

This event promotes awareness of new foods and healthy eating among K-2 students through fun food stories and tasting activities.

Objective

Build literacy skills, encourage reading, and generate discussions about nutritious choices, trying new foods, and being physically active.

The Event

Students in kindergarten through second grade read books about healthy food choices and physical activity, and books that involve characters who model healthy behaviors or overcome barriers to lead a healthy lifestyle. Schools can involve multiple grades by matching older students and younger students to read together as “book buddies.” You may also consider inviting notable members of the community to read with the students. A reading challenge, where students read as many books as they can in a month from a list, can be another way to get students involved.

Once the reading is finished, classes can discuss the story and the importance of making healthy food and physical activity choices. Classes can then taste foods related to the book or enjoy storybook-themed meals in the school cafeteria.

Planning

Gather a broad team. Teachers, librarians, school nutrition directors, and wellness committee members can work to identify books that feature healthy food and physical activity choices, making sure to take into consideration the reading curriculum criteria, book availability, and overall themes. Many schools already plan activities for National Reading Month in March, so this activity may be easy to integrate into the school schedule at that time.

Choose a theme. You may wish to focus the reading selections around a specific theme in order to make discussions and tasting activities easier to implement, as well as make the overall message more memorable. Some themes and the books that relate to them are listed below.*

Breakfast

Good Morning, Little Fox

By Marilyn Janovitz (North-South, 2001)**

The Hatseller and the Monkeys: A West African Folktale

By Baba Wagué Diakité (Scholastic Press, 2000)**

Dairy

A Big Cheese for the White House: The True Tale of a Tremendous Cheddar

By Candace Fleming (DK Publishing, 1999)

Make Me a Peanut Butter Sandwich and a Glass of Milk

By Ken Robbins (Scholastic, 1992)

Raising Cows on the Koebels' Farm

By Alice K. Flanagan and Romie Flanagan (Children's Press, 1999)

Planning (cont'd)

Food Groups and Meals

The Beastly Feast

By Bruce Goldstone (Henry Holt and Company, 1998)**

Discover MyPlate Emergent Readers

By the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2014

Zachary's Dinnertime

By Lara Levinson (Star Bright Books, 2012)**

Fruits and Vegetables

Count on Pablo

By Barbara deRubertis (Kane Press, 1999)

Growing Vegetable Soup

By Lois Ehlert (Sandpiper, 1990)

Pumpkin Soup

By Helen Cooper (Doubleday, 1998)

The Trouble with Cauliflower

By Jane Sutton (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2006)

The Ugly Vegetables

By Grace Lin (Charlesbridge Publishing, 2009)**

Yum! ¡Mmmm! ¡Qué Rico! America's Sproutings

By Pat Mora (Lee & Low Books, 2007)**

Gardening/Farm-to-School

Apple Countdown

By Joan Holub (Albert Whitman & Company, 2009)**

In the Garden with Dr. Carver

By Susan Grigsby (Albert Whitman & Company, 2010)**

Little Critter: A Green, Green Garden

By Mercer Mayer (Harper Collins Publishers, 2011)

Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!

By Candace Flemming and G. Brian Karas (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2002)

Plant a Little Seed

By Bonnie Christensen (Roaring Book Press, 2012)

The Surprise Garden

By Zoe Hal (Scholastic, 1998)

Tops & Bottoms

By Janet Stevens (Harcourt Children's Books, 1995)**

Water, Weed, and Wait

By Edith Hope Fine and Angela Demos Halpin (Tricycle Press, 2010)**

Grains

The Little Red Hen and the Ear of Wheat

By Mary Finch (Barefoot Books, 2001) **

The Tortilla Factory

By Gary Paulsen (Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1995)

Physical Activity

The Busy Body Book: A Kid's Guide to Fitness

By Lizzy Rockwell (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2004)**

Froggy Plays Soccer

By Jonathan London (Viking, 1999)

Giraffes Can't Dance

By Giles Andreae and Guy Parker-Rees (Orchard Books, 2001)**

Planning (cont'd)

Junie B Jones is Captain Field Day

By Barbara Park (Scholastic, Inc., 2001)

The Listening Walk

By Paul Showers (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991)

Pete the Cat, Play Ball! (My First I Can Read)

By James Dean (Harper Collins, 2013)

Rainbow Magic: Sports Fairies (series)

By Daisy Meadows (Scholastic Press, 2003)

Scholastic Reader Level 1: Bob Books #4: Outdoor Adventures!

By Lynn Maslen Kertell (Scholastic Inc., 2012)

Watch Me Throw the Ball!

By Mo Willems (Hyperion Books for Children, 2009)

Trying New Foods

Bread and Jam for Frances

By Russell Hoban (HarperCollins, 1964)**

Delicious! A Pumpkin Soup Story

By Helen Cooper (Doubleday, 2006)**

Green Eggs and Ham

By Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1960)

I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato

By Lauren Child (Candlewick Press, 2000)**

Two Bite Club

By the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2013

Yoko

By Rosemary Wells (Hyperion Books, 1998)

*Mention of these materials is not an endorsement by the United States Department of Agriculture over other materials that may be available on this subject.

**Discussion questions for this book are provided in Team Nutrition's *Discover MyPlate* curriculum (see appendix, page 94).

For children reading chapter books, some popular selections can still provide opportunities to discuss nutrition and physical activity. For instance, *The Chocolate Touch* by Patrick Skene Catling (HarperCollins, 2006) can start conversations about moderation. Even *Bunnicula* by Deborah and James Howe (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006) can be the source of creative conversations about vegetables.

Plan how to present and sample the foods during meal times. School nutrition staff can incorporate the reading theme into cafeteria displays, such as labeling special menu items as a book character's "favorite" or creating storybook-themed menus or food tastings.

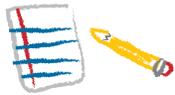
Make it fun and memorable. Promote your event with posters and announcements, or in the school newsletter or emails (see page 3 for promotion tips).

Team Up Success



School

- Ask older students to volunteer to read books to younger students.
- Hold a book parade, where children dress as a character from a book they've read and carry foods or sporting equipment featured in the book.
- Create a special display in the library of the books on your students' list. Create a chart for children to track how many books they read. Give children a small nonfood prize or coupon when they have read a certain number.



Classroom

- Tie books to lesson themes using *Discover MyPlate* (see appendix, page 94), which includes a Book Club section that connects activities with educational standards for kindergarten.
- If your school offers the Breakfast in the Classroom program, read stories about nutrition and physical activity to children as they eat breakfast.
- Consider a book bag program, in which families check out a bag containing a book, some discussion questions, a simple recipe or physical activity related to the book, and a journal. As students check out their book bags, they can use the journal to describe their experiences with the book and the recipe/physical activity. At the end of a designated period, share some of these experiences with the class.



Cafeteria

- Incorporate story themes into the cafeteria décor and menu. Invite children to decorate placemats with a food-related image from their stories.



Community

- Invite a local children's book author, chef, or registered dietitian to read a book to the students and lead a discussion on what they like about trying new healthy foods and being physically active.



Media

- Ask students to write about their experiences with a food featured in one of their books. Post those writing assignments on the school's Web site, along with recipes that feature the book's food and lists of other books that discuss healthy foods.



Home

- Send students home with recipes that include foods featured in their books, as well as additional books about food recommended by librarians, to encourage their families to read with them and try the foods at home.
- If your school offers a family literacy night for parents and children, create a display or handout of books with positive nutrition and physical activity messages. Provide parents with a copy of Team Nutrition's *MyPlate for Kindergarten Emergent Readers* (see appendix, page 97) to take home and read with their child.

Schools **IN** Action

Rural Vista School District in Hope, KS, coordinated a *Healthy Lifestyles with Dr. Seuss* event. The event, held during Dr. Seuss Week, involved junior high and upper elementary students reading a Dr. Seuss book to younger students. Tasting stations were set up based on healthy foods featured in the book, such as a snack of green eggs and ham made with Canadian bacon. Local media highlighted the event, and both students and their families had a fun and educational experience.

In **North Marion School District in Aurora, OR**, third through fifth graders qualified for a *Kids Iron Chef* competition by writing nutritional essays based on literary challenges. One of the challenges posed was, "The story of Jack and the Beanstalk does not tell about the crop of beans that must have come from such a big plant. Write about what Jack and his mom did with all those beans. Were they dried beans or green beans? Did they eat them or sell them? How did they cook them?" Students with winning essays were placed on Iron Chef teams coached by a high school student. Teams then participated in a competition during an all-school assembly, preparing two recipes each for a panel of local "celebrity" judges.



[Photo] Books about nutritious foods and physical activity help students strengthen their reading skills while learning more about healthy habits.