

IMPACT

University of Idaho
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New healthy lifestyle education program engages and teaches elementary-age youth

The Situation

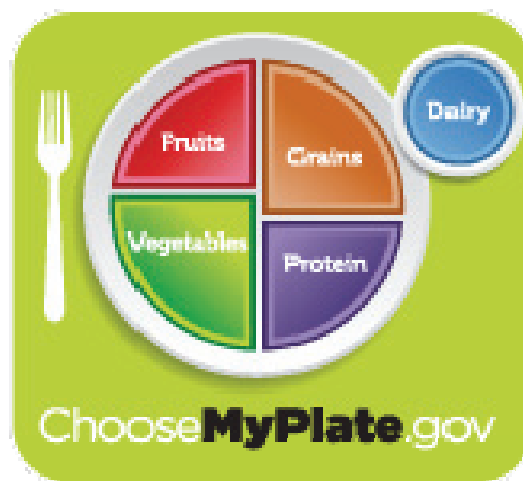
The healthy lifestyle education program taught in individual classrooms at Bingham County elementary schools since 2003 by the Extension Educator has experienced such tremendous growth that the delivery of this program was requiring more time that could be allocated with her other responsibilities. Table 1 shows the growth of the program.

Table 1. Participation in Bingham County Healthy Lifestyle Education Program

Year	Number of schools	Number of classes	Number of student participants
2003	3	24	492
2004	3	19	441
2005	4	40	820
2006	7	79	1662
2007	7	81	1725
2008	7	84	1864
2009	7	90	2103
2010	7	90	2068
2011	8	94	2190
2012	8	109	2411

Our Response

To help address this situation, in 2012, the 4-H program coordinator and the 4-H program assistant were recruited to help with teaching. The change was successful but still required a large number of staff hours to reach so many youth. In 2013, the Extension Educator revised the format of the healthy lifestyle education program in order to reach the youth in a more efficient and potentially more effective way. Revisions included:



- Changing the location of the program from individual classes to the school gymnasium.
- Teaching one grade level at a time (2-4 classes) rather than one class at a time.
- Using a PowerPoint presentation to display class content and a food-related children's literature for younger students.
- Incorporating physical activity breaks throughout the 25-minute presentation.
- Obtaining evaluation data by having students respond to questions by standing up or sitting down.

Choose My Plate was the program theme this year. Students reviewed the components of Choose My Plate and viewed examples within each group and then were asked questions to measure their knowledge of Choose My Plate. Students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades were then read

the story, *I Will Never, Not Ever Eat a Tomato*, by Lauren Child. Fourth and fifth grade students participated in additional activities to solidify their understanding of Choose My Plate and learned about and were invited to join the county 4-H.

Finally, all of the students were asked whether they had learned something new about Choose My Plate and if they would think of Choose My Plate when deciding what to eat. Each student was given a Choose My Plate poster to share with their families and to remind them of what food to eat.

This program was taught at eight elementary schools in Blackfoot, Aberdeen, and on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. The number of students taught increased to 2,498 while the number of individual class presentations given by the Extension Educator and Bingham County 4-H staff was decreased from a high of 109 to 42. Twenty-eight percent of the students were Hispanic and 14 percent were American Indian.

Program Outcomes

Students in grades one through five were asked several questions to measure their knowledge of Choose My Plate and their intention to use it in deciding what to eat. Correct and positive are shown on Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the 2013 Choose My Plate Healthy Lifestyle Education Program Evaluation

Question	Percent correct or positive
Knew about Choose My Plate before presentation	21
Able to identify a FRUIT group food	87
Able to identify a VEGETABLE group food	91
Able to identify a GRAIN group food	93
Able to identify a PROTEIN group food	88
Able to identify a DAIRY group food	92
Learned something new about Choose My Plate	85
Will think of Choose My Plate when deciding what to eat	90

Between 85 percent and 93 percent of students were able to correctly identify foods from each of the food groups. Only 21 percent of students knew about Choose My Plate prior to this program, and 85 percent indicated that they learned something new about Choose My Plate during the program. Ninety percent of the students planned to think of Choose

My Plate when deciding what to eat. These results indicate that the program was successful.

Although teachers were not formally surveyed, many of them said that they loved the new format that allowed the children to move while they were learning. They encouraged the Extension Educator to continue teaching with this format.

The Future

This Extension Educator will continue using this format to teach healthy lifestyle education to youth in Bingham County. She will share the impacts of this program with other Extension Educators that teach youth.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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