

Situation that informed workgroup recommendations

- Parents/caregivers of young children are a primary audience for WNEP. Providing education to preschool-age children is a mechanism to engage their parents/caregivers in education. Providing education only to young children is discouraged because they have little control over their food choices – parents are the gatekeepers. In FY14 if teaching children at Head Start, 4K or other preschool audience locations, a maximum of two lessons per class are recommended.
- Engaging parents in education is difficult. Most education provided to parents is a one-time lesson at parent nights/literacy nights. Some indirect education is done using newsletters or “mini” lessons with a display. Many parents have smartphones, cellphones and/or Internet access therefore there is the potential to link parents to education through technology.
- Local WNEP staff work in collaboration with local Head Start staff or 4K teachers to plan education WNEP for children, plan how parents will be engaged in education and discuss other issues related to this collaboration. Teachers and aides are helpful and get engaged in lessons. Some teachers do follow up/provide reinforcement of lesson content.
- Head Start is no longer able to provide incentives for parents to attend education (federal requirement.) However, they may be able to provide food, child care or other resources that could help in getting parents to be engaged in WNEP education.
- Preschool-age children generally are energetic and have short attention spans. They like to sing, use different voices, do rhymes and act things out. They like to be close and may be affectionate. Children in Head Start may not enjoy drawing.
- Results of a research study conducted in North Carolina indicate that preschoolers who received education using the Color Me Healthy curriculum significantly increased their consumption of fruit and vegetable snacks when compared to a control group. Most of these preschoolers were 4 years old. (Witt KE, Dunn C. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among preschoolers: evaluation of *Color Me Healthy*. *J Nutr Ed Behav*.2012;44(2):107-113.)
- Observations by WNEP workgroup members indicate that this curriculum does not work as well with 3 year olds.
- The following chart indicates characteristics and implications for children in the pre-operational stage of development, ages 2 to 6 or 7 years. (Contento I. Children’s thinking about food and eating – A Piagetian-based study. *J Nutr Educ*. 1981;13(1):S86-S90.Natapof JN. A developmental analysis of children’s ideas of health. *Health Educ Quarterly*. 1982;9:130-141.)

Characteristics	Implications for Nutrition Education
Have trouble focusing on wholes and parts at the same time	It is not possible to be part healthy and part unhealthy; for example, if you have a sore throat you are not healthy.
Have difficulty with categories	All edible items are food, have difficulty seeing peas as a type of vegetable, will sort foods into groupings such as breakfast.
Attend to one aspect of a message at a time	For example, you might say “eating lots of different vegetables like peas, carrots, and broccoli is a healthy way to eat” but they hear “eating peas makes you healthy.”
Cannot “reverse” an experience	For example, cannot go from “if I eat too much I will get fat” to “if I don’t eat too much, I won’t get fat”
Don’t consider cause and effect	For example, “I know I am healthy because I am in school today.” Won’t predict that throwing their lunchbox will make their apple crush their sandwich.
Can repeat words and phrases without understanding them	For example, might say “vegetables are good for you” but might not be able to name vegetables or tell why vegetables are good for you.
Have difficulty understanding change	For example, no understanding of digestion or how food affects their bodies.

Tips for engaging parents/caregivers of preschool-age children in education

1. Focus on families as a whole. One way may be to engage families in food preparation and physical activity together.
2. Consider which Head Start/preschool events are most likely to engage parents. Members of this workgroup found the best attendance at events is at the beginning or end of the school year.
3. Use USDA [core messages for parents of preschoolers](http://www.mypyramidforkids.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/SupportingContent.htm) when possible, <http://www.mypyramidforkids.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/SupportingContent.htm>.

Tips for teaching preschool-age children

1. Keep lessons short (15-30 minutes) and include opportunities for children to be active in lessons.
2. Use songs, puppets/stuffed animals, books, games, and short DVDs to engage children in learning.
3. Incorporate ways to resolve problems, learn from surroundings, and link to other things kids are learning in preschool such as numbers/counting, colors and early literacy skills.
4. Consider having children use their senses (taste, smell, feel, sound, look) to explore foods. Sometimes food samples/tasting is not allowed or permission slips are necessary.
5. If a new educator hasn’t worked with this age group before, s/he should plan to observe a classroom before teaching.

Recommended educational materials by key concepts and lessons

Teaching topic, related to key concept identified as priority by work group and recommended educational materials

Children

Teaching topic	Key concept	Recommended education materials
b. Portion awareness	Eat when hungry and stop when no longer hungry	Sesame Street's Healthy Habits for Life
f. Fruits and vegetables	Trying new foods Exploring foods	Sesame Street's Healthy Habits for Life Color Me Healthy (4 year olds only)
n. Being physically active	Physical activity	Sesame Street's Healthy Habits for Life
t. Keeping hands and surfaces clean	Hand washing	Handwashing lesson for preschoolers

Parents *

Teaching topic	Key concept	Lessons	"Mini lessons"/ supporting resources
b. Portion awareness	Child-sized portions, Division of responsibility	Healthy Portions, Healthy Children (short video) Feeding with Love and Good Sense II DVD & lesson plan	Portion Awareness: Don't Go Overboard (flip chart)
f. fruits and vegetables	Reinforcing messages taught to kids, being a role model	Loving Your Family, Feeding Their Future	MyPlate 10 Tips handouts
n. Being physically active	Reinforcing messages taught to kids, being active as a family, being a role model	Loving Your Family, Feeding Their Future	MyPlate 10 Tips handouts
q. Feeding toddlers or preschoolers	Picky eaters, Division of responsibility, feeding children, being a role model	Start Smart: Guiding Your Child to a Lifetime of Healthy Eating (short video) Feeding with Love and Good Sense II DVD & lesson plan Raising Healthy Eaters (lesson series)	Healthy Eating for Preschoolers Nibbles for Health MyPlate 10 Tips handouts Touching Heart, Touching Minds Patience works better than pressure (display)
s. Family meal times	Family meals	Feeding with Love and Good Sense II	Nibbles for Health

		DVD & lesson plan Loving Your Family, Feeding Their Future	
t. Keeping hands and surfaces clean	Reinforcing messages taught to kids, food safety		Be Food Safe resources MyPlate 10 Tips handouts
w. Determining resources for food		Money for Food , lesson 1 (in Spanish)	
x. Planning and tracking food spending		Money for Food , lessons 2A, 2B, 2C, 3 (in Spanish)	MyPlate 10 Tips handouts
y. Living within a spending plan		Money for Food , lesson 4 (in Spanish)	MyPlate 10 Tips handouts
z. Planning healthy meals and snacks	Low-cost healthy snacks, preparing food with children	Money for Food , lessons 5, 6, 7, 9 (in Spanish)	MyPlate 10 Tips handouts
aa. Shopping for food		Money for Food , lessons 8, 10, 11, (in Spanish) Shopping Matters	MyPlate 10 Tips handouts

*[Feeding Our Families/Alimentando a Nuestra Familias](#) and [Food \\$ense](#) FYI sites are also recommended resources

Note: We are in the process of pilot testing two *Making Healthy Meals and Memories Together* lessons (previously the *Kids in the Kitchen* lessons developed by Fond du Lac county) for use with 4 year old children and their parents together.

Lesson and evaluation needs – We will continue to look for materials to meet educators’ needs around these topics:

- Resources for culturally diverse audiences, and displays/flipcharts in Spanish and Hmong
- Single or short lessons with concepts covered in Raising Healthy Eaters
- Evaluation tools for single lessons with parents, possibly revised Feeding Young Children tool

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