

OSUEA Hoecker Grants Program Applicant
ENHANCING CHILDHOOD NUTRITION EDUCATION IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

PI: Patricia Case, MS, RD, Assistant Professor Family and Community Development, Klamath County

Project Goals & Target Audience: This project endeavors to develop a “tool” for use by elementary school teachers, Head Start Teachers and Daycare Providers that will increase awareness of nutrition issues and improve food and activity habits of young children through education in school or daycare settings.

Current Situation: Many of our students are failing healthy eating. Only 2% of school children meet all the recommendations of the Food Guide Pyramid. Fewer than 15% eat the recommended servings of fruit. Only 30% consume the recommended milk group servings (*USDA, Team Nutrition*). Childhood obesity has doubled since 1970. This is leading to higher levels of disease at earlier stages of life. A study in *Pediatrics* reported that 25% of children aged 5 to 10 years had one or more adverse cardiovascular disease risk factor. Type 2 diabetes, once only seen in adults, is now showing up in children and teens in increasing numbers. Current trends for children to exercise less, and drink less milk and more soda, are leading to risk for bone fractures and osteoporosis, as they get older.

National and state efforts are underway to address the increasing concern for the health of our children such as Oregon Healthy Kids Learn Better, USDA Team Nutrition, etc. This kind of leadership, however, will amount to very little unless we can mobilize resources at the community level.

Ensuring children are eating nutritious meals and getting physical activity has primarily been the responsibility of parents. But with most children now eating more than one meal at school or day care setting the responsibility has shifted to other adults. Research indicates that food preferences that are established in the childhood years track into adolescence. In Klamath County, discussions with teachers indicate an interest in teaching nutrition but a need for more ideas and links with subject areas (math, english, science, etc). For a consistent message on health, teachers need to be equipped to help our children establish positive habits early in childhood.

Proposed Plan & Time Line: The first phase of this project will be assessing needs of target audience. This will steer what “tool” will be used or developed. Successful models such as OSU’s “Project Learning Tree or Project WET have used teacher workshops to accomplish similar goals, paying for substitute teachers so teachers can attend training. In New Jersey, Dairy Council surveyed teachers and determined the best approach was to enhance teacher competency in nutrition through workshops and guest lecturers. In Nebraska teachers wanted to have a nutrition kit that could be checked out including all materials for teaching a series of nutrition lessons with assistance from Extension educator.

October-November: Develop survey to determine what the current level of nutrition education is in schools & daycares and what would be preferred options for delivery i.e. workshops, guest lectures, teacher kits, newsletters, etc. Apply for IRB Approval.

November-December: Conduct survey, in-depth interviews if appropriate.

Jan-March: Based on input from target audience, choose delivery method and develop “tool”. Use curriculum from existing resources/models (Oregon Dairy Council, Project Learning Tree, USDA Team Nutrition, 4-H Curriculum, OFNP Curriculum, etc). Develop evaluation tool for this product. Apply for IRB Approval.

April: Invited teachers, care providers to attend workshop or review materials. Provide scholarships for teachers that need substitute pay.

May: Conduct workshop or facilitate distribution of “tool.” Teachers to evaluate tool/delivery.

June-August: Revise “tool” as needed based on teacher evaluations. Continue to use “tool” in OFNP and other venues as appropriate.

Long-term: Repeat teacher survey on frequency of incorporating nutrition into curriculum. Compare to “control” group that did not receive nutrition training from Extension. Seek funding for non-OFNP eligible audiences.

Anticipated Outcomes:

Short: Teachers improve knowledge of nutrition, food safety, and physical activity. Teachers increase awareness of importance of nutrition and exercise for children’s ability to learn and reduce risk for chronic diseases. Teachers improve knowledge of available educational resources.

Medium: Teachers increase frequency of nutrition education in classroom/home. Administration changes school policies related to health/nutrition & physical activity.

Long-term: Increased youth interest/participation in health activities. Community embraces/supports an active healthy lifestyle for young children/families. Controlled obesity rate, increased intake of fruits & vegetables, dairy products, willingness to try new foods, daily activity.

Evaluation: 1) Survey to assesses needs, determine best alternatives; if possible using in-depth interviews with target audience. 2) Evaluate teacher knowledge change using retrospective pre-test 3) Summative evaluation of “tool”.

Budget:

Postage for return of survey (350 teachers, 50 Head start, 100 care providers) = 180; 5 Scholarships for teachers to pay for sub so they can attend training or evaluation (130 per sub) = 650; Lunch/Refreshments for Teachers 5 x 20 = 100; Materials cost = 70.

Other Information: This pilot project will provide valuable information about county needs that may apply to other rural communities in terms of grassroots efforts. Other communities could adopt the tools or techniques garnered from this research. The potential for sustainability is high as the tool could be used in OFNP audiences in Klamath County. Scholarship is a natural fit with the design of this project not only in the final product but also in the collection of data from teachers. This data would allow for

additional funding if need is determined.