

Integrating Nutrition Education and Role Modeling in Early Childhood

A Head Start Perspective

SNE Annual Conference 2008



Some Facts About Head Start

MISSION STATEMENT: Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families.

- Funded through the US Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.
- A comprehensive early childhood development program for preschool children(3-5 years of age) and their families.
- For low-income families who meet HS income eligibility requirements.



More Facts About Head Start

- ☛ Program is of no cost to families.
- ☛ 1,071,697 children enrolled nationally
(95,000 Early Head Start)
- ☛ Total funding for 2008 is 6.9 billion
- ☛ Average teacher salary \$27,400
compared to kindergarten teacher \$47,750
- ☛ In existence since 1965



Head Start Performance Standards

*Are mandatory regulations that must be implemented in order to operate a Head Start.
They articulate a vision of quality service delivery to young children and families.
They provide a regulatory structure for the monitoring and enforcement of quality standards.*



Here are just a few that are applicable:

- **Child Nutrition Education/Food related Activities**
- **Parent Nutrition Education**
- **Parent involvement in Nutrition**
- **Staff Training**
- **Community Partnerships**



Head Start Performance Standards

Here are just a few more applicable:

- Programs supported by qualified Nutritionist
- Meal payments provided through USDA/CACFP
- Provide kinds and quantities of foods required by CACFP meal patterns
- Foods served must be low in fat, sugar and sodium.
- Variety of foods served which consider cultural and ethnic food preferences
- Family Style Meals



www.HeadStartinfo.org

Family Style Meals



- ❶ Opportunity to learn about food and nutrition.
- ❷ Encourages conversation on a variety of topics.
- ❸ Enhances social skills.
- ❹ Enhances fine motor skills (hands and fingers)
- ❺ Allows children to:
 - identify and be introduced to new food
 - practice good table manners
 - make choices/fosters independence
- ❻ Allows for staff/volunteers to model eating practices and positive attitude toward foods.

Multicultural aspects of Head Start

- † **Variety of foods are served which consider cultural and ethnic food preferences.**
- † **Supporting and respect of home language and culture of each child in ways that support the child's health and well being.**
- † **Meetings and interactions with families must be respectful of each family's diversity and cultural/ethnic background.**
- † **Staff and consultants must be familiar with the ethnic background and heritage of the family.**





For consideration.....

- **Recommend implementation of family style meal service practices in ALL preschool learning environments receiving CACFP funds.**
- **Provide meal reimbursement for staff/volunteers who participate in family style meal service.**
- **Enhance classroom staff training in food, nutrition, and healthy eating behaviors.**

More to consider.....

- **Inclusion of ethnic foods/meals to respect and celebrate cultural diversity.**
- **Promotion of nutrition education directed to the preschool population and caregivers/parents (role modeling and food served).**



A hand is holding a small, colorful toy figure of a person riding a horse. The figure is red and green. The background is a scenic view of a large, snow-capped mountain range under a blue sky, with a dense forest of evergreen trees in the foreground.

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