

LESSON THREE: Reviewing the Essentials of Nutrition



The GOALS of this lesson are to:

- recognize healthy eating habits and the importance of a well-balanced meal to meeting the body's needs (SCIENCE)
- build an understanding of the biology of nutrition and the biological causes and effects of hunger (SCIENCE)



DISCUSSION

Have a large copy of the Food Pyramid available as the basis for class discussion (see Appendix A).

Discuss the Food Pyramid and its different components: fats, oils and sweets; milk, yogurt and cheese; meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts; vegetables; fruit; bread, cereal, rice and pasta. Discuss the recommended number of servings of foods from the different groups. Discuss why it is important to eat from all of the food groups, and what these different components do for the body (see Appendix B).

Ask the children to talk about their favorite foods. Have them name where their favorite foods fit on the Food Pyramid. Ask them if they would be eating a healthy diet if they just ate their favorite foods.

Ask the class, "What happens to children who don't eat enough or don't get the right kinds of foods?" Write their ideas down as they brainstorm. You may want to supplement what they say with what research has shown: that hungry children are more likely to have headaches, fatigue, colds, and other sicknesses; they have a harder time concentrating; and they are less able to learn.



ACTIVITY

Once the Food Pyramid discussion has taken place, you can select from among the following activities:

Divide the class into six small groups, assigning a different food group to each. Have each group review what their food group does for the body and why it is important to eat from that food group. (Or, in the case of fats, oils and sweets, why it is important not to eat too much from that food group.) Have each group write and present to the class a poem about their food group. For example, "Carbohydrates give you lots of energy, That's why runners eat them, don't you see?" "Milk, yogurt and cheese make your bones strong, So you'll be able to walk all day long." Make and illustrate posters with the poems and put them up in the class and/or cafeteria.

Pick one or two students to tell the class about everything they had to eat so far that day. As they describe what they had, point to the appropriate food groups in the Food Pyramid. Have the class brainstorm together what other foods the students should eat for the rest of the day (for snacks and meals).

NOTES

Have students keep a journal of what they eat for a week, starting with what they've eaten so far that day. Have them then report back on their eating habits, noting the extent to which their dietary habits conform to the recommendations of the Food Pyramid.

Have the students act out a healthy day of eating. Have five areas designated at the front of the room for each food group. One by one, each student should tell the class which food he/she is, and from which food group. Count the number of servings as each food group fills up, until the class has created a well-balanced day of eating (i.e. 2-3 servings milk, yogurt and cheese; 3- 5 servings vegetables, etc.).