



Low  
Cost | Elementary  
School-Oriented

Student champions of the month wear costumes and lead fun activities to educate their peers about nutrition and physical activity.



## Objective

Peer motivation encourages students to try new healthy food options, make healthy food choices from each food group, and participate in physical activities and nutrition education programs.

## The Event

Small groups of students serve as food champions, motivating their peers to make healthy food choices from the five food groups: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Dairy, and Protein Foods. For more information about healthy food options from each food group, visit <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>. Each month, rotating groups of food champions promote the nutritional benefits of a featured food throughout the month, encouraging other students to try it when it is served in the cafeteria. Food champions can create costumes and colorful posters, host trivia games, and create songs about their featured food. Have food champions help students get excited about tasting featured foods when they are served in the cafeteria.

After a series of months, schools can assign each student to a food group team and hold races between the teams as part of physical education classes. The food champions can participate in the competition while wearing the costumes they created. The school nutrition staff can feature winning groups' foods on school lunch or breakfast menus.

## Planning

**Gather a food champion team.** As a group, decide how you will recruit student volunteers to serve as food champions. Involve students and school nutrition services staff in deciding which foods will be featured each month. Create a timeline for the monthly activities, coordinating them early with the school nutrition director (especially if the food champions will be promoting foods on the school lunch or breakfast menu). Teachers, librarians, and wellness committee members can create a list of resources to help students research the nutritional benefits of their food. Art teachers can provide students with ideas for simple, easily accessible materials that can be used to make costumes or decorated T-shirts promoting the featured food.

**Design a food group race day.** Physical education teachers can determine how to incorporate a food group race into physical education classes or an all-school field day, including what elements will comprise the race. It can be a running event, an obstacle course, or another competitive physical activity that all students enjoy. The food champions can participate by wearing the costumes or T-shirts they created.



# Team Up Success



## School

- The food champions can make an announcement over the school's public address system, sharing a healthy fact about their food.
- Enlist the school mascot to help food champions promote the event.
- As an alternative to having students design costumes or shirts, ask parent organizations (e.g., PTA, PTO) to purchase specially designed T-shirts for food champions to wear throughout the year.



## Classroom

- Students can use class time to learn about healthy food choices from the five food groups. Consult *Serving Up MyPlate* for elementary school students and *Nutrition Voyage* for middle school students. See page 94 for these and other Team Nutrition resources.
- Language arts teachers can assign a writing project, such as writing a fictional story about how a food champion helps kids power up with foods from the five food groups.



## Cafeteria

- Each month, school nutrition directors can highlight featured foods on the school lunch or breakfast menu.



## Community

- Local chefs or registered dietitians can provide cooking demonstrations using the featured food. Food champions can assist and help distribute samples to students.
- If the featured food is produced locally, area producers can use visuals to show the food's origins. For example, a local miller can show how wheat is made into flour, a dairy farmer can discuss how milk from a cow ends up in cartons, and farmers can discuss how vegetables go from seed to plant to a student's plate.
- Local grocery stores can put the champions' foods on display in sections of the market.



## Media

- Post blogs featuring pictures, students' stories about their roles as food champions, and presentation materials about various healthy food choices on the school's Web site.



## Home

- School nutrition directors and wellness committee members can provide recipes using the featured foods for students to bring home to their families. For ideas, consult the *Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Homes* (see appendix, page 99).

# Schools **IN** Action

**Slater Middle School** in **Pawtucket, RI**, ran a summer food program called *Fruit and Vegetable Ambassadors*, where students came up with fun ways to encourage their fellow students to make healthier decisions during lunch. The ambassadors learned about uncommon healthy food options, such as malangas and chocolate peppers, so they could talk about them with their peers. They also learned from a local farmer who came to speak about the fruits and vegetables grown on her farm. The ambassadors participated in a food trivia game, taste-tested foods, and brainstormed ideas to help promote healthy food consumption among their fellow classmates. One group's idea was to create rap songs about healthy eating that could be aired on the school's public address system.



[Photo] *Fruit and Vegetable Ambassadors* sample fresh produce at their Summer Food Service Program.

