

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

Bingham County
208.785.8060, Fax: 208.785.2511
583 W Sexton, Blackfoot, ID 83221

“Fabulous Fruits and Vegetables” teaches youth why and how to eat more produce

AT A GLANCE

After this program, a large majority of students indicated learning about fruits and vegetables and intending to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables often.

The Situation

MyPlate (www.choosemyplate.gov) is the current food guidance system developed by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. It is a visual reminder of a healthy eating style for people of all ages. Half the plate is full of fruits and vegetables.

Unfortunately, kids aren’t getting nearly enough fruits and vegetables. A 2009 study by researchers at Ohio State University found that only 22% of children ages 2 to 5 met government recommendations for vegetable consumption. Just 16% of children ages 6 to 11 met the MyPlate guidelines, and only 11% of those ages 12 to 18 met them. In the study of more than 6,000 kids and teens, about a third of vegetable consumption was fried potatoes (potato chips, French fries, etc.), and a little more than a third of the fruit consumption was juice.

Our Response

A school nutrition education program, “Fabulous Fruits and Vegetables” was developed to teach students where fruits and vegetables come from, how many fruits and vegetables they need, why they need them, and simple ways to eat enough fruits and vegetables. The program included a slide show, physical activity breaks, quizzes, and for the younger students, a children’s literature book encouraging fruit and vegetable consumption.



Elementary schools throughout Bingham County and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation were invited to have this Extension educator and the Bingham County 4-H Program manager teach the “Fabulous Fruits and Vegetables” program. Fifty-three sessions were held at 10 schools, and 2,699 students in kindergarten through 5th grade participated. Twenty-seven percent of the students were Hispanic, 12% were Native American, 0.5% were Asian, and 0.5% were Black.

Program Outcomes

Students were evaluated at the end of the program to measure knowledge gained and intention to follow recommended behaviors. Ninety percent reported knowing where fruits and vegetables come from, including where and how they are grown, and 89% reported knowing that fruits and vegetables are good for them. Eighty-eight percent reported intention to try to eat fruits and vegetables every time they ate,

and 89% reported plans to eat a variety (“many kinds”) of fruits and vegetables.

Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 completed a written evaluation one week after the presentation. Results are found in table 1.

Table 1: Student response to statements about fruit and vegetable knowledge and intended behavior change

Statement, n=1061	% who answered yes
What I KNOW	
I know where fruits and vegetables come from	97
Fruits and vegetables are good for my body	99
I learned something new about fruits and vegetables	78
What I WILL DO	
I will eat fruits and vegetables with my meals	89
I will eat fruits and vegetables with my snacks	84
I will eat more fruits and vegetables than I used to	82
I will eat more colorful fruits and vegetables	83
I will eat more kinds of fruits and vegetables	83
I will ask my family to buy my favorite fruits and vegetables	84

Results indicate that the students learned important concepts about the source and benefit of eating fruits and vegetables. Over 80% of students reported an intention to eat fruits and vegetables frequently and to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Although not quantified, anecdotal evidence at the 2016 school nutrition program showed that students had increased their frequency and amount of fruit and vegetable consumption.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Marnie Spencer, Extension Educator
 University of Idaho, Bingham County
 583 W Sexton St.
 Blackfoot, ID 83221
 Phone: 208.785.8060
 Fax: 208.785.2511
 E-mail: marniers@uidaho.edu

Debbie White, 4-H Program Manager
 University of Idaho, Bingham County
 E-mail: dwhite@uidaho.edu

2-16mspencer-fruits.pub
 4/16