

Description of Educational Project

NURS:4096 Honors Independent Study

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This project titled *Supporting Healthy Growth and Development in Preschool-Aged Children by Providing Interactive Nutrition Education* is being developed to implement an evidence-based interactive educational intervention to preschool students to aid them in developing healthy nutritional habits to support their growth and development. The educational plan consists of a sensory activity with a vegetable, reading a storybook about vegetables, and a second exposure to the vegetable with the opportunity to taste it.

The first part of the educational session is a sensory activity in which a piece of broccoli will be placed in a brown paper bag. Each student will have a turn to feel the broccoli and describe it using one word. This is an introduction to the topic of healthy foods to eat and will pique their interest in what the educational intervention will entail.

The second component of the intervention is reading a storybook. The book selected is *Eat the Rainbow Foods* by Sara Kale and discusses the benefits of eating different colors of fruits and vegetables. At the end of the intervention if time allows, another book will be read called *All of the Vegetables We Eat* by Mya Papaya which discusses the benefits of a number of vegetables to eat. Research focused on nutrition education in preschoolers has thoroughly supported utilizing storybooks to provide a fun, interactive experience to learn about the benefits of eating them.

The third component will be another sensory exposure with a tasting of the broccoli. First, the students will use hand sanitizer prior to receiving their portion of broccoli. Then, each

student will receive a small cup of broccoli to taste. Because autonomy is very important when trying foods, each student will be given the option to try the broccoli if they would like to but can choose not to. Students will again be asked about their sensory experience with the broccoli, but this time through tasting the broccoli. They will be asked to describe what they taste and if they enjoy tasting it.

One goal of this educational project is to assess educational efficacy. To do this, feedback will be solicited from the students regarding whether they had a positive, negative, or neutral experience throughout the intervention. A positive experience could indicate either that they enjoyed eating the broccoli, or just that they had fun reading the book and trying a vegetable. After tasting the broccoli, students will “throw away” their plastic cups by placing them into one of three bins. One bin will have a smiley face, indicating a positive experience. The second will have a sad face, indicating a negative experience. The final bin will have a neutral face, indicating that they were indifferent to the intervention. These bins will not collect specific information about whether the students actually enjoyed the broccoli or just enjoyed the sensory experience or storybook, but it will indicate their overall experience with the educational intervention.

Finally, handouts will be prepared for the students, the teachers, and the parents. The kids will receive a broccoli coloring page which they can color and bring home with them as a reminder of what they experienced and learned. The parent handout will be a summary of the intervention with a brief discussion of the value of eating fresh fruits and vegetables in the home and the impact on their children’s healthy growth and development now and in the future. There also will be a brief explanation of how to steam broccoli and an easy recipe for them to make at home. The teachers will receive digital files of the student handout, parent handout, and a copy of the storybook to keep in the classroom so that the students can have repeated exposure to the concept of eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

In closing, this educational intervention highlights the value of sensory exposure to increase intake of fresh fruits and vegetables in preschool children. It is interactive to capture the students' attention and incorporates their teachers and parents who are primary reinforcers of healthy habits at this age. It is also easily reproducible so that it can be repeated with future students and shared with other children.