Walsh County Second Graders are “On the Move To Better Health-Junior”

The Situation
Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 29% of adolescents in North Dakota are considered overweight or obese; North Dakota has the 11th highest rate of obesity in high school students in the nation. Obese children are at a higher risk for future obesity and associated conditions like cardiovascular disease, with 70% of obese children showing at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Obesity also increases the risk of diabetes, stroke, cancer and osteoarthritis.

Extension Response
Tara Sondeland, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Educator (SNAP-ED) and Kari Helgoe, Family Consumer Science Agent presented “On the Move to Better Health Jr.,” a five lesson curriculum for children in second grade. It is designed to increase student knowledge of dairy foods, fruit, vegetables, whole grains and proteins through story books and activities. The curriculum includes a newsletter for parents/caregivers and pre- and post- surveys to determine knowledge gain. Students chart their intake of food groups on weekly charts. Teachers receive guidance on implementing a healthy snack policy in their classroom. A total of 88 second graders in Grafton and Minto Elementary Schools participated in this educational opportunity.

Impacts
As a result of the five weekly lessons, students were able to state all five MyPlate food groups, know the importance of physical activity, name healthy snacks choices from each group and implement a healthy snack policy. They sampled unusual fruits and vegetables throughout the program. A seven month follow up showed the majority of youth are still implementing a lot of what they learned from the program.

All the students and their teachers tried the unusual fruits and vegetables presented to them (even a few that were never going to eat vegetables). They all respected a “no thank you bite” policy created by Tara Sondeland.

Changes in Knowledge
- In the pre-survey 66% of youth could identify healthy snacks, as compared to 100% in the post-survey.
- In the pre-survey 39% of youth could identify dairy foods, as compared to 94% in the post-survey.
- In the pre-survey 94% of youth could identify vegetables, compared to the post- survey.
- 100% of youth tried a new grain during the program.

Changes in Behavior
Seven months later, a follow-up survey was conducted with Minto third graders to determine if they retained healthy eating and physical activity habits without SNAP-ED actively in their classroom. Results showed that students not only retained knowledge but further increased their intake of all five MyPlate food groups and increased physical activity.
- 100% of youth are exercising 30 minutes a day
- 94% continue to try new vegetables
- 83% continue to try new fruit
- 77% are eating more grains, while 100% are trying new ones
- 100% of youth identified healthy snacks

Feedback
Kids said (on the follow up survey seven months later):
- “I still keep trying new whole grains in hopes to find another favorite like those breadsticks you had us try.”
- “Since you being here I am never without blood oranges in my fridge, I love them!”
- “I am still eating my fruits and vegetables.”

Teachers said (after the five weekly lessons):
- “My kids cannot wait until you ladies come each week to see what new topic/food you will have them try next.”
- I think you two should travel the world and teach this to every kid, they all could use it.”

Parents said (after the five weekly lessons):
- “My child finally realized that not all healthy whole grains taste bad.”
- “My son would only eat green beans until you challenged him to eat a rainbow of colors due to the great incentives you offered him during the challenge he now eats carrots and corn.”
- “My kid has been transformed, he wants to eat healthy. Prizes do wonders!”
- “My daughter makes spinach smoothies 3 times a week, and is challenging me to try one. I am not a fan of vegetables.”

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