

Healthy Living for Youth

Part of ACES pillars for Economic and Community Development



"I matured in leadership skills and communication. It gave me an idea of how to plan and organize different activities. I really enjoyed my experience as a 4-H Healthy Ambassador." -Malia, age 12

"Helping teach the kids good eating habits has led me to want to keep helping others so that they can have a better and healthier life." - Madeline, age 14

Eat Smart Play Hard helps:

- Students reduce barriers for eating fruits & vegetables
- Engage parents in healthy living
- Creates community support for eating healthy
- Bridge the communication gap between home & school
- Challenge unhealthy eating behavior
- Create empowerment of upper-level students

Situation

Bernalillo Elementary School (BES) serves 373 students, grades 3-5 (68% Hispanic, 19% Native American, and 13% White). BES has a minority enrollment of 85%, which is more than the state average of 76%. American Indian students are significantly more likely to experience obesity than any other racial or ethnic group. By 3rd grade, 50.4% of American Indian students are either overweight or obese, followed by Hispanics (36.4%). Ninety-six percent of the student body is eligible for free or reduced lunch program. Low income populations face numerous problems associated with inadequate nutrition. In some cases, children do not eat enough to sustain health, grow, and develop at optimal levels.

Extension Response

In 2018, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent partnered with UNM Eat Smart to Play Hard (ESPH). ESPH was initiated at BES to introduce and reinforce the concept of eating healthy. Designed to involve family members in making healthy decisions regarding diet and physical activity, while they have fun together. Students are asked to complete one recipe and one activity each week in their "passport." Student participation in the eight week campaign was recognized and rewarded by a "Fun Day." Four-H members served as Health Ambassadors in a leadership role. This program was possible by funds through the Walmart Foundation.

Impact

Two hundred four 4th & 5th grade students (55%) of BES and their families were involved in the ESPH campaign. BES had a 50.02% return rate of the "passport." This was the highest return rate in the state. State-wide data shows students that complete at least 75% or more of the "passport" eat 2.3 additional cups of fruit and vegetables per day. BES students completed more than 80% of the "passport." Of the 245 participants (3rd-5th grade) that responded: 85% pay attention to how much water they drink each day, 77% indicated that they eat breakfast most or everyday, usually or always pay attention to how much fruit or vegetables they eat each day 69% & 64%, respectively. **Two hundred twenty-eight participants (88%) indicated that they sort of or did (20%, 68% respectively) learn about healthy food choices.**



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