

Shopping for a Balanced Meal

Standards of Learning

Health: 1.2, 2.2

Objective

The student will be able to:

- Categorize foods by food group
- Identify the components of a healthy meal

Materials

- grocery store circulars/ads from multiple stores/weeks - enough for each student or group of students to have one
- paper plates
- scissors
- glue sticks
- markers

Background Knowledge

A well balanced diet is essential to good health. By learning to make good food choices early, students can begin habits that will prevent health problems later in life, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. When students choose nutrient rich foods from each of the 5 food groups they can fuel their bodies for healthy and active lifestyle. A significant addition to the revised food pyramid is physical activity. A person's age, gender, and level of physical activity determine how much of each food group they should eat.

Virginia farmers grow or raise food that belongs in each section of the pyramid. In "Meat and Beans" there is poultry, eggs, beef, and hogs as well as soybeans and peanuts. Additionally, Virginia farmers produce many dairy items for the "Milk" sections. In fact, there are more than 100,000 head of dairy cattle in Virginia, making it the state's third largest commodity (behind chickens and beef, respectively). For the "Fruit" group Virginia growers produce an average of 8-10 million bushels of apples a year, as well as strawberries, grapes, peaches, cantaloupes and watermelons. Next, in "Vegetables," Virginia is the nation's third largest producer of fresh tomatoes. You will also find potatoes, green peppers, and snap beans, as well as many other fresh vegetables. Lastly, in the "Grains" group Virginia farmers produce corn as well as wheat.

Procedure

1. Display a poster of the food pyramid (you may find this at www.mypyramid.gov).
2. Discuss the food groups and examples within each category. Ask students to share what they had for lunch. Write the foods included in the meal on the board and then have students sort them into the appropriate categories.
3. Discuss the importance of choosing foods from each of the food groups as well as healthy choices within each group. Point out that each of the food groups has foods that you should eat more often than others – these are represented by the wider base at the bottom of the pyramid. For example, low fat yogurt versus ice cream. Also point out that some of the stripes are larger than others – this means that you should choose more foods from these groups.
4. Pass out grocery store circulars and markers to students. Remind students that the



different food groups are represented by different colors on the pyramid. Have students use the appropriate colored markers to circle the various items in the ads. For example, students will circle the chicken, steak, and eggs in purple while they'll circle the bread and cereal in orange.

5. Have students share a few of the items that they circled. Discuss those items whose ingredients contained multiple food groups.
6. Next pass out one paper plate to each student. Have them cut foods out of the circulars and paste them to their plate to create a meal. They must include at least one item from each food group.
7. Students may share their meals and display around the classroom.

Extension

Bring in examples of healthy snacks for students to taste and enjoy! For example, fruit with yogurt dip and whole grain pasta salad tossed with chopped veggies and grilled chicken cubes.

