

## Eat Smart Idaho collaborates with Head Start to reach preschoolers

### AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension Eat Smart Idaho collaborated with College of Southern Idaho Head Start centers to teach preschoolers about healthy eating and physical activity.

### The Situation

University of Idaho Extension Eat Smart Idaho is a federally funded program that provides nutrition and physical activity education to low-income Idahoans. Supported by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-SNAP and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Eat Smart Idaho aims to increase knowledge of individuals and families to create behavioral changes, including young children. Evidence suggests that healthy eating habits established in early childhood contribute to dietary choices into adulthood. While it is essential to educate young children about healthy food choices and physical activity, it can be challenging to reach this age group without partnerships and support.

### Our Response

Eat Smart Idaho fosters partnerships and collaborations with agencies and organizations on a local and statewide basis to coordinate efforts and leverage funds in delivery of direct education.

In FY19, Eat Smart Idaho in UI Extension's central district collaborated with College of Southern Idaho Head Start to deliver *Go Glow Grow* Preschool



Children were preparing a healthy snack themselves. Photo credit: Michel Cardona, dietetic intern.

Nutrition Curriculum to preschoolers at seven Head Start centers. While Eat Smart Idaho provided this six-lesson series at the centers, Head Start paid for the food demonstration/tasting items. The curriculum is based on the USDA's MyPlate designed to meet the specific needs and abilities of young children, using an active and hands-on approach to help children establish healthy eating and physical activity habits. It is divided into three sections labeled Go, Glow and Grow emphasizing the effect each food group has on the body. Topics included handwashing, MyPlate, grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy and protein groups, as well as physical activities. Preschoolers learned how to prepare a nutritious and easy snack at each lesson that reinforced the lesson concepts.

## Program Outcomes

In UI Extension’s central district, 414 preschool children ages 3-5 from 22 Head Start classrooms in Twin Falls, Jerome, Gooding, Cassia, Minidoka and Lincoln counties participated in the class series. Each Head Start teacher completed the Teacher Evaluation at the end of the program. Results are shown in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Percentage of best practices teachers intended to incorporate

Questions	Percentage
Use the <i>Go Glow Grow</i> terminology in other classroom conversations.	90%
Refer to MyPlate during snack time.	90%
Talk about healthy choices during other activities.	100%

Table 2: Percentage of student behavioral changes teachers observed post lessons.

Questions	Percentage
Talk about <i>Go Glow Grow</i> foods while they ate snack or meals.	86%
Be more willing to try new foods.	86%
Talk about <i>Go</i> foods giving them energy after the lesson.	80%
Talk about <i>Glow</i> foods "makes my hair shine and my eyes sparkle."	81%
Talk about <i>Grow</i> "help me grow bigger and stronger."	95%

Be more physically active at indoor and outdoor play times.	81%
Wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating.	100%

Findings from 21 Head Start teacher evaluations show that students demonstrated behavioral change after participating in the class series. They were able to identify food groups in snacks, meals or photographs and repeated phrases they learned from the lessons.

Additionally, one teacher commented that “students loved the food experience.” At a Head Start home visit, a mom stated that her child “is now trying many new foods.”

Statewide, Eat Smart Idaho delivered the *Go Glow Grow* curriculum to 44 classrooms at 16 Head Start locations, reaching 847 preschool students.

## The Future

Eat Smart Idaho in UI Extension’s central district plans to continue working with College of Southern Idaho Head Start to teach the *Go Glow Grow* curriculum at all Head Start centers and uses this partnership as a model for collaboration across the state. Additionally, the curriculum will be offered to K-2nd graders statewide through collaborations with local afterschool and summer school programs. Through these partnerships, Eat Smart Idaho provides nutrition education to young children to establish healthy habits early in life, which is critical in supporting children’s growth and reducing the risks of chronic diseases in adulthood.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Siew Guan Lee**, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Twin Falls County • 208-734-9590 • siewguan@uidaho.edu  
**Cammie Jayo**, District Program Coordinator • University of Idaho Extension Eat Smart Idaho • 208-734-9590 • cjayo@uidaho.edu  
**Annie Roe**, Extension Specialist, Director • University of Idaho Extension Eat Smart Idaho • 208-885-1709 • aroe@uidaho.edu  
**Kristin Hansen**, State Program Manager • University of Idaho Extension Eat Smart Idaho • 208-885-6872 • khansen@uidaho.edu

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