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Nutrition Education in the Classroom

National Indian Head Start Directors Association

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Today's Journey

- Introductions
- Why CACFP Changes
- Revised HSPPS nutrition standards
- Infant Meal Patterns
- Child Meal Patterns



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What does food mean to you?



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- Much about who we are, where we come from, and what we share with our children is centered around food.

Why can't we use it as a tool for learning?

1302.31 (e)(2) Promoting learning through approaches to rest, meals, routines, and physical activity.

1302.46 Family support services for health, nutrition, and mental health.



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Nutrition is “the foundation for the development of cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional skills through childhood and adulthood.”

Nutrition and brain development in early life.

Nutrition Reviews Vol 72: 267-284



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“I’ll be honest with you . . . I think it’s just as important or more important because like I said earlier, if you don’t have healthy nutrition, then your body isn’t ready to be able to be here. . . . If you have better nutrition, then in turn, hopefully you’ll do better at school.”
(Carrie, teacher)

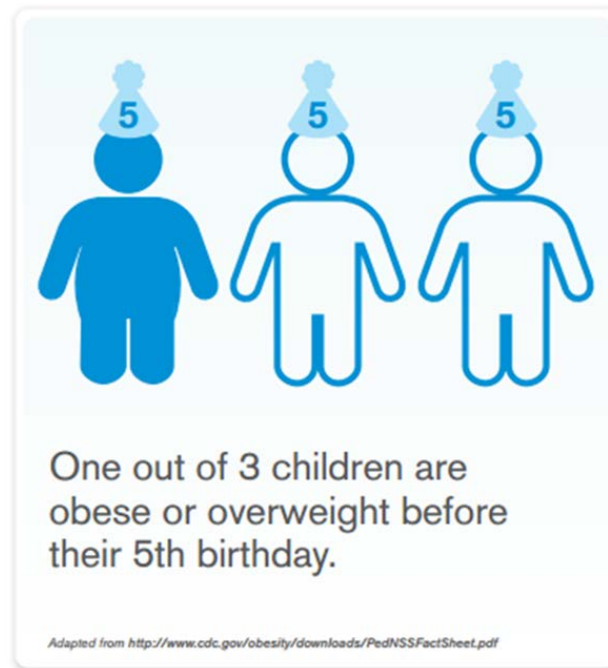
Nutrition and the brain

Poor nutrition and growth is related to:

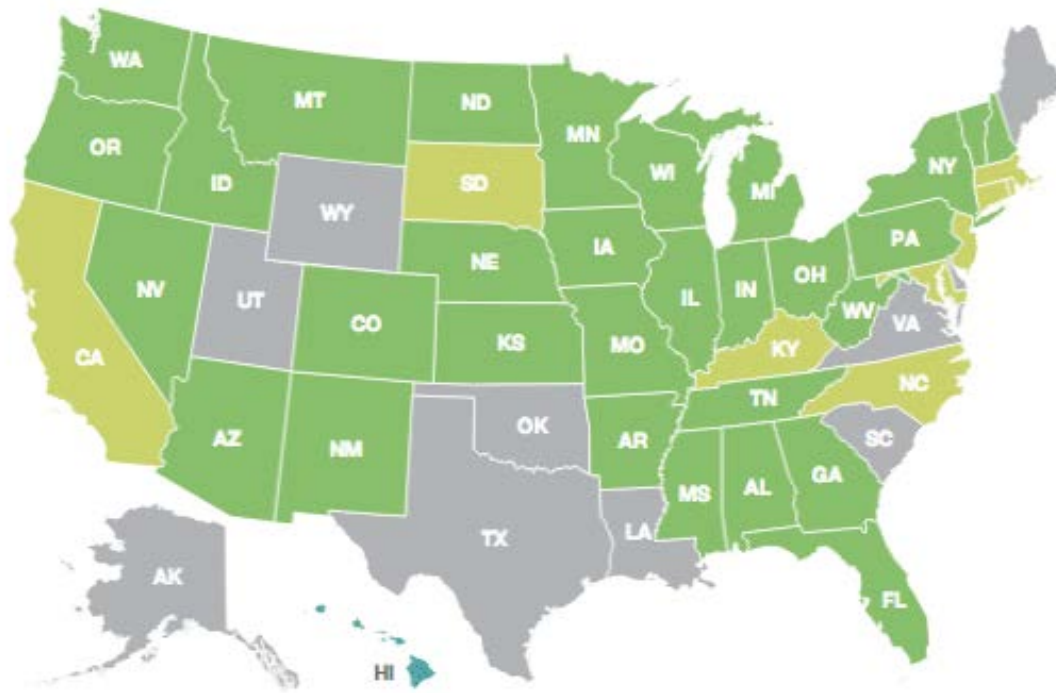
- Decreased cognition
- Motor skills
- Language
- Academic skills
- Attention problems



What are the numbers at the national level?



Obesity Prevalence: Low-Income Children



Percent of obese 2- to 4-year-olds from low-income families

■ 0 - 9.9% ■ 10.0 - 14.9% ■ 15.0 - 19.9% ■ No Data



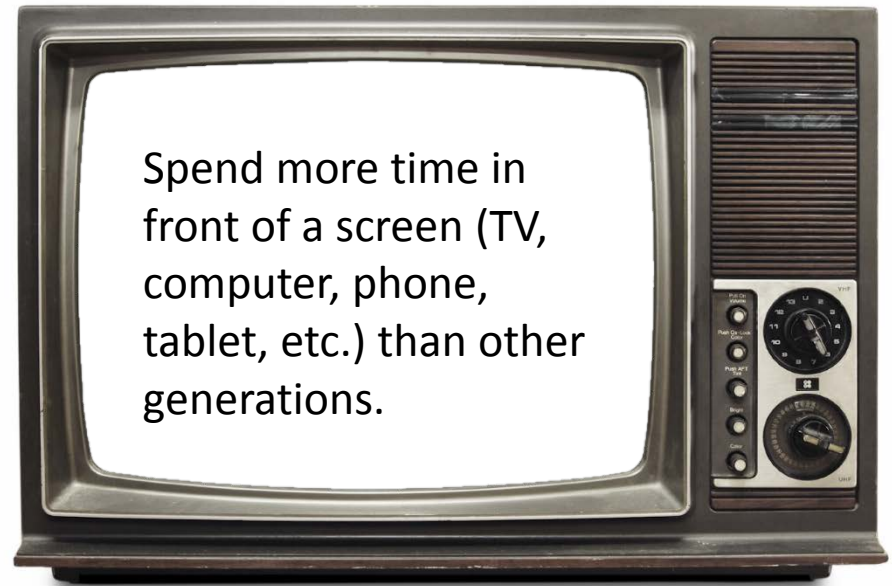
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What do we know?

In general, most young children:

- Are not eating enough fruit and vegetables (if any).
- If they are eating vegetables it is usually limited to the starchy one (i.e. potato and corn).
- Many consume sugary drinks, cereal, and snacks on a daily basis.
- Sleep less than recommended amount.



Critical Period

- Children are acquiring their eating, activity, and sleep patterns.
- Age 0-5 is a critical window to shape healthy habits.





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What do we want children to learn about nutrition?

Nutrition education

- Can support healthier habits
- A strategy for picky eaters
- Encourages variety of foods
- Opportunity to practice mealtime routines
- Role model social norms
- Explore other cultures
- Family and staff engagement tool



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Early Learning Framework

	CENTRAL DOMAINS				
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
			Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	



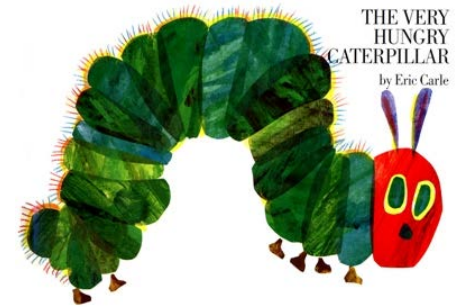
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Nutrition Education

- Create nutrition education that allows children to explore the texture, smell, taste of new foods.
- Integrate nutrition into the daily curriculum.
 - Practice fine motor skills by sorting play food or dried beans by color.
 - Build gross motor skills with a class garden
 - Reinforce colors and shapes with fresh fruits and vegetables (can cut into shapes)
 - Build language skills by asking a child to describe a new food. How did it taste? What does it feel like?





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Small Group Activity

Think of a nutrition activity you've done or that happens in your programs.

Why did you or your staff create this activity?

What did you want the children to learn?

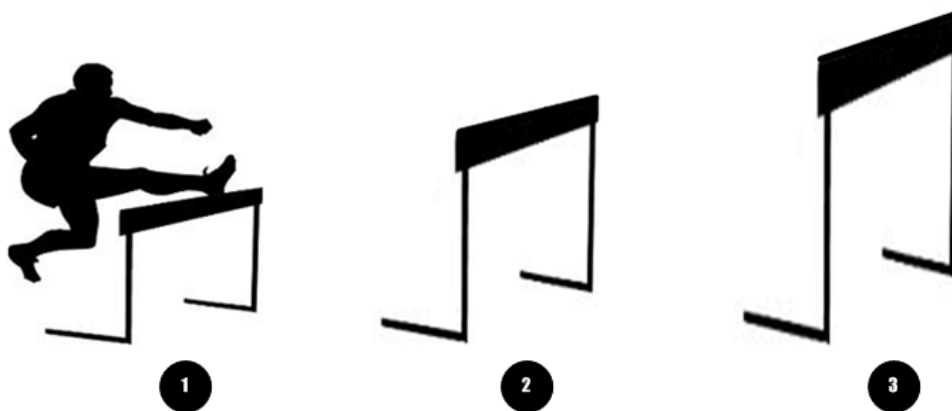


The role of teachers

- Potential to influence behaviors
- Trusted source of information for children and families
- More effective than outside health educators

Discussion

What are some common barriers you hear regarding implementing nutrition education?



Nutrition knowledge and efficacy

- Teachers report low efficacy to deliver nutrition information
- Lack of formal training for ECE curricula/training
- Link to program/child outcomes
 - Mealtime environment
 - Nutrition education

The role of health managers

- Provide content expertise
- Partner with staff
- Support implementation and family engagement

What are knowledge or performance gaps you see?



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Opportunities for nutrition education

School readiness begins with health!

Family Style Meals: opportunities to build healthy habits

- Introduces and encourages children to new foods
- Encourages teachers to model healthy eating
- Provides opportunities for nutrition education
- Teaching serving sizes
- Offers variety of healthy foods
- Teaches food safety



You may need to introduce a food **10-15 times** before a child will accept it!

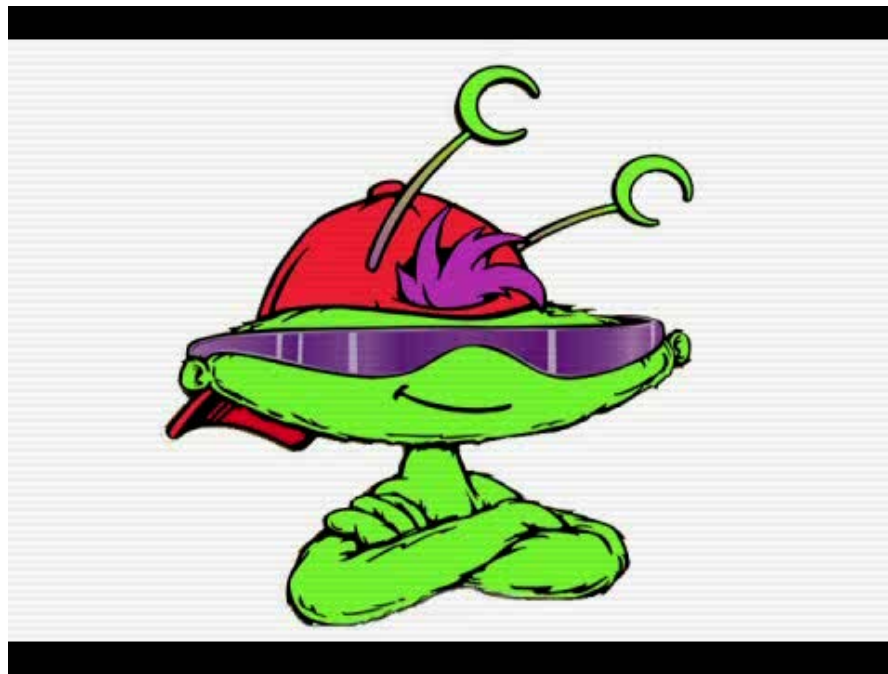
Create a positive eating environment

- Avoid the “clean your plate” mentality
- Encourages children to listen to their own hunger and satiety cues
- Can create positive affects on child’s food preference



Nutrition

“I am learning **ABOUT** healthy eating and drinking.”



Integrate into existing curricula

- Letters
- Colors
- Shapes
- Seasons
- Menu changes

Make Nutrition Part of Your Daily Routine

- arrival time
- breakfast time
- greeting circle time
- group time
- gross motor time
- lunch time
- story time
- snack time
- outside time
- closing circle time

Group activity

- Think of an activity within your daily program routine.
- Consider how nutrition can be integrated as a learning tool.
- How does this fit within the learning domains?

Nutrition focused lesson plans

- Eat Play Grow
- Harvest for Healthy Kids
- I am Moving, I am Learning
- Little Voices for Healthy Choices
- Head Start Body Smart
- Care Connection
- Color Me Healthy

Food based experiences

- Engages all the senses
- Great way to introduce children to new foods





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What are strategies you have used to provide food for nutrition education?

Books and nutrition education

Promotes literacy

Supports introducing new foods and menu changes

Promotes adult/child bonding

Get the children involved:

- Ask children to name the foods, their colors, or shapes
- Ask how many have tried it before. How does it taste, smell, etc
- Consider ways to encourage movement in the story



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Expanding a book into a lesson

- Taste foods from the book
- Plant seeds of foods from the book
- Use prop food during story time
- Use food as a theme for other lessons such as fine motor, math, etc.
- Involve parents
- Make your own!



Gardening- a component of nutrition education

- Supports experiential learning
- Can increase fruit and vegetable knowledge
- Supports trying new foods



Farm to Preschool

- Sourcing local foods in menu planning
- Increase access to local foods for children and families
- In-class prep and tasting
- Field trips to farm, farmer's markets, community gardens



How might you incorporate gardening into a program without outside space?



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Do any of your programs
currently support locally
sourced foods?

Family Engagement in nutrition education

- Newsletters
- Take home lessons
- Ask parents for ideas or suggestions
- Family night
- Books



Family engagement

- Families can “check-out” a nutrition focused book
- Recipes of the new food
- Ask families to share photos, draw a picture, or share stories from trying the new food
- Partner with community to offer fresh F/V for families to try.



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How do programs engage families in Nutrition now?



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Questions??