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Kids in Nutrition

Most kids eat what their parents pack for lunch and don't really think about it. Others complain about what their parents pack and refuse to eat it in protest. Either way, most kids aren't reading nutritional labels or thinking about why getting their daily value of iron is important.

A new partnership with students from Tufts University is trying to change that.

Kids in Nutrition is a nonprofit that empowers the younger generation to lead sustainable and healthy lives through nutrition and food sustainability education. Their mission focuses on getting kids thinking about how our individual dietary choices impact ourselves and the world around us. Students from Tufts University have been teaching an interactive curriculum over a seven week period, making connections with our kids, and inspiring them to think more critically about what they eat.

“We have loved seeing how the kids are so excited to share their favorite foods and how they apply to each lesson. They are truly curious and excited to learn. They remember concepts from previous lessons and are building their knowledge about how nutrition helps us live happy and healthy lives.” -Iris, Tufts volunteer

One week focused on water and sodium. Students learned about hydration and dehydration and how much water a person needs in order to stay healthy. They learned about how much sodium is in everyday foods like peanut butter or pizza, and measured out an equivalent amount of table salt. EPH students then compared the amount of salt in common foods to the daily recommended amount of salt (for a 12 year old child, it is less than 1 teaspoon). Over time, having too much sodium can have negative consequences for cardiovascular health.

*Top:* EPH student carefully measures out the amount of salt in a serving of peanut butter. *Middle:* Uzo (from Tufts) explains the difference between “good fats” and “bad fats” in the food we eat. *Bottom:* An EPH student colors in the outline of a human heart—arteries are drawn in red, and veins are drawn in blue.
Preschool Teachers Attend NAEYC Training

Five of the Preschool staff attended an early education conference hosted by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children. The conference, hosted in Mansfield, offered an opportunity to learn among other early childhood educators from across the state. Workshop topics ranged from "Responding to Big Emotions" to "Strategies to Transform your Circle Time", and teachers were able to take a deeper dive into material that was of interest. The team spread out to different workshops on purpose so that they could come back together at the end of the day and share ideas.

"I chose the workshops on behavior management and gross motor play," said Jon. "We learned about how to manage challenging behaviors and also learned new games to play with the kids outside." For instance, he learned a variant on musical chairs that offers kids who get "out" ways to stay engaged with the game.

For some teachers, attending the workshops was affirming that they already do things right. As Florie explained, "I left the Infusing Mindfulness workshop feeling pretty proud that we were already doing a lot of what the presenter was talking about. Like the way we talk to students about their feelings. We say things like I can see that you're mad right now, it's okay to be mad rather than dismissing their feelings. That's what the presenter was talking about, and we already do that!"

Sandi expressed a similar sentiment; hearing from teachers at other preschools made her feel proud of the way EPH already does things. She has been focused on improving the morning circle time, and it was helpful to see that the Green Room has become a long way down how circle is used to be. Still, it was a good refresher and reminder of some fun ideas—like bringing more props into circle time, or giving clipboards for students to draw during transition times.

Sheri attended a workshop called "Trusted to Co-Raised a Child." One of EPH's goals in the past year has been to strengthen the home-school connection, and this workshop offered ways to put that into practice.

The most surprising and meaningful part of the conference was being able to spend time together outside of the classroom and spend a weekend away as a team. "The whole experience of going to the conference together and spending the night at the hotel really built camaraderie and solidified us as a team," said Sheri. Melanie totally agreed, "The best part was being able to spend time together outside of work. We laughed a lot. We don't always get to see each other like that, and we really needed that time. When we came to work on Monday it felt different, we felt refreshed."

Everwood Camp Parent Open House

It was the first warm Sunday in April, and an excited group of parents and students boarded a big yellow bus and drove down to Sharon, MA for a Everwood Day Camp open house. About 20 people attended in all, both returning and first-time visitors. There were activities planned for the kids, information sessions for the adults, and a chance to make s'mores over the campfire for everyone.

Summer Camp has been a cornerstone of the EPH experience for decades, and a quintessential part of childhood for many. But some of the parents in our community didn’t have the opportunity to attend camp as a kid, and are curious what the experience is all about. Parents were able to tour the property with the camp directors, visit the lake, view the cabins, and hear about what a typical day at camp is like.

Meanwhile it was a day packed with fun for the kids. Counselors opened up the main lodge for activities, including a rock climbing wall and indoor Gaga Ball pit (a favorite). Joe’s Crazy Critters was there with a bullfrog, bunny rabbit, and assortment of reptiles that kids could pet and hold. There was an arts and crafts station where students could make their own wind chimes, and an area to build forts with large, soft blocks.

"It was like a little snapshot of camp life," explained India, the Afterschool Director and Camp Liaison. It was a gorgeous day, and everyone came back excited for the upcoming summer at camp.

EPH Named Community Partner in $1.5 Million, Multi-Year Grant

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care recently awarded a nearly $1.5 million multi-year grant to Somerville Public Schools (SPS) to expand access and improve the quality of its local early education system. The Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPII) will allow SPS and local early childhood providers to work collaboratively toward a more equitable and accessible early childhood system across the city.

At EPH, the grant will support new materials and furnishings in classrooms, stipends for teachers to attend workshops, more professional development and curriculum alignment, and services to support children and families such as early screening and mental health and behavioral consultations.

"Our progress so far is really built on the strong relationships we have with our community partners who work hard every day to provide early education and care for children and families," said Dr. Kuh, the Director of Early Education for SPS. "These collaborations afford the opportunity to work side by side with teachers and directors to build quality together. The CPII funding will allow us to continue this important journey with renewed energy, confidence, and financial support as we lay the foundation for a lifetime of success for generations of children in our community."