How to Teach Nutrition to Kids: Secrets and Strategies for Success

Interview with Connie Evers, MS, RD
Author of *How to Teach Nutrition to Kids (4th Edition)*
Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this webinar, the learner will be able to:

- identify specific health and nutrition challenges for the current generation of children
- identify specific nutrition education needs for kids
- Define FIB and state why it is important
- select the educational approach most appropriate for the audience and setting in which nutrition education will occur
- Apply marketing principles to the educational process
- Identify and use an activity appropriate for a specific age and educational goal for the following scenarios: elementary school education, WIC nutrition education, teen/tween weight management, and elementary school foodservice
Kids and Nutrition: We Know it’s Important!

- Obesity more than doubled, and in some cases tripled, among children 2-19 between 1976-2008
- Physical activity has decreased among children 9-15, and half of kids are not regularly active
- Processed foods, solid fats and added sugars are consumed in excess
- Portions sizes have skyrocketed
- Poor eating (and beverage) habits
- Altered body image which is reinforced by culture, media
The Message of Healthy Eating: Easier Said Than Done

- Find Balance
- Create Positive Attitudes
- Know what Kids Need to Know
The Secret to Reaching Kids: FIB!

- FIB = Fun Integrated & Behavioral
- Begin by making it fun! THEN...
- Integrate nutrition where ever possible
- Emphasize behavior change

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How to Teach Nutrition to Kids

- Broken out by subject areas: e.g., math, science,
- How-to think about, brainstorm, and introduce to kids
- Tons of ideas, activities and dialogue!
- Additional section on cafeteria considerations and food marketing
Case Study #1: Elementary School Nutrition Educator

- It’s National Nutrition Month—now what?
- Healthy eating basics appropriate for ages 6-8
- Begin by making it fun:
  - ask teachers to have each student read a favorite fairy tale or superhero story
- Integrate nutrition where ever possible:
  - then ask students to put a nutrition ‘twist’ on their story (younger students can describe it; older students can write about it). E.g., imagine that the witch in Hansel and Gretel was actually a caring witch. What foods would her house be made of, instead of gingerbread and candy?
Case Study #1: Elementary School Nutrition Educator (cont’d)

- Integrate nutrition where ever possible:
  - Have students develop storybook names for cafeteria menu items served during the month. For example, Peter Piper’s Pepper Pizza, Three Bear Breakfast Porridge, etc.
  - Encourage them to rename healthy foods served at home, too

- Emphasize behavior change:
  - Ask kids to make one of their renamed healthy items at home. How did it taste?

- Special considerations for this audience
Case Study #2: WIC Nutritionist

- Waiting room activity to engage multicultural kids ages 5 and under and their moms
- Begin by making it fun:
  - Have the WIC receptionist provide paper and crayons to each child participant, and ask the child to draw a picture of his or her family eating dinner
  - Consider a ‘dramatic play’ area for kids in the waiting room
- Integrate nutrition where ever possible:
  - Have moms ask their kids what they are eating at the dinner pictured
  - Ask moms to identify the most nutritious aspects of their meal and discuss with their kids why healthy food is important
- Emphasize behavior change:
  - Ask moms to identify one way they could include more nutritious foods at mealtime
- Special considerations for this audience
Case Study #3: Weight Management Class for Tweens

- Encourage healthy eating, body image and physical activity for girls ages 11-13
- Girls are concerned about being ‘fat’ and feel pressure to lose weight
- Begin by making it fun:
  - channel the tweens’ inner actresses and do role play with various scenarios
- Integrate nutrition within each scenario, e.g.,:
  - Your friend thinks she is too fat so she decides to go on a lemon juice diet she found in one of her mom’s magazines. She wants you to go on the diet, too. How would you handle this situation?
  - [Better yet, let the girls come up with the scenario once they have the hang of it! Let them submit them anonymously if desired.]
Case Study #3: Weight Management Class for Tweens

- Emphasize behavior change:
  - Hold a discussion after role play and deconstructing media exercises. Ask tweens what takeaways they can apply to their own lives. Are they reasonable?

- Special considerations with this audience
Case Study #4: School Foodservice RD

- Charged with Introducing New Foods at elementary school
- Begin by making it fun:
  - Poll the student body to find out the most- and least-liked foods.
  - Ask teachers to nominate a ‘Nutrition Rep’ from each classroom. Ask Nutrition Reps to brainstorm ways that 3 favorite foods can be made healthier and 3 least-favorite foods can be made more palatable.
- Integrate nutrition where ever possible
  - Hold a ‘make your own’ day, where favorite foods (e.g., pizza) and less favorite foods (e.g., beans and veggies) can be experienced in new ways. Have a make-your-own pizza bar with healthier toppings, and a make-your-own salad day, where students can see how beans and other less-favorite foods can be tastier when served raw or in new combinations.
Case Study #4: School Foodservice RD (Cont’d)

- Emphasize behavior change:
  - Have students complete a satisfaction survey after the ‘make your own’ day. Ask them if they planned to eat the ‘less-favorite’ foods more often, and why. Ask them to list two new ways less-favorite foods could be prepared to make them eat them more often.

- Special considerations with this audience
Marketing to Kids: Special Considerations

- Offer two choices of both fruits and vegetables
- Keep healthy food front and center
- Make it look good! (colorful bowls, glass and other see-through containers—think merchandising like clothing stores do)
- Give foods fun and catchy names
- This works at home, too! 😊
Marketing to Kids: Some Great Examples
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Creativity Tips: You Can Do it!

- Know your audience (if you don’t, ask them!)
- Ideas are everywhere—use them!
- Customize according to your needs and goals
- Always cross-check with FIB
- Trust yourself!
Question & Answer
For Your Continued Learning


- **Nutrition Fun with Brocc and Roll**

- **Smarter Lunchrooms Project (Brian Wansink, author of *Mindless Eating*)** Fascinating research and GREAT advice!

- [http://www.smarterlunchrooms.org](http://www.smarterlunchrooms.org)
Thank You!

- Thanks for joining us!
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