

## **Supporting Healthy Growth and Development in Preschool-Aged Children by Providing Interactive Nutrition Education**

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### **Background/Introduction:**

In recent years, studies have shown that obesity rates are rising in children, which profoundly impacts their physical and psychological health and development (Dehghan et al., 2005). Many factors contribute to these findings including home environment, choices provided by schools, and lifestyle habits developed by these children at a young age. More specifically, consuming excessive calories and decreased levels of physical exercise have contributed to increased overweight and obese children (Dehghan et al., 2005). Research supports intervening during the preschool years to educate children in the development of strong dietary and physical activity habits (Lanigan et al., 2010). These years are crucial in paving the way for maintenance of a healthy weight and lifestyle long-term (Lanigan et al., 2010). The most beneficial methods for intervening within this age group are still being explored, but research supports educating parents with their children through interactive education to model healthy behaviors to reinforce their child's education (Ling et al., 2016).

### **Goal:**

The goal of this project is to develop and implement an evidence-based interactive educational intervention to preschool students to inform them of healthy nutritional choices that will support their healthy growth and development.

### **Product:**

Interactive educational session and handout for preschoolers and instructional guide for parents. Also, digital files for teachers.

### **Objectives**

- Summarize existing literature regarding nutrition education and effective educational techniques in preschoolers.
- Develop educational session based on interventions supported by the literature to enhance nutrition in preschool students.
- Develop instructional guide for parents to review in the home.
- Present the information synthesized to preschool students in a preschool in the

Iowa City Community School District.

- Evaluate the efficacy and benefit of the educational session.

### **Reflection**

Overall, I really loved working on this project over the past year and seeing it come together felt very rewarding.

One strength and passion that I recognized was my ability to interact positively with young students. I was very nervous about going into the preschools to present the educational session

I realized that I really enjoyed completing this intervention in the preschool classes which led me to consider potential future opportunities as I continue learning and growing individually and professionally.

### **Classroom teacher reflection:**

Clare did a nice job with her intervention. She took time to come in the week before to be able to play and interact with the students and observe a group time. When she came back, she was able to remember the names of some of the kids and the kids were excited to see her. Clare did a nice job engaging the kids during the stories and encouraging the kids to try the broccoli while not pressuring them and making them feel like they had to.