

Portland Pyramid Power Program

Food & Fitness Choices for Winners

With all the news of soaring obesity rates among children, there's reason to take heart in a program in Portland that's based on tried and true practices. "It's all about helping kids make healthy choices and learn to balance nutrition and physical activity," explains Renee Carr, who started the Portland Pyramid Power Program using an activity-based model she helped develop ten years ago to make learning about nutrition fun. "What started as a pilot program for 200 kids at a summer camp has grown to reach over 10,000 kids in Portland with 40,000 contacts during the school year."

Lessons in nutrition, food safety, and physical activity are team taught by OSU Extension education program assistants with physical education, health, and classroom teachers in 21 Portland K-8 schools where 50 percent of the students are food stamp eligible. "The curriculum was developed by OSU faculty using current research and best practices," explains Renee who is a program manager for the Extension Family and Community Development program. "It's based on the new MyPyramid.gov, national health and PE standards, and has been through a peer-review process." Three school districts are very willing partners with more than 100 staff providing in-kind matches that augment funds from the Oregon Family Nutrition Program.



Young students in Deb Madore's physical education class at Faubion School show off their Pedometer Pals, which keep track of their physical activity.



Pals to Play With

With years of experience making nutrition and physical activity fun, Renee and her staff are pilot testing **Pedometer Pals** at this summer's programs to give kids an exercise "companion" that shares their interests. Pedometer Pals play soccer, roller blade, jump rope, play hula hoop, and run with kids at play each day. And every one of the 10,000 children in the program has a pedometer to use at school. "While measuring their steps, we play games that correlate to nutrition messages to show how food and physical activity are linked," Renee explains. "Our goal is to help them make active lifestyle choices now and throughout their lives." It's a coordinated message taught in physical education and health classes and reinforced throughout schools in posters, public announcements, libraries, and with education service district nurses and opportunities created to prepare healthy meals and share recipes through a one-time family-style food prep/cooking experience. As the saying goes... results are in the numbers: Individual schools reported that students ate 30 percent more fruits and vegetables, sales of pizza went down 25 percent, sickness was down 10 percent due to regular hand washing, and demand for water went up and soda pop went down.



Renee Carr likes to think of herself as a nutrition and physical activity cheerleader as she and her staff visit teachers and kids at 21 schools with the PPPP program. Her motto is "Keep the messages simple and encourage them to make changes one small step at a time."



Find healthy recipes in English and Spanish at <http://healthyrecipes.oregonstate.edu/>

Get physical activity and nutrition tips at www.mypyramid.gov