

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Expanding nutrition education for Bannock County students

### AT A GLANCE

Federal funding for SNAP or EFNEP direct nutrition education is limited to locations that qualify. This program received funding to provide direct education in a non-qualifying school.

### The Situation

Eat Smart Idaho (ESI) is a University of Idaho Extension program that provides nutrition and physical activity education for limited resource Idahoans. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) uses evidence-based curriculum and activities within ESI. The lessons are a great way to supplement a teacher's curriculum or add something different to a school day. ESI nutrition instructors are only allowed to teach in qualifying schools, which means the school has 50% or more of its students qualify for free or reduced meals. Unfortunately, this stipulation leaves out about 50 schools (elementary, junior and high school) in the eastern district.

### Our Response

Chubbuck Elementary invited the UI Extension educator in Bannock County, Kathryn Hickok, to provide ESI curriculum to two third-grade classes. Sixty students participated in this six-week customized nutrition series that utilized aspects of the Choose Healthy Food Fun and Fitness (CHFFF) curriculum. The third-grade teachers requested specific topics that aligned with their current classroom topics.



Chubbuck Elementary, Chubbuck, Idaho.

Due to large class sizes and time restraints, CHFFF curriculum modifications were necessary. The six-part series included:

- Three of five food groups + fruit kebobs
- Food exploring and descriptive words + apple tasting
- Exploring food labels, whole grain + popcorn
- Sugar content of beverages and food + homemade electrolyte drink
- Exploring food labels, fiber + overnight oats
- Summary of series + food group activity

The first lesson consisted of discussing food groups and preparing a kebob snack. The kebob had two fruit options, a dairy option and a vegetable.

The second lesson invited the students to describe two mystery fruits (dragon fruit or pineapple) that were hidden from the class. The students then compared the taste and smell of two types of apples using a list of descriptive words. Any unfamiliar words were defined.

The third lesson reviewed the nutrition label and focused on fiber. We discussed where fiber comes from and the benefits of fiber. The students examined food labels and identified good sources of fiber. The activity included air-popped popcorn.

During the fourth lesson, we examined the nutrition label and explored various food labels for sodium and added sugar content. The activity included a demonstration of the sugar content of commonly consumed beverages. This demonstration was followed by preparing a homemade electrolyte drink using freeze-dried strawberries, citric acid powder and minimal sugar.

The fifth lesson discussed fiber and the benefits of whole grains. The students prepared a single-serve bag of overnight oats with different ingredients, from chia seeds to coconut flakes.

The final lesson was a discussion and an activity. Students were invited to share what they learned and how they thought they could use the information learned from these lessons. After the discussion, groups of five or six students were given cards with one food from each food group and were asked to make a meal using all five food groups. As a group, the students presented the meal they put together.

### Program Outcomes

Students were asked to report what they learned from the nutrition lessons. Results included:

- Nine students reported making the kebob snacks at home

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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40-23-khickok-nutrition-ed • 10/23

- Four students prepared popcorn using the air popping technique demonstrated in class
- Eighteen students prepared overnight oats after learning how to prepare it in class
- Twelve students reported looking at the food label with more curiosity and confidence, whereas before, they admitted they just looked at it when they were bored
- A majority of the students were able to report why oatmeal is a healthy option, but also noted how it can easily become unhealthy (by adding candy or lots of sugar)

Students were invited to share how their new approach to exploring food has changed their attitudes.

- Half of the students felt more willing to try new foods prepared by their parents and were more eager to help in the kitchen
- Some of the new foods they tried were kiwi, grapefruit, papaya, yellow dragon fruit, strawberry crepe, sour cream, blood orange and overnight oats
- One student said their parent hung up a try new food poster at home to remind them to stay curious when trying new food

We observed that students who thought they would not like something but tried it with a new approach found they *actually liked* the food. They were surprised and curious.

The teachers both agreed that these lessons tied into their classroom curriculum well. Both teachers noted how their students talked about the lessons between educator visits.

### The Future

The information provided by Eat Smart Idaho benefits all students in qualifying and non-qualifying schools. Eat Smart Idaho will be providing nutrition lessons for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year in non-qualifying schools in Pocatello and Chubbuck.