

Promoting Wellness in Your Classroom!

Tips for Teachers

kids
CanDo
it!



Teachers Can Do It!

- 1. Get Moving!** – Reinforce healthy eating and active living by showing physical education and nutrition video clips in the classroom or during lunch in the cafeteria. Even better, get your kids moving in the classroom and during those long days of state testing — get up and re-energize those brains with some great exercise steps!
- 2. MyPyramid Tracker** – Don't just teach your students about the food pyramid, make it interactive! Challenge your students to keep track of what they eat and then compare it with the MyPyramid recommendations (www.mypyramid.gov).
- 3. Do a Fruit & Vegetable Challenge** – Set a goal for your class to eat a certain number of fruits and veggies by the end of each week or month. (<http://teamnnutrition.usda.gov/resources/fvchallengepacket.html>).
- 4. Healthy Popular Culture?** – As you teach about important health topics, ask students to go home and keep their eye on social themes in media (i.e. TV, movies, internet, video games, newspaper, or radio) that show or even contribute to negative behaviors such as inactivity and overeating. Have your students record what they found and provide alternative solutions to the negative behaviors—what would they do differently? Have students be Sports Screeners - examine how physical activity and sports are depicted in movies and on television. Hypothesize how images of physical activity and sports in entertainment can influence our attitudes and behaviors. Visit PBS Teacher Source (<http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/educators/lessons/sports2/index.html>).
- 5. Time It!** – Who says you can't exercise in math class? Have students do two minutes of physical activity (jumping jacks, jogging in place, etc.) and then ask them to take their pulse. Don't stop there... graph your results! For younger students, measure the pulse by counting the movements of a drinking straw attached with clay to the pulse point on the neck.
- 6. You Be the Coach!** – Investigate, explain and demonstrate the essential physical skills needed to play a sport. Discuss reasons why sports, athletics or physical activities should be an important part of teens' lives. Visit PBS TeacherSource (<http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/educators/lessons/sports1/index.html>).
- 7. Grocery Store Scavenger Hunt** – Have your students write down the types of foods they find at the grocery store. Can they find the fat and sugar content on the label? Have them keep track of what is in their grocery cart and let them decide if the food is a healthy option. Check out a great Scavenger Hunt template from CATCHTexas.org (http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/catch/PDF_Files/grocery_savenger.pdf) or create your own! For another idea, have students conduct an observational experiment and examine the food choices of classmates, as compared to the amount of physical activity exerted each day.
- 8. Just Desserts** – Just Desserts is a program that will help develop an awareness of the kinds of foods that are marketed to kids and which of those foods are healthy. This K-5 activity incorporates Arthur episode # 509 from PBS Kids. Visit http://pbskids.org/arthur/parentsteachers/lesson/medialiteracy/pdf/print_desserts.pdf.
- 9. Sous Chef Needed** – Partner with a local chef to make a “Healthy Harvest Salad” or have them show your class how to prepare one of their easy and healthy dishes. The American Culinary Federation has created the Chef & Child Foundation to build awareness of proper nutrition in preschool and elementary school children. To learn more, visit www.acfchefs.org.
- 10. Mini-Chef Contest** – This could be a contest between classrooms or a home-school project where students follow-up their nutrition unit with a healthy recipe contest. Students create a recipe based on what they have learned about heart-healthy and nutritionally-packed food choices.

- 11. **Mentor Program** – Ask students from a high school or middle school culinary arts (home economics) class to speak to younger students about the food pyramid and healthy food choices. They can even share samples of healthy food recipes that they have prepared in class. You can also invite members from your local food co-op or grocery store.
- 12. **Get Drawing!** – A great way to reinforce what has been taught in class is to have students participate in a poster contest focused on nutrition, physical activity, and healthy habits.
- 13. **A Feast for All** – Invite parents to eat breakfast or lunch on special days of the month. Get even more interactive! Have your class create a healthy lunch menu using the nutritional information they have learned and make them the “teacher” as they share this information with their parents!
- 14. **Create a Recipe Book** – Can’t get parents to come to your school? Bring the nutritional information to them by having your students create their very own Healthy Choices cookbook. If you really want to get them motivated, have your students create a healthy vegetable or fruit salad in class! Check out a few recipes from the American Heart Association’s Kid Cookbook for some ideas to get you started. <http://www.healthyfridge.org/kidsrec.html>.
- 15. **Pyramid Relay** – Get your class up and moving with this fun game! Create a food pyramid on your playground and have students race to match up foods with the food group they belong in. Don’t have enough room? Create a matching game that can be duplicated and completed in the classroom. Cut out pictures from food ads and magazines to match up with their food group.
- 16. **That’s a Wrap!** – Have your students role-play certain scenarios that demonstrate good and bad eating habits (junk food dinner versus a well-balanced meal, watching TV versus riding your bike, etc). Each role play scene should be followed by a discussion on the different healthy choices that could have been chosen. You may even want to discuss some of the obstacles your students face when trying to make healthy choices (lack of equipment, no safe areas to play, time constraints) and then brainstorm ways your students can find healthy and fit alternatives.
- 17. **Read All About It** – Why not incorporate nutrition into your reading class? The Food and Nutrition Information Center of the USDA has created a list of children’s books about food and nutrition. Many of these titles can be found at your local library. <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/bibs/gen/childlit.html>.
- 18. **Mission Nutrition** – What could be more interactive than having a health fair at your school? This can certainly be modified for all grade levels, but the key is to have your students host the event. Students could set up informational booths or tables in the cafeteria, offer nutrition lessons and activities, as well as demonstrate physical activities! You could even open this up to local grocery stores or health professionals in your area. Ask them to share some of their expertise about healthy eating and keeping fit.
- 19. **Healthy Lifestyles** – Have a class discussion about the impact that food sources, diet, availability of clean water, and healthy lifestyles have had on populations around the world (e.g. life span, politics, culture). Encourage students to think critically about how American lifestyles and diets have impacted our health over the years. Possible extensions could include showing videos and documentaries about food to offer different points of view, or creating a time line that represents how our healthy habits have been impacted as our food sources, diets, and technologies have changed.
- 20. **It’s a Date!** – Transform your lunch or classroom calendar by adding a healthy activity or fun fact each day. Simple activities such as taking a 10-minute walk around your school (count the number of steps), trying a new fruit or vegetable, counting the number of push-ups or sit-ups you can do in 2 minutes, and having a student lead a five minute stretch after lunch. This is a great daily “habit” that will surely inspire your students to keep active in the years to come! Check out the CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health) program from the University of Texas for a “facts-of-the-day nutrition calendar” that you can use in your classroom (http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/catch/whats_new_classroom.html).

Source: Alliance for a Healthier Generation, William J. Clinton Foundation/American Heart Association
www.HealthierGeneration.org

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