Note to Educator: MyPlate is based on 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans to help consumers make better food choices. MyPlate’s easy-to-read graphic, i.e. a plate, reminds Americans to make healthy food choices from the familiar five food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, protein (meat/beans), and dairy). The plate graphic is particularly appealing to children as it visually provides ratios of the five food groups, i.e. importance of eating more vegetables than protein.

The MyPlate Bulletin Board Kit features the United States Department of Agriculture’s selected messages, designed to help Americans build healthy diets. The following guide provides educators with a mini-lesson to introduce the MyPlate concept to students.

About the author: Kathy Chatelaine has dedicated her life to partnering with children and their families in the discovery of their gifts. She holds Minnesota teaching licenses in Elementary Education, Middle School Language Arts, Parent Education, and Family and Consumer Science. Kathy is the former coordinator of Early Childhood/Family Education programs in the Owatonna School District; a parent educator; a former 9-12 FACS teacher; a staff development coordinator; and contributing writer at LZE. She has served on Minnesota family education boards. Mrs. Chatelaine currently teaches 3rd grade at St. Mary’s School in Owatonna, MN.
Choose MyPlate.gov
Let’s eat for the health of it

Message One: Choose MyPlate.gov Let’s eat for the health of it

Look at the icon in the left corner. What do you observe?
✓ Plate divided into four sections and a glass.
  (Discuss five food groups: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Proteins, and Dairy)
✓ Each section is a different size.
  (We need different amounts of food from each food group.)

Additional comments:
» Place setting helps us remember how much of each type of food we should eat each day.
» When we follow the guidelines, we’re “eating for the health of it.”
» Point out the words: Choose MyPlate.gov

We can go to this website to:
▪ Find additional information about healthy eating.
▪ Determine the amount of energy – based on our gender, age, height, weight, and physical activity – that we need to eat each day.
▪ Plan menus to support nutritional goals.

Message Two: Eat the right amount of calories for you

Introductory Activity:
» Take a balloon. Blow enough air in it so it is ½ full. Ask: What happens if I put a little bit of air in this balloon? (It won’t float; looks wimpy, etc.)
» Then ask: What happens if I put too much air in this balloon? (It will pop.)
» Finally, after blowing the right amount of air in the balloon and tying it off, ask: What happens if I blow just the right amount of air in the balloon? (We can bop it around; it looks like a balloon; it does what it was meant to, etc.)

Just like air in a balloon, for you to be healthy, it is important to know how much energy your body needs each day, and then choose the types and amounts of food needed to make this happen.

Calories are the amount of energy we get from a food. The number of calories you need each day is determined by your gender, age, height, weight, and physical activity.
How do you find this out?
Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov

**Note to Educator:** If your computer or SMARTBoard is available, go to site. Go to “I Want To... “ and click on “Get a personalized Plan.” Demonstrate how to discover the amount of energy/calories they need each day by entering Gender, Age, Height, Weight, and Physical Activity. You can also show, based on their personal information, the amounts of food needed from each of the five food groups.

Use the numbers that you discovered to help you to make healthy choices of what to eat each day.

**Message Three: Enjoy your food, but eat less**

Why do we eat?

**Students may come up with:**

✓ Energy (calories that are needed to do what we need throughout our day)
✓ Nutrition (vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates, fat)
✓ Tastes good
✓ For fun
✓ Social time
✓ Family together
✓ Rituals and celebrations

As Americans, we need to pay attention to how much we eat. If we eat too little, our bodies are tired, we get sick more frequently, we run out of energy. If we eat too much, our bodies store the extra energy as fat. We have a more difficult time playing, our clothes don’t fit well, we’re tired a lot, we get sick more. It’s important to eat the right amount of energy (calories) each day.

**Some tips:**

» Think before you eat. Ask yourself:
  - Am I hungry?
  - Do I still need something from this food group?
  - Will this food help my body be healthy?

» Eat slowly, enjoying the taste and texture of the food.

» Eat without doing anything else. In other words, choose not to read, watch TV, etc., as you eat. Your food will taste better and you won’t eat too much!

» Eat when you are hungry.

Have you ever eaten so much you feel “stuffed?” How does that feel? Stop eating when you are “satisfied,” not full. (What does satisfied mean?)
Message Four: Avoid oversized portions

A portion is how much or a particular food you eat at one setting/time.

To stay healthy, it’s important to know how much of a food should be eaten at a time; in other words, how large of a portion you should eat.

Many of us are used to eating more of a certain food than we need. Can anyone think of an example of this? (large bowl of cereal, quarter pound burger, super sized servings, large popcorn, etc.)

Did you know the portions served at many restaurants and fast food places are large enough for two – or more – people?

**To help eat the right sized portions . . .**

- Cook at home more often, portioning out food before you eat.
- Place food on smaller sized plates, bowls, and glasses. How would this help to eat the right sized portion? *(Your plate will look fuller and the portions will look smaller;)*
- When you eat out, choose a smaller size menu item; eat only until you’re satisfied and take home the rest; order one item to share.

*Think of a food that you might be eating too large a portion of. Think of a plan to eat the right sized portion. After a minute: Turn to your neighbor and share.*

Message Five: Foods to eat more often/Foods to eat less often

Look at this card. Do you see how it’s divided into two parts? Let’s read the title of each part: **Foods to eat more often. Foods to eat less often.**

Now look at the gold side. What foods do you see? *(blueberries, grains, yogurt, lettuce)*

What food groups are represented? *(fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy)*

Why are these foods important to be healthy? *(contain nutrients needed for health, including potassium, calcium, vitamin D, fiber)*

These food groups should be the foundation of each of your meals.

We’ll return to the dark side on the right. First, let’s explore these foods for health.
Message Six: Make half your plate fruits and vegetables

Look at the MyPlate. How much of the plate has fruits and vegetables? (half of it)

Give each student a piece of paper: Think of one of your favorite fruits. Write or draw it at the top of your paper. Now think of one of your favorite vegetables. Write or draw it at the bottom of your paper. As time permits, have each student share their favorite fruit. Repeat with the vegetables.

(Extension: Create a pictograph or bar graph that displays the data of favorite fruits and vegetables.)

When you choose vegetables, think color, particularly red, orange, and dark-green vegetables like tomatoes, carrots and sweet potatoes, broccoli and spinach.

How can you include fruit in your breakfast? Lunch? Dinner?

Message Seven: Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk

To be healthy, it’s important to drink milk. Milk provides nutrients – like calcium and vitamin D – that help our bones grow strong. Fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk provides the nutrients your body needs without the extra fat and calories/energy found in 2% and whole milk.

Notice the other foods on this card. Turn to your neighbor and tell them what food made from milk on this card you enjoy.

Message Eight: Make half your grains whole grains

Another food group on MyPlate is grains; also known as whole grains. Whole grain foods use the entire seed (grain) within the food (whole grain breads, whole grain pastas, whole grain cereals, whole grain crackers, etc.). To determine if a food is whole grain, check the listed ingredients. When possible, choose whole grain bread instead of white bread, brown rice instead of white rice, whole wheat tortillas instead of white tortillas, etc. Be on the lookout this week on what whole grain foods are served in the school cafeteria!
Message Nine: Choose a variety of protein foods

The last food group is protein. How much of our MyPlate is protein?

What protein foods do you know of?

Note to Educator: If your computer or SMARTBoard is available, go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov. Go to “I Want To. . . ” and click on “Learn about food groups” then “Protein” then “View Protein foods gallery.” This provides children with pictures of a variety of foods in the protein group as well as demonstrates the correct portion size.

What is one protein food that you ate this week? Which protein food have you never eaten?

To be healthy, choose lean, or low-fat, proteins like skinless chicken breast, almonds, black beans, cashews, salmon, shrimp, tofu, and lean deli ham and turkey.

On the back of your piece of paper, write the name of or draw a protein food that you might try.

(Back to Foods to eat less often)

Let’s return to the dark side. To be healthy, there are some foods that we should eat less often. These foods are high in solid fats, added sugars, and/or salt (sodium). They are low in nutrients like vitamins and minerals.

Can anyone think of any of the foods to eat less often?

✔ cookies, cake, pie, candy, sodas, ice cream, potato chips, sausage, bacon, hot dogs, etc.

Are foods to eat less often found on MyPlate?

✔ No.

How often should we eat these foods?

✔ Occasionally, but not everyday.

These foods are high in solid fats, sugars, and/or salt. What isn’t in these foods?

✔ Nutrients we need for health.

What’s a “less often” food you enjoy?

What could you eat instead of these “less often” foods?

✔ Fruit instead of candy. Lean meat instead of ribs. Low-fat pudding instead of ice cream.
**Message Ten: Compare sodium in foods**

Does anyone know why salt is used in food?

✓ For taste
✓ To preserve

Did you know that

» Many Americans eat too much sodium (salt)?
» Too much sodium can contribute to disease?
» There is “hidden salt” in our foods?

What to do:

» Reduce the amount of salt you add to food, including with the salt shaker.
» Check the amount of sodium on the Nutrition Facts label on products.
» Choose “low sodium,” “reduced sodium,” or “no salt added” foods.
» Prepare and eat fresh meats, vegetables, rice, pasta vs. processed or canned goods.
» Cook and eat at home vs. restaurant or fast food eateries, when possible.

**Message Eleven: Drink water instead of sugary drinks**

What is your favorite beverage?

Did you know that

» Soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks are a major source of added sugar – and calories – in American diets?
» A single bottle may contain 2 or 3 servings, so you may need adjust the numbers listed on the Nutrition Facts label depending on how much you drink.
» The healthiest beverage is water!!

Our bodies are 60% water.

Water helps us digest food, transport nutrients throughout our body, removes waste products, keeps our skin fresh, etc.

Think of what beverages other than low-fat milk and water you drink. Make it a goal to substitute water for these beverages!
Message Twelve: Be physically active your way

What is a physical activity (or exercise) that you enjoy? (Allow time for sharing.) Do you do this physical activity at least three times/week? If not, think of a physical activity that you participate in at least three times/week?

To be healthy, it is important to choose and eat the right amounts of the right kinds of foods. It is just as important to choose to be physically active, i.e. move your body! And, it is more fun to be physically active doing something you enjoy!

Quick tips:

» Choose activities that you enjoy and that your body can do.
» Try to do the activity for at least 10 minutes. Later do another activity for at least 10 minutes until you have been active for at least 60 minutes each day.
» Find friends to be active with! Join a team, if possible.
» Bring water to drink. This will keep you refreshed throughout your activity.
» Try a new activity.
» Make it a goal to have activities that help your strength, endurance, and flexibility.
» You will be healthier as you spend more time being active.

Conclusion:

When we make good food choices and are physically active, we are more likely to stay healthy. Using MyPlate messages, we can choose to eat foods that are high in nutrients that will give us energy and help us to grow. Balancing healthy eating with at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day will contribute to a healthy life.