

Elementary students learn to “Get Going with Grains”

AT A GLANCE

After learning about whole grains, elementary students indicated an intention to eat more whole grain foods.

The Situation

The grain group includes any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or other cereal grain. Grains are divided into two subgroups, whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel, including the bran, germ, and endosperm. Whole grains contain more dietary fiber and more vitamins and minerals than refined grains. MyPlate recommends that at least half of all grains eaten should be whole grains or approximately three one-ounce servings of whole grains per day.

Most children and adults in the U.S. are getting less than the recommended amounts of whole grains and dietary fiber, according to a recent study at the University of Minnesota. Among 9,042 people surveyed, only three percent of children and teens ate at least the recommended three servings per day while 39 percent of children and teens consumed no whole grains at all.

Our Response

This University of Idaho Extension educator developed “Get Going with Grains,” a nutrition education program for youth in kindergarten through 5th grade. Students learned what a whole grain looks like and that whole grains contain more vitamins, minerals and fiber than refined grains. They learned that fiber helps food move more easily through their 25-foot long digestive systems. They learned that grains give



them energy to learn, grow, and play. They were shown many examples of whole grain foods and were encouraged to eat at least three whole grains every day. Students in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade read the children’s literature book Bread and Jam for Frances by Russell Hoban. Older students learned about fiber requirements, choosing high fiber foods to meet requirements, and reading food labels for fiber content. A final part of the class was a physical activity break where students learned to do the yoga tree pose and learned some of the benefits of yoga.

Students from 12 Bingham County and Fort Hall Indian Reservation elementary schools participated in “Get Going with Grains,” including two new elementary schools and a new middle school. This Extension Educator and the 4-H Program Coordinator taught 74 sessions to 3,231 students, an increase of 532 students from 2015. Students were ethnically diverse,

with 24 percent of the students Hispanic, 10% Native American, 0.5% Asian, and 0.5% Black.

Program Outcomes

Two evaluation methods were used to measure knowledge and intention for behavior change. Immediately following the class, all students were asked to respond to what they knew and what they planned to do because of the class. Ninety-six percent knew examples of whole grain foods and 97 percent of students reported knowing that whole grain foods were good for them. Ninety-four percent of students said they would try to eat at least three whole grains per day, and 91 percent indicated that they would encourage others to eat whole grains.

Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 completed a written evaluation one week after the presentation. Results are found in table 1.

Table 1: Student response to statements about grain knowledge and intended behavior change one week after the class

Statement, n=1184	% who answered yes
What I KNOW	
I know what foods are whole grains	91
I know that whole grains are good for me	94
I know that whole grains have more fiber than other grains	81
What I WILL DO	
I will eat more whole grains than I used to	83
I will try to eat at least 3 whole grains per day	88
I will encourage others to eat whole grains	72
I will try to eat enough fiber every day (my age + 5 grams per day)	86
I will do the tree pose or other yoga poses to relax and get stronger	63

The vast majority of students reported knowing what foods are whole grains and that whole grain foods were good for them, both immediately after the class and one week after the class. Although the percentages decreased slightly, both were over 90 percent. The vast majority of students also indicated intention to eat at least three whole grains per day and to encourage others, such as family members and friends, to eat

whole grains. At the one week follow-up, a majority of students indicated an intention to eat more whole grains than they used to and to eat enough fiber every day. Although not the main focus of the class, some aspect of physical activity is discussed, demonstrated, and practiced at each nutrition lesson, and 63 percent of students indicated an intention to do yoga to relax and get stronger.

Extension will continue to provide nutrition education to students in Bingham County and on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. A variety of teaching methods will be used to teach and reinforce nutrition topics appropriate for elementary school students.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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