

Balanced Meal Evaluation Exercise

Items Needed: Round, flat bottomed light-weight paper plates, permanent markers, glue, child friendly scissors, magazines with pictures of foods

Directions: Pre-test Before the nutrition program begins, give each child a paper plate, marker, scissors and glue. Each child should put his or her name on the back of the paper plate with the permanent marker. Then, pass out the magazines with different foods and food items in them. Each child should then cut out pictures of foods to create what he or she thinks a balanced meal is. Make sure the children do not help one another and receive no help from you. The children are free to cut out pictures of any food they want. The key is to reinforce that they are trying to create what they consider a healthy, balanced meal. You can allow them to focus on any meal time (breakfast, lunch or dinner) or you can specify that they focus on a specific meal time (my preference). The point to reinforce here is that they should focus on only one meal time. Once each child has finished, you will collect the plates. At some later time, you will give each child a pre-test score (put it on the back of their plates or a separate score sheet). You will score as follows:

1 point for every child

1 point for having a food item from the meat group

1 point for having a food item from the dairy group

1 point for having a food item from the fruit group

1 point for having a food item from the vegetable group

1 point for having a food item from the bread group only if it is a whole grain item

2 points if the largest portion on the plate is from the vegetable and fruit group

2 points if there are NO items from the fats, oils and sweets group

* A total of 10 possible points

Post-test At the end of the program, you carry out the evaluation in the same manner as the pre-test. Each child should have a post-test score. Compare post-test score to the pre-test score per child. OR, compute then compare overall average pre-test and post-test score for the group.

Follow-up If possible, follow-up with the same youth and carry out the evaluation again. Each child should have a follow-up score. Compare the follow-up score to the post-test score per child. Or, analyze them as a groups as described above.

Note: The follow-up should be at least 2 to 3 weeks after the post-test. The longer lapse of time, the better faith you can have that the knowledge has been retained. Of course, you will ask about whether they have received nutrition education from other sources (parents, school, etc.).

Developed by Dr. Lisa A. Guion in collaboration with 4-H and Family and Consumer Science Agents who were a part of North Carolina Cooperative Extension Summer Nutrition Camps. Reviewed by Ms. Glenda Warren, FYCS, University of Florida.