



*Developed to
encourage
and enhance
a young
child's healthy
beginning.*

BLEND Beginnings

My Food Grows Where?

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MY FOOD GROWS WHERE? KEY MESSAGES

Ask a child where their food comes from and you may very likely hear the response “the supermarket”!

Knowing where food comes from can impact how children think about and enjoy food. Integrating nutrition and agriculture education will encourage and foster healthy eating habits. It is recognized that there is a distinct connection between healthy food choices and knowing where food comes from, how it grows, and who grows it. This knowledge has proven to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

We know that children need an assortment of foods from all the food groups to grow up healthy and strong and finding ways to encourage and motivate children to want to eat healthy foods is very important. Young children learn to prefer foods that are familiar and favor those presented as “acceptable” in their environment. By addressing children’s nutrition in the classroom, home, or child care setting, a real impact can be made on their eating habits. Research has shown that environmental factors can strongly influence taste preferences in children. This means if children are given the right environmental cues, they will “trust” that environment to be one in which to enjoy new foods. To help develop a positive connection with healthy foods, caregivers need to create a bond, a relationship, or a connection with the community (e.g., a farmer) and environment (e.g., a garden or farm) to develop and expand that level of trust.

Ways to create a bond, a relationship, or a connection with the community and environment can be to:

- Visit an apple orchard
- Plant a garden
- Invite guest speakers (farmers, gardeners, etc)
- Read stories specific to agriculture

By experiencing and exploring community, environment, and a variety of healthy foods on a regular basis, children more easily learn and retain knowledge about nutrition and agricultural concepts. Allowing children to take on the role of farmer or gardener, or participating in “agriculture play” in the classroom, fosters a valuable and practical connection to agriculture. Children who grow food want to eat the food they grow.

Tips for teaching young children where food grows:

1. During mealtime, talk to the children about where their food comes from. For example, if they are eating oatmeal for breakfast, talk about how oats is a grain that grows in fields. The oat grain is harvested with large farm equipment. Tell them that oatmeal is made from the ground or rolled seeds of the oat grain.
2. Explore new ways to integrate nutrition and agriculture education in your daily routine – songs, stories, art, etc.
3. Try new foods during snack time. Ask that parents share healthy snacks with the class. Encourage them to bring in a food choice that is traditional, or perhaps, something ethnic.
4. Don’t just tell kids about good choices. Show them!
5. Keep it short.
6. Praise every child!

Content reviewed by Mary Caskey, Extension Educator, Health and Nutrition



MY FOOD GROWS WHERE? CIRCLE TIME

Contrary to belief, it can be quite simple to educate and motivate young children about healthy eating. For instance, reading a book to a child and highlighting the food and nutrition aspects of the story does not add additional teaching time, nor does it add additional preparation or work. It can, however, add a whole new significance to the book and to the food they eat. Food touches every aspect of our lives and society; it's easy to make these connections in subjects like social studies, science, math, literacy, family and community, etc. In this unit, you will share the story "Stone Soup" with the children and then ask them to help you prepare the soup. This activity connects Literacy (*reading the book*), Math (*measuring the ingredients*), Health (*washing their hands and vegetables*), Family and Community (*shopping for vegetables with their parents at a grocery store*), and more. Along with simply reading a book to bring nutrition into the classroom, educators can also use songs and other creative activities to engage children in thinking about healthy eating.

Preparing the environment:

- Hang the USDA "MyPyramid for Preschoolers" Poster* in your designated Circle Time area. For additional posters, order online at: <http://tn.ntis.gov/>.
- Use the "My Healthy Food" Picture Cards, "Where My Food Comes From" and "Farm Harvest" Picture Cards* during Circle Time to talk about all the different environments food grows.
- "Healthy Food" Sitting Mats* should be available for the children to sit on during Circle Time conversations.
- Prepare reading books (for example, *Stone Soup*) that support teaching about agriculture and healthy foods.
- The BLEND Apron* should be worn by the staff member leading the session.

**Materials available in the BLEND Beginnings Program Container*

Leading the BLEND Circle Time Session:

During this unit, children will learn about foods in a different way. They will find out that some foods grow "in the ground" while others grow "above the ground". To help the children better comprehend "where" and how food grows, the "Garden Mural" activity was added to the lesson plan. This activity will take some time and a few materials to prepare, but your efforts will surely impact their agricultural understandings. What you should talk about:

- *"In the Ground" Foods*
- *"Above the Ground" Foods*
- Planting and Harvesting
- Farm and Garden Equipment

Gather items that will help the children piece together where their food comes from. This could include: toy tractors and other farm equipment, magazines and publications that represent farming, gardening, harvesting, and farm animals. Also, collect seed packets, talk about them and have the children touch the seeds, too.



MY FOOD GROWS WHERE? LESSON PLANS

Week 12 My Food Grows Where?

Day 1 - Circle Time (10 minutes) Talk about all the places that local food grows. This could be on a farm, in a garden, on trees, “Above the ground”, and “In the Ground.” Also, talk about how foods are harvested – farmers use large equipment like “combines” to harvest food from a field – gardeners pick their produce by hand or dig with shovels or with forks. Talk specifically about the foods that grow “Above the Ground.”

“Above the Ground” foods include:
apples, bananas, beans, eggplants,
melons, oats, peas, squash, tomatoes,
wheat, etc.

Include the following in your conversation:

- Planting Time Song (page 71)
- Good for Me! Song (page 71)
- Garden Mural (page 72)

Activity Time (15 minutes) Select from the following activities:

- Friendship Fruit Salad (page 71)
- “Garden Foods” Coloring Sheet (page 72)

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- Jumping Stations (page 73)
- All the Kids Song (page 74)

Day 2 - Circle Time (10 minutes) Continue to talk about where food grows, - particularly about “In the Ground” vegetables. Show pictures of farms, gardens, equipment, and how they are harvested.

“In the Ground” foods include: beets,
carrots, onions, parsnips, potatoes,
radishes, yams.

Include the following in your conversation:

- Garden Mural (page 72)

Activity Time (15 minutes) Select from the following activities:

- Old MacDonald Song (page 74)
- Fruits and Vegetables Matching Game (page 74)
- Vegetable Soup (page 75)

Energy Time (30 minutes) Select from the following Physical Activity games:

- Balancing Stations (page 76)



Planting Time Song

Sing this song to: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."

Dig, dig, dig the earth	(Make digging motion)
Then you plant your seeds	(Pretend to drop seeds)
A gentle rain	(Flutter fingers down)
And bright sunshine	(Circle arms above head)
Will help your FRUITS grow	(Hold one arm parallel to ground and move other arm up behind it with fingers extended to represent a flower growing)

Change the word "FRUITS" to "VEGETABLES" or to a specific fruit or vegetable.

Good for Me! Song

Sing to the tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Be creative and change the words for fruits to vegetables or to other fruits.

**Strawberries, Bananas, Watermelon, too;
Good for me and good for you!
They are tasty; they are sweet,
All are such yummy treats.
Strawberries, Bananas, Watermelon, too;
Good for me and good for you!**

Friendship Fruit Salad

The kids will love this fruit activity – in large part, because they had been invited into the process of selecting the fruit and making the salad. This activity asks that you invite all the children to bring in a piece of fresh fruit to contribute to the Friendship Fruit Salad. A sample parent letter asking for family support is on page 77 – simply make copies and insert the date that you will need the fruit.

What you need:

Large bowl
Cutting boards and utensils (for adults and older children)
Variety of fruits – supplement fruit if needed
Large spoon
Parent letter (page 77)

What to do:

Begin collecting the fruit a day or two before you plan on making the salad. Discuss the fruit that has been contributed, especially those that are unusual (star fruit, mangoes, papayas, etc.). It is very important for those that are cutting up the fruit to thoroughly wash their hands and use plastic gloves. Gather the children and have them watch you peel and slice all the fruit and place in large bowl; toss together and serve immediately.

Optional: teachers could take the fruit provided by all the children and cut up into smaller pieces – each child could then cut up the small pieces of fruit to make their own salad using a plastic knife – wash hands, first!



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Garden Murals

The “Garden Mural” lets you bring a garden inside. With a little preparation this activity will teach children valuable lessons about agriculture and create interest and enthusiasm about where food comes from.

What you need*:

Display board (bi-fold or tri-fold)
Felt – Blue (sky), Dark Brown (garden dirt), Green (tree leaves),
and Light Brown (tree trunk)
Green colored foam roll
Glue (spray glue works great)
Copies of fruits and vegetables (see pages 79 through 83)
Velcro

What to do:

Create the “Garden Mural.” As an easy reference, look at *page 78* for details and ideas on how to create/design the mural. Glue the felt to the display board. When attaching the dark brown for the garden (dirt) leave areas at the top open to allow for “below ground” foods to be placed in – like pockets. Glue the remaining felt pieces on the board. Draw a variety of plants (corn stalks, leaves, vines, bush plants, etc.) on the green foam roll. Cut out and glue to the board. Print and laminate a variety of fruits and vegetables (use the examples on pages 79 through 83 or use your own). Place a piece of Velcro (“hook” side) to the back side of the fruits and vegetables – these will let the fruits and vegetables attach to the felt and can be taken off easily. Note: if the Velcro does not “stick” to the felt, apply the “loop” side of the Velcro directly to the mural - placing them where the fruits and vegetables will likely be placed.

When the mural is finished, place it in the Circle Time area and begin conversations about where food grows. Talk about “above ground” and “below ground” fruits and vegetables. Take the fruits and vegetables out one by one and ask the children what it is and where it grows in the garden – then, place it on the garden mural. When finished placing the fruit and vegetables on the mural, talk about how they are harvested.

It may be helpful to give an example – for instance, take a carrot (explain that it is an orange vegetable), tell the children that carrot seeds are planted in the garden and will grow “below the ground” with rain and sunlight. Place the carrot in the dirt (behind the brown felt) and then pull out to show how it is harvested. Velcro will create a resistance similar to pulling it out of the ground.

**Please note – creating the “Garden Mural” with the above materials will offer years of use and fun. It is recommended to create the mural with the above directions; however, if the cost of the materials creates a burden, the mural can be created with poster board or a large roll of paper, markers or crayons, and pictures of plant foods.*

“Garden Foods” Activity and Coloring Sheet

Make a copy of the “Garden Foods” Coloring Sheet for each child (see page 84). Follow directions and enjoy the fun!



Jumping Station

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Jumping activities can help develop muscular endurance and muscular strength and, if the activity is intense and sustained over time, can develop cardiovascular endurance. Create jumping stations using all or some of the below themes/activities. Make signs to label each station and watch the kids leap into fun!

Jumping Animals: Can be a separate station or as a break. Play music and ask children to jump like a variety of animals, such as a frog or kangaroo.

Broad Jump: Although skills vary widely, children like to see how far they can jump. You may want to mark varying widths to represent a river. For additional safety, children can jump over mats.

Jump Bump: The child tries to bump a hanging object, such as a beach or foam ball, suspended from a low ceiling. Ask the child to bump the object with a different body part each time.

Jumping Down: This station has many possibilities. The task is for children to jump and land on both feet from a low elevation to an area marked by a hoop. As the child demonstrates body control, the height can be increased. Always use spotters.

High Jump: This station requires two adults, a mat, a rope, and a hoop. The challenge is to jump over the rope and land on both feet in a marked area. Raise the rope as the child shows control.

Hoop Jump: A child holds a hoop in both hands in front of the body and jumps through it. Although a hoop is easier for children to handle than a jump rope, this task is recommended only for older preschoolers.

Jack Be Nimble Jumps: Preschool children enjoy the chance to act out stories. Ask each child to jump over “candlesticks” without knocking them down. As each child jumps, sing the rhyme and insert his or her name: *“Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jump over the candlestick.”*

Jump the Shot: An adult squats in the center of a circle of children and slowly swings a rope with a bean bag tied on the end. Children must jump as the bag swings under their feet. Stop the rope in front of very young children and tell them to jump.

Jumpscotch: This variation of hopscotch uses hoops laid in a pattern. Young children may need mats under the hoops. They may have difficulty because their feet barely leave the ground. Ask the children to hop with one foot in the single hoops and both feet in the double hoops.

Jump Up: This station challenges children to increase vertical jumping ability. If a low ceiling is available, hang waffle/wiffle balls at different heights for children to jump and touch. A chalkboard may be hung on the wall, instead. Although it requires more coordination, the children can mark on the board as they jump.



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All the Kids Song

Sing this song to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

All the kids are jumping kids, jumping kids, jumping kids.

All the kids are jumping kids, jumping all day long!

Additional verses:

All the kids are...turning kids, or clapping kids, or stomping kids, or waving kids, or shaking kids, or bending kids

Old MacDonald Song

Sing “Old MacDonald” with the children, but substitute fruits and vegetables for the animal names that are usually sung in the song. Here are two variations:

Variation 1:

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.

And on this farm he had some carrots, E-I-E-I-O.

With a crunch, crunch here, and a munch, munch there.

Here a crunch, there a munch, everywhere a crunch, munch.

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.

Variation 2:

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.

And on this farm he had some beans, E-I-E-I-O.

With a yum-yum here, and a yum-yum there,

Here a yum, there a yum, everywhere a yum, yum.

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.

As children say each “yum, yum” in the song, add a tummy rubbing hand movement to show that they like eating the healthful food.

Option: Have children take turns picking and holding up a real, or play, fruit or vegetable at the beginning of each verse. Sing the name of the chosen food in that verse. Or, use the “My Healthy Foods” Picture Cards and ask the children to hold up the picture and sing the song.

Fruits and Vegetables Matching Game

This matching game will keep the children busy as they try to match up the fruits and vegetables.

What you need:

Fruits and Vegetables Matching Game (included in BLEND Beginnings Program container)

Scissors

What to do:

Cut the Fruits and Vegetables Matching Game cards along the dotted line. There are 30 cards – you may divide them up and allow several children to play the game. Tell the children they will need to find the match for each card and if possible name the specific fruit or vegetable. When the child completes the game, praise and praise!



Vegetable Soup

This activity engages children, parents, and staff educators in a number of ways. The parents are asked to gather a variety of vegetables with their child, the children clean the vegetables, and staff encourages the children to help prepare a large pot of soup.

Prior to this activity, send a letter home to the parents asking them to help their child select a fresh vegetable to bring in to share. The vegetable can be something fresh from their home pantry or a vegetable selected by the child during a trip to the grocery store. During Circle Time, ask the children to name the vegetable that they brought in.

What you need:

Parent letter (see page 77)

One large stockpot

Two quarts of broth

One quart of tomato or vegetable juice

Vegetables, such as:

Carrots

Corn

Green beans

Onion

Tomatoes

Peppers

Celery

Broccoli

Peas

Potatoes

Optional:

Uncooked pasta

Salt

Pepper

Herbs (thyme, rosemary)

What to do:

Preschool children are in a vulnerable category for food-borne illnesses, it is not recommended to put a stone in this recipe – you can pretend to put in a stone or simply ignore it and focus on the vegetables. First, add broth to a pot and simmer. Wash and clean the vegetables – ask the children to help. Chop the vegetables in small pieces – ask the older children to lend a hand with the softer vegetables – using a plastic knife. Add the vegetables and tomato juice to pot. Simmer until vegetables are tender. Season to taste.

Tips:

- *Show the children the vegetables in stages – whole, chopped up, and after cooking in the soup. You can talk about other things, too – what colors the vegetables are on the outside and on the inside, the seeds inside, the peelings, the parts that are edible, etc.*
- *Remind them that vegetables are good for their eyes and skin.*
- *Add firmer vegetables first (potatoes, carrots) to soften before adding tender vegetables.*
- *Use your own vegetable soup recipe.*

