



A mock grocery store shopping experience in school empowers students through real-life lessons.

Objective

Reinforce students' understanding of the food groups and food labels and inform students' future decisions about the foods they consume in and outside of school.

The Event

Simulate a grocery store tour using empty food packages, pretend food, and mock displays of at least three grocery store stations. Your imaginary store can be created in a classroom or another indoor area of the school, and you can customize your store tours for students of varying age groups. A tour leader can provide students with a brief overview of the benefits of each food group, where to find healthy food choices at the grocery store, and (for older children) how to read food labels.

Students can practice what they learn by forming groups and pretending to shop for groceries at the mock store. Volunteers can act as store clerks, guiding students and answering questions. In **Stewart County, TN**, schools set up donated cash registers and provided students with child-sized shopping carts.

Planning

Collaborate with others to form a planning team. Identify a grocery store tour leader, such as a registered dietitian, Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Science professional, or health teacher. Recruit parents, student organizations, and teachers to help prepare the displays for the grocery store sections.

Pick a date for your event. Decide what, including food groups and food labels, will be covered during the tour. You can also designate certain areas for specific food groups, such as a produce department, cereal aisle, fish counter, meat counter, and dairy section.

Stock and set up the store. Collect and clean empty food containers or obtain pretend foods, food models, or pictures of foods from magazines to use in your imaginary store. Team Nutrition's *Discover MyPlate: Nutrition Education for Kindergarten* curriculum includes food cards that can be adapted for this purpose (see appendix, page 94), and *The Great Garden Detective Adventure* includes fruit and vegetable flash cards (see appendix, page 95). Ask students to create posters that illustrate the different store areas. They can create signage that marks different aisles and the front entrance.

Enhance the shopping experience. Consider offering a nonfood prize for every station the students visit. You may also want to offer food samples to students, as well as distribute a list of healthy items from each store section on the tour.

Team Up Success



School

- Conduct a mock grocery store tour for each grade at different times throughout the day, and ask a selection of students from each grade to share a healthy eating tip they learned from the tour via the school intercom system.
- Train older students to become grocery store tour leaders or to serve as clerks for younger children, giving them a chance to teach what they learned to others.
- Create a market where students, families, and staff can purchase fruits and vegetables grown in the school garden, if possible. (See page 56 for a school garden event.)

Classroom



- Explore the concept of the marketing and advertising of foods, providing examples from magazine and newspaper ads. Assign groups of students to develop their own print ads that promote a healthy food option or a MyPlate food group, and then combine the ads to make a catalog of healthy food choices.
- To prepare students for learning to read food labels, middle school teachers can present the *Nutrition Voyage: Backpack Full of Snacks!* lesson plan (see appendix, page 95) that discusses how to compare nutrition information based on serving sizes. For students in grades 5-6, consider incorporating the materials from *Serving Up MyPlate's Level 3, Lesson 3: Decisions, Decisions!* (see appendix, page 94) and *Dig In!'s Lesson 9: Power of Choice* (see appendix, page 95).
- Integrate the grocery store into classroom activities, such as having students add up the cost of grocery items in math class or working healthy food choices into word problem exercises.
- Invite a registered dietitian or Family and Consumer Science professional to lead a class discussion about how the grocery store design influences food purchases, including display height and where different foods are located in the store.



Cafeteria

- Ask the school nutrition director to briefly discuss with students different meal planning ideas that include a variety of grocery store items.

Community



- A staff member from a local grocery store, a registered dietitian in your community, or a county Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Science professional agent can lead students on the mock tour. A local grocery store can donate food to be sampled or provide coupons to encourage families to buy healthy food items that are in line with MyPlate.
- Encourage afterschool programs to host a field trip to a local supermarket or farmers market for a real grocery shopping experience.

Team Up for Success (cont'd)



Media

- Create a master school list of students' grocery shopping tips to include on the school's Web site and in its newsletter.
- Develop a healthy shopping quiz based on the students' grocery store tips and pitch it to local radio stations, asking them to challenge listeners' knowledge of healthy grocery shopping habits.



Home

- Families can donate empty containers from home to add to the mock grocery store.
- As a supplement to this event, students can do an at-home kitchen check, where they take home a list of healthy food choices and check off the healthy items they find in their pantry and refrigerator.
- Provide families with the *MyPlate Grocery Store Treasure Hunt* worksheet (see appendix, page 86) so students can have fun learning during real-life trips to the grocery store.

Schools **IN** Action

North Stewart Elementary in Big Rock, TN, created a mock grocery store, inspired by a school counselor's experience visiting one at a museum. The school wellness council created a team of volunteers to implement it, including staff from local grocery stores, and the school counselor identified a classroom to house the store. The group collected donations of empty containers for the store and enlisted parent and teen volunteers to clean and arrange the empty containers on their store's low shelves. The school worked to develop a curriculum that uses the mock grocery store to teach students about nutrition, as well as geography, math, foreign languages, and social studies.*

*Source: Alliance for a Healthier Generation, <http://www.HealthierGeneration.org>.



[Photo] The mock grocery store at North Stewart Elementary is open for business.

