



FOOD & FUN AFTERSCHOOL, SECOND EDITION

PLANNING

# ABOUT GUIDE

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Created by the Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity in collaboration with YMCA of the USA.

- Project Director: Steve Gortmaker, PhD
- Project Coordinator: Rebecca Mozaffarian, MS MPH
- Research Assistants: Rebekka Lee SM, Emily Sanders SM, Analisa Andry SM, Maria Sequenzia MS Ed

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- Project Directors: Jean Wiecha, PhD and Steve Gortmaker, PhD
- Project Coordinator and Health/Nutrition Writer: Suzanne Nobrega, MS
- Research Associate: Toben Nelson, MS, ScD
- Curriculum Developer: Lori P Marcotte, MPH, MS, RD
- Recipe Developer: Julia Grimaldi, MLA

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# ABOUT THE CURRICULUM

At the Y, we're committed to children's development and well-being. We know how challenging it can be for busy families—and busy program staff!—to eat well and get enough physical activity in their days. The Food & Fun Afterschool curriculum is one of our tools for creating health environments and supporting the well-being of your children at the Y. We developed the Food & Fun curriculum in collaboration with the Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity. It's based on the latest science and is fun and easy to do.

The goal of *Food & Fun Afterschool, Second Edition*, is to assist program staff in providing healthier environments to children during out-of-school time. The curriculum is designed to incorporate lessons and activities about healthy eating and physical activity into regular after school program schedules. Food & Fun includes 11 teaching units that encourage healthy behaviors through active play, literacy and math skills development, creative learning, and hands-on snack time activities. With over 70 activities to choose from and a user-friendly layout for each lesson, Food & Fun makes it simple to promote healthy eating and physical activity in your program every day!

The materials included in Food & Fun are divided into four sections, explained below:

- Planning
- Teaching Units
- Parents
- Resources



## PLANNING

Navigating the Food & Fun curriculum and promoting healthy environments in your afterschool program can be easy and fun! Food & Fun includes multiple planning tools to help save time and plan effectively. These tools can help your program make Food & Fun lesson plans, set goals, assess progress, and promote sustainability. All the tools are designed as optional self-assessments. Some people might use all of them and others might choose just one that fits the needs of their program. These simple assessments should not be added work, but instead tools to encourage learning and sharing within and across programs.

- 1. About Guide:** This is the overview guide you're reading now. It explains the entire curriculum and how it all fits together.

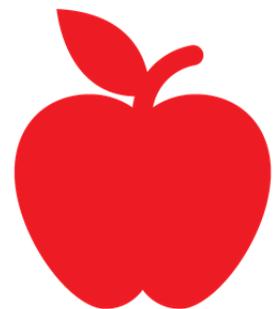
- 2. Food & Fun Planning Tool:** A tool designed to help plan the use of the Food & Fun Afterschool curriculum. Staff can make note of which activities children enjoy the most and how they communicate each unit's healthy goal to families.
- 3. Family Engagement Planning Tool:** A tool designed to record and plan the strategies programs will use to promote nutrition and physical activity with families.
- 4. Snack Sense:** A menu planning tool to provide fun, healthy, and budget-friendly snacks for children in afterschool and out-of-school time programs.
- 5. Getting Staff On Board:** Simple tips for involving staff in Food & Fun and helping them feel comfortable and confident with the goals and messages of the curriculum.

## HOW CAN I USE THE FOOD & FUN PLANNING TOOLS?

- Site directors can use the *Food & Fun Planning Tool* to create weekly or monthly lesson plans for the school year.
- Site coordinators who supervise multiple sites can use the *Food & Fun Planning Tool* to track the nutrition and physical activity offerings in their programs over the course of the year.
- Site directors can use the *Family Engagement Planning Tool* during staff meetings to spark discussion about staff interactions with parents and caregivers and to plan family activities and outreach.
- Child care directors could use *Snack Sense* to plan healthy, inexpensive afterschool snacks.
- Any of the tools can be introduced at Food & Fun trainings as a way to encourage staff to set goals, plan action steps, and reflect upon those practices that work best in their programs.

## TEACHING UNITS

See page 7 of this guide for a detailed explanation of these 11 units that form the core of the Food & Fun curriculum. Each unit encourages healthy behaviors through active play, literacy, math skills development, creative learning, and hands-on snack time activities. With more than 70 activities to choose from, the lessons make it simple to promote healthy eating and physical activity every day!



## PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Children develop their health habits at home, and engaging families is critical to inspiring children to make healthy choices. Food & Fun provides many opportunities to involve parents and caregivers throughout the curriculum. Each unit includes tools and information for engaging families, and accompanying parent communications, newsletter templates, and handouts help bring the health messages home. A planning tool is provided to help you plan and monitor your family engagement strategies, and several resources are designed specifically for families with practical tips and information and fun recipes and activity ideas. Below are descriptions of the family engagement tools in Food & Fun:

### 1. Parent Communications:

- **Newsletter articles:** These are designed for you to cut and paste into your current program newsletter or use as a stand-alone one-page bulletin. With these articles, you can send information about healthy eating or physical activity home each month. Available in English and Spanish.
- **Email messages:** Get around the challenge of notices left in children’s backpacks by sending parents a simple message via email. These specifically address the unit key messages and activities while offering simple tips to involve families in the promotion of healthy foods and fitness behaviors. Available in English and Spanish.



- 2. Parent Handouts:** These colorful sheets are another easy way to get the health messages of Food & Fun home to families. Available in English and Spanish.
- 3. Parent Newsletters:** Provided for each unit topic of Food & Fun, these attractive newsletters are fully designed and ready for you to send to parents each month of the curriculum. Just fill in your Y’s name and Web address.
- 4. Food, Fun & Family:** This parent handbook provides information for parents about how to help develop healthy eating, physical activity, and television habits at home. It also includes additional resources like information sheets and recipes.
- 5. Family Snack Sense:** This menu planning tool gives families simple, clear information, tips, and encouragement to choose healthy foods while managing their budgets.
- 6. Family Recipe Packet:** This convenient packet combines all the Food & Fun recipes and helpful tips in one place for families to prepare at home, for both snack and dinner time.

## RESOURCES

Completing the Food & Fun curriculum are tools designed for staff to get inspired, informed, and learn more about healthy eating and physical activity. Also included is a resource that combines all the recipes from the teaching the units in one convenient packet.

- 1. Tip Sheets:** These handy sheets are designed to encourage and equip program staff with tips on creating healthier afterschool environments.
- 2. Web Resources:** This list of websites on nutrition and physical activity summarizes the resources mentioned throughout the curriculum.
- 3. Recipe and Taste Test Packet:** This resource provides tips on preparing food with children; fun, healthy, and inexpensive recipes; and guidelines for including taste tests as part of your snack program.
- 4. “Healthy Places, Healthy Kids” poster:** This handy poster summarizes the key messages of Food & Fun.

All curriculum materials are available for download from [Exchange](#). You can also visit the Food & Fun website at [www.foodandfun.org](http://www.foodandfun.org) or [www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/).

# ABOUT THE UNIT THEMES

Food & Fun contains 10 teaching units that offer a variety of games, learning activities, and recipes for afterschool settings. Also, an 11th unit serves as a review and can be used at a time of your choosing. While some units reinforce others, each unit can stand alone. Use all the units over the course of a school year, or use only a few. Some unit themes connect to a national month or other special events, as noted below, which allows you to find other resources to support the messages in that unit.

UNIT (MONTH)	TITLE	THEME
Unit 1 (September)	Take a Bite	Fruits and Vegetables
Unit 2 (October)	Get Moving	Physical Activity
Unit 3 (November)	Be Sugar Smart	Sugar-Sweetened Drinks
Unit 4 (December)	Go for Good Fat	Healthy and Unhealthy Fats
Unit 5 (January)	Go for Whole Grains	Whole Grains
		<a href="#">National Oatmeal Month</a>
Unit 6 (February)	Super Snacks	Healthy Snacking
Unit 7 (March)	Mix It Up	Fruits and Vegetables
		<a href="#">National Nutrition Month</a>
Unit 8 (April)	Tune Out the TV	Reduce TV Viewing
		<a href="#">TV Turn Off Week (3<sup>rd</sup> week)</a>
Unit 9 (May)	Play Hard	Physical Activity
		<a href="#">National Physical Fitness and Sports Month</a>
Unit 10 (June)	Be Active, Stay Cool	Keeping Hydrated
Unit 11 (Anytime!)	Food & Fun Finale	Food & Fun Review

# HOW TO NAVIGATE EACH UNIT

Each of the units is set up the same way and everything you need to conduct an activity (instructions, worksheets, recipes, etc.) is found within the unit. Most activities require common afterschool materials, such as construction paper, crayons or other craft items, and physical education equipment such as balls. Still, you may need to gather some material from outside sources, such as old magazines or empty water bottles. Also, for the recipes, you may need to purchase some special ingredients.

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN EACH UNIT

### **BEHAVIOR GOAL**

Each unit lists a simple goal for children to achieve through the unit's activities.

### **KEY MESSAGES**

These are the sound bites for the unit theme. A great way to inform children of the new theme is to copy the key messages onto colorful paper for display in your program—post on a bulletin board, on the walls, or at your checkout area. Visual displays not only help the children identify with the new theme, but also remind parents and caregivers of your program's healthy goals! Program staff should review the key messages and use them when they present the various activities. For instance, when serving snack the leader may remind children: "Fruits and vegetables make great snacks that are healthy for your body!" (a key message from Unit 1). There are many opportunities to infuse these key concepts throughout a program day or week. *All* staff members should be familiar with them, even if they are not in charge of leading the Food & Fun activities.

### **KEY INFORMATION FOR PROGRAM STAFF**

This important background information provides staff leaders with the "why" behind each unit. It also offers tips for presenting the activities and things to keep in mind when discussing nutrition or physical activity concepts with children.

## ACTIVITY OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN



1. **Arts and Crafts** involve coloring, cutting and pasting, or other creative projects. These activities allow leaders to introduce children to the various food or fitness concepts in a fun way.



2. **Active Games** get children running and moving while learning about the key messages of the unit. Relay-type races with modifications are one common way to integrate learning with movement. These activities are designed to involve all children in a way that eliminates individual competition. Modifications are provided for most games.



3. **Other Group Games or Activities** can be used in circle time or small groups to reinforce the learning concepts of the unit. Some of these activities are geared towards older children (upper elementary, 3rd–5th grade) who have writing skills and/or the ability to understand more complex information.



4. **Suggested Books** can be used to complement the unit activities. You can make books available in a reading center or read to the group during circle time. Instead of purchasing books, remember you can borrow them from your local library for free.



5. **Snack Time Ideas** are designed to introduce new foods to children! Recipes are provided as the best hands-on way to involve children in snack preparation. Most recipes include commonly found ingredients and simple preparation methods, though some do involve cooking or advance preparation by adults (such as chopping vegetables). Programs can introduce families to healthy foods by preparing extras to serve during pickup and by distributing the recipes (see the recipe packet in the parent resources).

### ***New to Food & Fun Afterschool, Second Edition***

Check out the lesson extensions that suggest ways to adapt units to the lives and needs of the children you serve. These can help you connect more with families, make lessons more age appropriate, and add variety to old favorites.

## CONNECT WITH PARENTS

It is crucial to involve and inform families about the steps that your program is making to positively influence the health of their children. To help you reach out to parents and caregivers, each unit lists key messages for adults support the unit objectives. Like the key messages for children, these may be printed on colorful paper to display at the checkout area or on a parent board. They are also included in the Parent Communication newsletters and email messages. Within each teaching unit, Food & Fun suggests ways to connect with parents and caregivers and provides communications materials in English and Spanish:

- **Key messages for adults:** This convenient list summarizes the main points from the unit that children are learning and that families are encouraged to continue at home.
- **Family engagement activities:** These are specific suggestions for how to engage parents and caregivers in the messages being taught in each teaching unit. Experiment and be creative; come up with your own ideas or modify the suggested activities for each unit!

## RESOURCES

For more information about the topic of the month, each unit lists a number of websites. Some units also include sources for materials that complement the activities. You may also reinforce unit lessons by using the curriculum's tip sheets.



## ACTIVITIES

Instructions are provided for each activity or game and include information on the materials, advance preparation required, objectives of the game (if applicable), and instructions on how to conduct the activity or play the game. There are also lesson extensions to adapt the game for different age groups or space limitations.

## RECIPES AND TASTE TESTS

Preparing and trying new foods with children is a great way to get them excited and interested in healthy foods. Children who help with meal or snack preparation are more likely to try their own creations! Recipes are included within each unit and are designed to complement the unit themes. You can also consult the complete Recipe and Taste Test Packet for more.

The recipes are classified by level of kitchen equipment requirements so you can easily determine if you have the resources to make the snack at your program. For example, for Level 1 there is no cooking required, Level 2 is basic equipment (e.g., sink, fridge, microwave, blender, and/or toaster); and Level 3 requires a full kitchen (i.e., basic equipment plus stove). Each recipe lists the supplies needed along with the ingredients and instructions.

Taste tests provide another fun and simple way of introducing children to new foods. Select foods that are easy to prepare and keep in mind that children can taste one new food or recipe or compare similar foods (like “green vegetables” or “whole grain breads”). Taste test rating sheets, along with simple guidelines and ideas, are provided in each nutrition unit.

Remember to keep safety and sanitation in mind by washing hands and cleaning surfaces before handling food. Always keep sharp tools out of the hands of children. Be cautious of any food allergies or other health concerns children may have.

## **WORKSHEETS**

Worksheets used in the learning activities are found at the end of each unit, along with any other supportive printouts that may be needed for a game or activity.

# CREATING HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR HEALTHIER KIDS

The Y is not only one of the nation's largest providers of childcare and afterschool programs—but we are also determined to be the healthiest. As part of our commitment to young people, the Y has adopted a set of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards for early childhood and afterschool programs nationwide. The standards will build a healthier future for our nation's children by providing healthy environments rich in opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity and by supporting families to do the same at home.

The aim of the HEPA standards is to help program leaders create healthier out-of-school environments for children by achieving specific standards. These standards are based on current scientific evidence about healthy eating and physical activity and align with the themes and messages of the Food & Fun curriculum.

## THE Y'S HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Implement an educational program for parents and child care providers with physical activity and nutritional information relevant to the health of their children.
- Ensure that children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day (for full-day programs), including a mixture of moderate and vigorous physical activities that promote bone and muscle strengthening.
- Play will take place daily outdoors whenever possible.
- No access to television or movies.
- Limit digital device time to less than one hour per day. Digital device use is limited to homework or programs that actively engage children in activity.
- Serve fruits or vegetables at every meal.
- Serve all meals family style.
- No fried foods.
- Offer water at the table during every meal and have water accessible at all times.
- Serve beverages that do not have added sugars.
- Serve healthier beverages, including water, lowfat (1%) or nonfat milk, or 100% fruit juice (no more than one 6- to 8-oz. serving per day).

Adopting the HEPA standards successfully requires a well-planned process that involves time and participation of stakeholders. So where do you start? Try out the Food & Fun planning tools. These short, user-friendly tools help staff track implementation of the curriculum. They are designed to support staff in making healthy changes, and are not intended as extra required paperwork. For more on the planning resources, see the “Planning” section in “About This Curriculum” earlier in this guide.

For other ideas on how to implement the HEPA standards, see the tip sheets. These attractive, simple informative sheets address barriers to program change and practical strategies to overcome them, YMCA success stories, and extra education and resources.

When preparing for changes, involve program staff, children, and their families to plan how to proceed in a way that is appropriate for your setting. You may need to invest time early with getting buy-in, but healthy changes are often well received by everyone in the end.

For more information on the HEPA standards, visit [Exchange](#). All Food & Fun materials, including parent engagement tools, tip sheets on implementing the HEPA standards, snack recipes, and can be downloaded on [Exchange](#). For more resources from the Harvard School of Public Health, visit [www.foodandfun.org](http://www.foodandfun.org) or [www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/).

## TIPS FOR FOOD & FUN SUCCESS

Food & Fun activities, lessons, and recipes offer an integrated approach toward meeting the HEPA standards, listed above.

Here are some tips for success as you begin to work with the materials and make changes in program practices:

- **Power up your snack offerings:** Introduce healthier choices while removing unhealthy options from the menu. Check out *Snack Sense* for ideas on how to incorporate the HEPA standards into your regular snack time routine at a low price. The tip sheets are another great resource for ideas on how to provide healthy snacks in afterschool time.
- **Get children involved:** Ask children to help prepare for snack time and help at cleanup. For example, children can put snacks and pitchers of water with cups on the snack tables. You can also involve children through cooking special snacks and taste-testing. For a list of snack recipes and taste test ideas, check out the Recipe and Taste Test Packet. Check with your program’s regulations first to be sure that no restrictions apply.



- **Get children moving:** Schedule, schedule, schedule. Make physical activity a priority by scheduling at least 30 minutes at the same time every day. Plan activities that keep kids moving. The tip sheets “Physical Activity” and “Healthy Staff, Healthy Kids” are great resources for ideas on how to engage all staff and children in physical activity and how to offer physical activity every day.
- **Offer a variety of choices:** Whether it’s an active game or new snack, children like to have some control over what they do. Involve children in selecting games, snacks, or learning activities. After presenting something new, ask them to vote on whether or not they liked it enough to do again or if they have other ideas on how to play the game.
- **Designate a space for food and physical activity information:** Any corner can work! Display key messages from the unit along with artwork created by the children. You can add books that have nutrition or activity themes in the food and physical activity area. Most units suggest books which complement the theme.
- **Ban the junk:** Keep soda or unhealthy snack machines off limits to children during program time, and discourage staff from using them also.
- **Water!** Serve water as the primary beverage every day. Serve tap water in pitchers on the snack table with cups. Jazz up the water with slices of fruit!
- **Engage staff as role models:** We all know that children model what they see. It’s extremely important that staff participate in healthy snack time and physical activity games during afterschool program hours. It is strongly recommended that staff not bring soda, fast food, or other unhealthy snacks into the program, even for personal use. Staff will project a positive attitude about eating well and being active when they participate in snack and active time with children. For more tips on staff participation, see the tip sheet, “Healthy Staff, Healthy Kids.”
- **Keep parents and caregivers informed:** As you use the Food & Fun materials, let parents know what’s happening. When adults pick up their children, talk to them about the activities their children participated in and the key health lessons they learned from the unit. Use the tools provided in the parent section to reinforce the lessons learned at afterschool and to provide tips for healthy habits at home.



## TIPS FOR TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

As the adult in charge, the lessons you teach and the language you use to convey them are very important for communicating **positive** messages about healthy eating and physical activity to children.

- Focus on the importance of nutrition and physical activity for **feeling good and staying healthy**. Avoid connecting eating well and staying active to losing weight or being slim. For example, do not use statements like, “drinking water will keep you from becoming overweight.” Water is good for *everyone*, not just those who want to lose weight.
- Talk about how eating well and being physically active are **fun and give you energy!** Share stories about eating healthy and being active. Avoid discussions that focus on losing weight.
- Do not talk about dieting—for yourself or for children. If parents or caregivers bring up a concern about a child’s weight, advise them to speak with their pediatrician.
- If a child asks you a question about nutrition that you do not know the answer to, avoid answering with your best guess. Simply say that you don’t know and that you will help to find the answer. Follow through by referring to the Web resources in Food & Fun that are separated by topic area. If the child is old enough to use the Internet, you can recommend one of these websites so that he or she can look for the answer.
- This curriculum is focused on positive, healthy messages about healthy eating and physical activity, but during discussions it is possible that issues of bias against overweight and obese children and adults may arise. For more information on how to address this, including information on bullying prevention, check out the information on weight bias and stigma from the [Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity \(www.yaleruddcenter.org\)](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org). They have tools designed especially for kids, parents, and educators.

Remember, the complete curriculum is available for download on [Exchange](#).

You can also find more information at [www.foodandfun.org](http://www.foodandfun.org) or [www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/). Have fun!

**YMCA OF THE USA**

101 N Wacker Drive, Chicago IL 60606

800 872 9622

[yexchange.org](http://yexchange.org)