

IMPACT



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School Nutrition Lessons Increase Knowledge

The Situation

The 1999-2002 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) estimated that 16 percent of children, age 6 to 11, were overweight. This is an up from the estimated 11 percent in the 1988-1994 NHANES. There are many factors that contribute to the rising levels, but overeating and low levels of physical activity are among the biggest.

In our society today, children are exposed to many messages about health and nutrition. All of which are not always positive or accurate. A study reviewing television advertising of food products found that the majority of them aimed at children are for nutrient-poor, high-sugar foods.

The good news is that research has shown health and nutrition programs focused on healthy eating and physical activity can have a positive effect on the eating and activity levels of children.

Our Response

In January 2005, five 15-minute lessons on health and nutrition were presented once a month to children in first through fifth grades at Harold B. Lee Elementary in Dayton, Idaho. The topics included 5-A-Day: The Color Way, Bones, How Sweet Is It, Moving with Fiber, and the Importance of Physical Activity. Games and incentives were included with the lessons to reinforce what was taught.

Program Outcomes

A pre-test was given before each lesson, and a post-test was given the following month. The results revealed that the elementary students' health and nutrition knowledge increased. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Pre- and Post-test Scores

Questions	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
How many fruits/vegetables should you eat every day?	38.3%	68.7%
Which fruit belongs to the white group?	85.7%	96.0%
Which food has more calcium?	68.0%	75.7%
Which activity makes bones stronger?	97.5%	98.3%
Which drink has more sugar?	95.6%	98.3%
Which food is higher in fiber?	49.1%	60.7%
Which part of the body does fiber help?	28.6%	53.9%

For More Information

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