to help elementary and middle schools implement nutrition and physical activity events. Anyone can lead these events: the school’s wellness committee, the principal, the wellness chair of a parent organization, a teacher, the school nurse, the school nutrition director (i.e., school food service director), or a community volunteer.

The process starts with a single person or group of people committed to making a healthy difference. But leading an event doesn’t mean doing it alone. This booklet provides you with ways to collaborate and engage others in the planning process to make your event a success.

Why Plan a Team Nutrition Event?

Schools play an important role in childhood obesity prevention efforts, because children spend so much of their day at school. Today, school districts establish and implement local school wellness policies that sustain healthy behaviors and share information about these efforts with the public. Schools started following updated meal patterns for the National School Lunch Program in July 2012 and for the School Breakfast Program in July 2013. These new meal pattern requirements mean that school meals now include more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy, and limit saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Nutrition education and physical activity promotion can help support these efforts by increasing awareness and acceptance of the healthier options available at school. They can also help lay the groundwork for healthy habits children will use for life.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and tripled in adolescents in the past 30 years.^{1,2}
- The top sources of energy (calories per day) for 2- to 18-year-olds are grain desserts (such as cookies and cakes), pizza, and soda.³
- Research shows that kids who have healthier eating patterns and get regular physical activity are more likely to perform better academically.^{4,5,6,7,8}

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How Do I Get Started?

The best way to start is to consider your school's needs and wants. When do you want to hold your event? How large or small is your budget? Do you want to focus on a particular age group? Are you trying to link your event to another school activity? Once you've determined your event criteria and objectives, use the "Events at a Glance" guide on page 10 and "Events Through the Year" guide on page 6 to determine which events fit your need. Piggybacking on a pre-existing event or activity, and connecting to a timely theme or observance, may help boost attendance at your event.

Remember to research policies and procedures at your school and in your district that may be relevant to your events. For example, you may need principal or district permission for facility use. District policies related to foods may also determine what food can be used in the school, who can use the cafeteria or kitchen, and where food can be eaten or stored. There may also be policies related to social media, event photography, and promotional materials.

What Does Each Event Description Include?

The event descriptions cover each stage of the process, from advance planning to the day of the event and beyond. Each event overview includes the following sections:

- **Objective** – A clear description of what you can hope to achieve by hosting the event
- **The Event** – Details about the event
- **Planning** – Instructions that guide you step by step in planning and conducting your event
- **Team Up for Success** – Ways to use six communication channels to strengthen and reinforce your event's message: schoolwide events, classroom activities, school nutrition services (i.e., cafeteria) connections, home activities, community extension opportunities, and media
- **Schools in Action** – Real-life examples of activities conducted by Team Nutrition schools

Some events also include template materials that you can customize (see appendix, page 79). Remember to allow plenty of time to plan and promote your event to help ensure success!



Delivering nutrition and physical activity messages via multiple communication channels and in a variety of ways increases the likelihood that children will remember and act on those messages. The Team Up for Success sections suggest ways to increase children's exposure to these messages where they live, learn, and play, maximizing the opportunity to engage them at critical decision points.



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Who Should Be Involved?

Creating a healthy nutrition and physical activity environment requires everyone's involvement. When planning events, invite input and support from different stakeholders in your school community. Consider forming partnerships with:



- Administrators and school board members
- Teachers
- School nutrition director and staff
- Parents/families and parent organizations (e.g., a parent-teacher association [PTA] or parent-teacher organization [PTO])
- Student government organizations or clubs
- Physical education staff and coaches
- School nurses
- Local school wellness policy committee
- School wellness council
- Garden coordinators
- Janitorial staff
- Community health professionals, business and community leaders, local chefs, and recreational organizations
- Cooperative Extension staff
- Local Health Department staff

Within each event listing, you'll find ideas on how to involve others in planning, promoting, and implementing the event. This collaboration will make your event stronger and create shared ownership of the activity.

How Do I Promote Our Event?

Building excitement and boosting participation will drive the success of your event. Below are a few ideas to help you get the word out at school, with students' family members, and in your community.

School

- Spotlight the event in the morning announcements
- Post event flyers and posters in the hallways, cafeteria, and classroom
 - Consider the height of your students when considering where to hang posters. Posters displayed under the service rails in the cafeteria line may be the right height for younger students
 - If you cannot tape posters to walls, consider hanging them from the ceiling
 - Choose or design posters with bright colors
 - Think about how many posters you want to hang overall – too many can be distracting – as well as how long posters should stay up
 - Some posters will match with specific events (e.g., Try-Day) and can be specifically hung for event days
- Ask teachers to make announcements about the event in class
- Mention an upcoming event during an existing schoolwide assembly
- Remind teachers and staff at faculty meetings
- Promote featured foods on the cafeteria's serving line using colorful signs that incorporate the event theme

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Family

- Send emails to parents/caregivers or, if available, use your school's automated phone call system
- Send flyers home with students
- Feature the event on your school Web site or in the school newsletter
- Share information via the Web site or newsletter of your school's parent organization (e.g., PTA, PTO)
- Highlight events at parent-teacher conferences
- Spotlight the event on your school calendar and invite families to attend
- Record an "on hold" message about the event for callers waiting to speak with school staff
- Send an automated text message to parents' cell phones about the event
- Promote the event on school menus
- Use social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest) to provide frequent updates about upcoming events (if your school does not use social media, your school's parent organization or community partners might use it)
- Post the event dates and reminders on outdoor signs near student drop-off and pick-up locations

When developing displays and promotional materials, be sure to include people of diverse backgrounds. Depending on your community, you may also consider translating materials or offering translation and other culturally sensitive services to non-English-speaking families.

Community

- Ask local organizations or chapters of national organizations, such as the PTA or Action for Healthy Kids, to promote your event in their newsletters or community calendars and to help recruit volunteers, if needed
- Consult with your district's communication department before reaching out to local media (e.g., television, radio, and print). They may have staff available to help you draft a press release or photograph your event. (Be sure to provide at least a 3-week notice prior to your event)
- Send a press release to local radio stations and newspapers (see appendix, page 93)
- Invite members of the community and local media organizations to attend your event or participate in their own way (for example, by starting their own healthy eating challenges)
- Invite local dignitaries to participate in your event, such as local media personalities, school board members, City Council representatives, or the mayor

What Does a Successful Event Look Like?

Evaluation is a key part of hosting a successful event. By documenting your success, you can help:

- Demonstrate the value of your event and how students benefitted from it
- Collect information that will help you plan future activities and apply for grants and future funding (e.g., number of participants reached, changes in awareness and attitudes, etc.)
- Share your success story with families, students, and others in the community
- Motivate teachers, school nutrition staff, families, and children to continue working hard to improve their nutrition and physical activity habits

About This Booklet (cont'd)

Most Team Nutrition events have positive results, but you won't know unless you collect information that shows what you accomplished! The evaluation doesn't have to be extensive or formal. Here are some tips to consider in planning your evaluation:

- **Keep your evaluation short and simple** – Most people do not like to fill out long forms. If you use a survey, include only a few questions (as an added bonus, the results will be easier to tally). Ask yourself: what information do I absolutely need to collect to be able to show the benefits of my event and plan for the next time?
- **Match your evaluation to your objective** – Different tools measure different outcomes. Think through what you're hoping to achieve, and then craft the measurement tool to capture that information. Was the goal to increase kids' awareness of healthy food choices and the benefits of a healthy diet? Try a quiz. Was it to get them to try new foods and discover new favorites? Try a ballot. Was it to engage families and the community? Try a survey.
- **Offer a reward** – People like contests and winning prizes for filling out a survey or participating in an interview. Here are a few ideas:
 - Have people put completed surveys in a box and draw winners. Prizes could include donated items.
 - Provide small incentives to everyone, such as print versions of Team Nutrition's *Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Homes* (see appendix, page 99).
- **Build on your success and add variety** – After the first time you hold an event, reconvene your planning committee to discuss what worked well and what you would like to change. Seek feedback from your students and consider new activities for your next event.

How Can I Share My Results?

Inform families and principals about what students did, learned, or tried during your event, and how this event might be expanded in the future based on these results. You can also share tips that other schools in your area may find useful. Here are a few ideas:

- Ask your school nutrition director to include information about your event on the school menu, in family newsletters, and on the school nutrition Web site
- Share findings with your superintendent or school board to keep them informed about your accomplishments
- Use the school or district newsletter to showcase your efforts
- Put a statement on your handouts, evaluation tools, and results, such as, "This event was conducted by [your name], [your title], of [name of district] Public Schools. Funding was provided by [funding source, if applicable]"

Sharing event results demonstrates your school's commitment to students' health and can help when securing donations or funds for future events.



¹ Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Kit BK, Flegal KM. Prevalence of obesity and trends in body mass index among US children and adolescents, 1999-2010. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2012;307(5):483-490.

² National Center for Health Statistics. *Health, United States, 2011: With Special Features on Socioeconomic Status and Health*. Hyattsville, MD; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2012.

³ Reedy J, Krebs-Smith, J. Dietary sources of energy, solid fats, and added sugars among children and adolescents in the United States. *Am Diet Assoc*. 2010 Oct;110(10):1477-84.

⁴ Florence MD, Asbridge M, Veugelaers PJ. Diet quality and academic performance. *J Sch Health*. 2008; 78:209-215.

⁵ Fu ML, Cheng L, Tu SH, Pan WH. Association between unhealthy eating patterns and unfavorable overall school performance in children. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2007; 107:1935-1943.

⁶ Sigfúsdóttir ID, Kristjánsson AL, Allegrante JP. Health behaviour and academic achievement in Icelandic school children. *Health Educ Res*. 2007; 22:70-80.

⁷ Kim HY, Frongillo EA, Han SS, Oh SY, Kim WK, Jang YA, Won HS, Lee HS, Kim SH. Academic performance of Korean children is associated with dietary behaviours and physical status. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr*. 2003; 12:186-192.

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.