

NETA Quarterly News

Nutrition, Physical Activity & Gardening for
Early Childhood Providers



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Building Healthy Communities and Schools for Our Children

The design of a community heavily influences people's well-being. Public health and medical experts have been paying greater attention to the built environment, which includes the design and characteristics of homes, schools, and neighborhoods. A community's walking and biking spaces, access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and safety all affect a person's ability to be active and eat healthy.

Communities have not been designed for health. Often there are too many fast food outlets, too few stores selling fresh produce, absence of sidewalks, and lack of parks in the neighborhoods. These challenges create barriers to being physically active and eating more fruits, vegetables, and other healthful foods. The availability of healthful foods and opportunities for physical activity are even less in poor neighborhoods, where there are some of the highest rates of obesity and diabetes.

Oakland has been able to begin improvements, such as increasing street safety and walkability of neighborhoods. At a school level, it is essential that efforts being made by the NETA program to improve dietary habits of preschool children be

made in conjunction with improving the overall community environment.

What can you do to help build healthy communities and schools for our children? Here are some possibilities. Participate in "Walk to School" and "Safer Routes to School" to encourage your students to eat well and play well. Promote walking and eating more fruits and vegetables with a poster contest.

Visit one of twelve Oakland elementary schools that host weekly produce markets where students can learn more about different kinds of fruits and vegetables available during the season:

Tuesdays: Franklin, Garfield, Bridges, New Highland, Hoover, and Parker;

Wednesdays: Manzanita, Global Family & Learning, Melrose Leadership Academy, Community United, Esperanza, and East Oakland Pride.

In addition promote drinking water in school. Recent legislation ensures access to free, fresh drinking water

during meals. Teach "Drink Water! Said the Otter," part of Alameda County Public Health's Re-Think Your Drink campaign. Read the book to your classroom and discuss the importance of drinking water, along with eating healthful foods and being physically active.



Photo: Network for a Healthy California

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Discuss, through books such as "We Like to Move: Exercise Is Fun" and "Let's Be Fit," how eating healthy foods gives energy to do physical activity. Contact the NETA program at (510) 567-6812 or neta.ucdavis.edu to check out any of the books.

Reference:

American Academy of Pediatrics. The Built Environment: Designing Communities to Promote Physical Activity in Children, *Pediatrics* 123:6, June 2009. <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;123/6/1591.pdf>



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Does Physical Activity Impact Learning?

Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is part of a healthy diet. Equally important for optimal growth, weight management, and disease prevention is physical activity. Early childhood is a critical period to establish healthy eating and physical activity habits. Children who eat a healthy, balanced diet and are physically active tend to perform better in the classroom. Good nutrition plus physical activity leads to optimal learning.

All types of movement activities contribute to a young child's development. Learning is stimulated through physical activity. Recent research supports what many early childhood educators have observed—active children learn more.

A variety of regular physical activity is critical for:

- brain development in children.
- new neural connections or reinforce existing connections.
- increasing levels of alertness.
- increasing creativity.
- building muscles for coordination.

TABLE. ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE MUSCLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOLERS

Large Muscles	Small Muscles
jumping	cutting
walking	doing puzzles
hopping	drawing and writing
throwing	zipping, buttoning, lacing
dancing	stringing objects
running	using snap-together blocks
balancing	

Incorporate both large and small muscle development activities (see Table) into the daily classroom activities.

Check out the last page of this newsletter for tips to practice yoga, which can improve balance. For more ideas on physical activity and how to incorporate into your classroom, refer to NETA's *Nutrition Matters!* curriculum and the *SPARK Early Childhood Program Manual* available at your sites.

References:

- Happy Healthy Me. Moving, Munching & reading Through MyPyramid for 4 to 6 Year-Olds. A Nutrition Curriculum for Preschoolers. University of California Cooperative Extension, 2005.
- Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies. Healthy Food Policy Resource Guide. California School Boards Association and California Project LEAN, 2003. http://www.phi.org/pdf-library/healthyfood_policyrg.pdf
- Brotherson, S. Keys to Enhancing Brain Development in Young Children. North Dakota State University Extension Service. FS-611. March 2009. <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/famsci/fs611.pdf>
- Growing Up Fit. Preschool Fitness Activities. Iowa State University Extension. PM-1359b June 1990. <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1359B.pdf>
- SPARK, Sports, Play & Active Recreation for Kids! Early Childhood Ages 3-5. San Diego State University Foundation, 2003.



Photo: Network for a Healthy California

Be Safe, Not Sorry!



Food safety and sanitation are important, particularly with young children who are susceptible to foodborne illnesses. Learning about good food safety practices will help you keep your classroom safe. You can also promote these practices to preschool parents, who might not otherwise get this information.

These food safety tips can be applied at your school.

- Wash hands before handling or eating foods. Have disposable

towelettes or hand sanitizer if you are not sure there will be a place to wash hands. Children should wash their hands before meal and snack times.

- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before eating. Once fresh produce is cut, place it in a container and put in the refrigerator.
- If you take children to an outdoor place, store cut produce in a cooler. Place cooler in a shaded area.
- Keep any food covered when you are not serving.
- Do not keep perishable foods (hot or cold) out of refrigerator or cooler for more than 2 hours (1 hour in hot weather—above 90° F.). Perishable foods include meat, dairy products, cooked foods, and cut produce.
- Bacteria multiply rapidly between 40 degrees F and 140 degrees F. Make sure food is out of this danger zone. Keep cold food cold and hot food hot.

Recipe

TWO BEAN AND CORN SALAD

Makes 5 servings. 1 cup per serving.

Note: This recipe makes 5 adult servings at 1 cup each. To make this for your classroom, adjust the taste tests to ¼ cup servings; this recipe makes 20 taste tests at ¼ cup each.

Ingredients

- 2 ⅔* tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinaigrette
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ (15-ounce) can Great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 1½ stalks celery, chopped
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- ½ medium red bell pepper, chopped
- ½ cup chopped red onion
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 small jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped (optional)

Preparation

1. In a large bowl, whisk oil, vinegar, and cumin

2. Add remaining ingredients and toss to coat.
3. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to 1 hour to allow flavors to blend.

* 2 ⅔ tablespoons = 2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons

Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 227, Carbohydrate 31 g, Dietary Fiber 9 g, Protein 9 g, Total Fat 8 g, Saturated Fat 1 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 334 mg

Recipe adapted from:

Soulful Recipes. Building Healthy Traditions. Champions for Change, Network for a Healthy California. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-AA-Cookbook-2008.pdf>



Photos: Network for a Healthy California

So beat bacteria with these tips and enjoy a bacteria-safe classroom.

If you are interested in more information, refer to the NETA Teacher Training Manual and the monthly *Tips for Busy Early Childhood Professionals*. Or contact the Nutrition Education Training Academy (NETA) at <http://neta.ucdavis.edu> or phone (510) 567-6812.

Reference:

- USDA, Food Safety & Inspection Service, http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/Barbecue_Food_Safety/index.asp
- FDA. Eating Outdoors, Handling Food Safely <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm109899.htm>

Creating a Child Care Environment Conducive to Physical Activity



Classrooms can be temples of learning and relaxation as well. Young children need a variety of activities, ranging from moderate to vigorous. With just a few simple changes, teachers can create an environment favorable to physical activity, allowing opportunities for children to learn and be active.

While many countries of the world have been practicing yoga with children and adults, in the U.S. we are learning that yoga is a great activity for children to improve their flexibility, strength, and relaxation skills. It can also be done without special equipment. Practice yoga in a quiet area in your classroom. Music and dim lighting may help

children relax. When yoga mats are not available, use towels, blankets, or pillows.

Yoga is simple and can easily be done with the children. Try these yoga steps: Start by doing these steps once. Slowly add more poses as you feel yourself improve in balance and endurance.

1. Learn yoga breathing. This is fun for children. Breathe in through your nose, with your mouth closed, and feel your belly rise. Breathe out through your open mouth and feel your belly sink down. When you breathe out, chant "O-O-O-O-O-O."
2. Do "Child Pose" (see picture). Kneel down on the floor. Take a deep breath and slowly bend forward, hands on

the floor, and reach out as far as you can. Make your back as flat as possible. Your head does not have to touch the floor. For children who can not bend so their head touches the floor, use a pillow or folded towel to rest their heads. For some children putting their hands back by their feet, instead of forward, is more comfortable.

3. Repeat the breathing exercise (in step 1).

For more yoga poses and pictures, along with nutrition tips to promote healthy eating, visit: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-ShapeofYoga.pdf>.

Photo: Network for a Healthy California



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* with funding from USDA SNAP, known in California as CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.cachampionsforchange.net.

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