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**Title:** Assessing Needs for Nutrition Education to Prevent Childhood Overweight:  
Focus Group Discussions with Head Start Parents

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**Abstract:** Parents shape their children's eating and physical activity behaviors through the environments they create and by serving as role models. Thus, parents will benefit from nutrition education programs that increase their self efficacy for establishing healthy behaviors in their children. We hypothesized that assessing parents' needs would make a nutrition education program more relevant and enhance participation. Two focus groups with Head Start parents were conducted in Decatur, IL using predetermined questions. Responses were audiotaped, transcribed and key themes identified. Parents were knowledgeable about causes of childhood overweight and understood that eating habits are learned early from adult role models. Parents identified "healthy eating" as consuming more fruits and vegetables. Barriers identified were the expense of fresh foods and lack of time. In terms of format, parents preferred visual education materials rather than written materials, "something I can watch, I can see". In summary, nutrition education was valued by Head Start parents. Visual educational materials were preferred and have been effective in populations with low literacy, thus we will develop a program in DVD format.

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