



Making a Difference

2015 – 2016

Nutrition, Health and Food Safety Program Focus Team Book in a Bag

Grand Challenges

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Situation

Combining cooking with literacy is a good way to encourage children to make healthy food choices. According to research, children are more likely to try new foods if they participate in the preparation of these foods. Book in a Bag, a Kansas SNAP-Ed-developed program, encourages young children's interest in foods, nutrition, health and reading in the family or small group setting. Children learn about nutrition and related health topics by having age-appropriate storybooks with positive food-related themes read to them, then participating in hands-on food and nutrition, physical exercise and health activities.

What We Did

Extension educators provide Book in a Bag multi-session lessons, combining cooking and physical activity with literacy to encourage children and families to prepare and include veggies and other nutritious foods during snack and meal times. Each interactive lesson centers around the food groups of MyPlate, family times or mealtimes and includes a parent letter, activities, and recipes. Children learn at an early age how to make healthy food and activity choices while developing a love for reading.

Outcomes

In FY2016, Kansas extension educators in 32 counties provided 198 Book in a Bag multi-session series combining cooking, food safety, physical activity and reading to provide 3,000+ students across Kansas with skills to prepare and include tasty, healthful foods during snack and meal times. Participants increased awareness of healthy choices related to MyPlate. Participants increased awareness of physical activity behaviors that will improve their wellness.

Success Stories

Students in the class were given a variety of healthy foods to taste during the five lesson series including hummus, snow peas, green beans, prunes, white beans, yellow tomato, mandarin oranges, blackberries, blueberry, frozen pea, frozen cherry, sweet potato, spinach, carrots, whole grain cracker/fresh mozzarella cheese/tomato slice/pesto, spinach/pineapple smoothie, 'chicken feed' nutritious snack mix, and air-popped popcorn.

The teacher said the students, many of which were picky eaters, are more willing to try new things and happy to see fruits and vegetables (following the lesson series). The students loved watching the popcorn pop in class. They tasted and compared several kinds of milk and cheese for flavor and mouthfeel. Every visit, students were tasting new foods and they were surprised that they liked a lot of what they were tasting. This program is successfully allowing students to learn about what makes foods healthy and to taste healthy foods.

"I am amazed at how much of a difference there is before and after this program in relation to kids' eating habits," one teacher noted. She added:

- They love trying the snacks, and talk about trying things with parents.
- I think this is a great program. The kids are excited and do a good job trying new foods. They also talk a lot about having their parents buy some of these foods. They gain a lot of knowledge about healthy habits.
- They loved getting to try nutritious food that most had not been exposed to in their home setting.