

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

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## Students Learn to Use MyPyramid for Kids

### *The Situation*

The Healthy Eating Index (HEI) was developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion to assess and monitor the dietary status of Americans. The HEI consists of 10 components, each representing different aspects of a healthy diet. These components include the degree to which a person's diet conforms to the following:

- Serving recommendations for the major food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid
- Total fat and saturated fat consumption as a percentage of total food intake
- Cholesterol and sodium intake
- Variety

*MyPyramid for Kids was developed to teach children, ages six to eleven, the importance of health food choices and daily physical activity. It is the youth-focused version of MyPyramid, a food guidance system that symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity.*

Most people had a diet that needs improvement. The percentage of the population that met the recommendations for MyPyramid consumption was as follows:

- Fruit: 17 percent
- Grains: 24 percent
- Vegetables: 28 percent
- Milk: 30 percent
- Meat: 30 percent

Ten percent of the population had a good diet (HEI score over 80), 16 percent had a poor diet (HEI score less than 51), and the remainder had a diet that needs improvement (HEI score from 51-80). School-age children had a mean HEI score of 66 out of 100.

### *Our Response*

University of Idaho extension educators in Franklin and Bingham counties developed and presented an educational program to teach and motivate kindergarten- and elementary-age children to follow MyPyramid for Kids. During the 2006-2007 school year, 1840 students from eight schools participated in this program. Ninety-two sessions were taught.

The program included the following components:

- Examining the food groups and brainstorming foods in each group
- Discussing the physical activity component of MyPyramid for Kids
- Categorizing the school lunch menu foods into groups

Older children completed a one-day food recall and tallied the servings they had eaten from each group. Kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade students listened to a children's literature book illustrating the importance of trying new foods before deciding whether they are liked or not.

### *Program Outcomes*

Students in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades completed a questionnaire before the program and immediately after the program. When asked if they learned something new about MyPyramid from the class, 85 percent (613 students) said yes and 15 percent (110 students) said no. A chi square test was done to

determine if there was significant difference in the number of children that knew the components of MyPyramid for Kids after the class. The following table illustrates the results:

Table: Students who knew the components of MyPyramid for Kids before and after class

<b>Component of My Pyramid for Kids (N=723)</b>	<b>% correct before class</b>	<b>% correct after class</b>
Grain	90	95
Vegetable	93	95
Fruit	96	93
Milk	95	98
Meat	88	95
Physical activity	87	96

All results had a p-value of 0.00. One Sample T-Test was done to determine if there was a significant difference in scores. The after posttest score of 7.37 (92 percent) was significantly higher than the pretest score of 7.14 (89 percent).

### **The Future**

School enrichment nutrition education programs will continue to be taught in area elementary schools. The topics are taught on a six-year cycle so that students will participate in a different class in each of their elementary school years. Several of the lessons are more in-depth topics from MyPyramid for Kids, including Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z, Crazy about Calcium, and Get Going with Grains. Other topics are Snack Attack and Be Your Best with Breakfast.

### ***For More Information***

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