

Instructional Activity: Identification of Individual Food Preferences.

Target Population Students with Developmental Cognitive Disabilities (DCD), i.e. MMMI and MSMI. This activity can be adapted in a variety of ways to teach students with a variety of ability levels and of a variety of ages.

Instructional Area/Curricular Area:

Ability Level: Students with a) moderate to severe mental impairments and b) moderate to severe physical impairments

The essence/core curriculum areas covered in this lesson are: Communication, Literacy, Personal Resource Management, Recreation/Leisure and Sensory

Previous Mn. Graduation Standards which align with this activity are: Write & Speak (Interpersonal Communication), Inquiry & Research (Research Process), Scientific Concepts & Applications (Concepts in Biology), and Physical Education & Lifetime Fitness (Individual and Community Health)

The IEP instructional areas that are integrated with the activity are:

- Communication Skills
- Home Living/Daily Living
- Personal Health
- Skills related to the interpretation of Sensory Information
- Social/Behavioral Skills

The skills that are addressed and align with core curriculum areas are: Interpersonal Communication, Research Process, Concepts in Biology, Individual and Community Health

Duration of Instructional Activity: The duration of this activity depends on each student's ability level and interest, available time and frequency of instruction. This lesson can be a one-half hour session or via a lesson plan that spans a period of several days or weeks. This lesson may lead into other lessons such as a cooking unit, a healthy food choices unit, menu planning unit, or the study of food groups. This lesson may culminate with a party that offers favorite foods of each the participants.

Topic/Skill Outcome: Knowledge of personal food preferences, whether by the student or the primary caregivers, is necessary in order to plan a well-balanced diet for all persons regardless of their functional levels, including these students with DCD. This knowledge will help the student or caregiver to use the student preferences in planning a healthy diet for the student. A few students who are limited by dietary and physical needs, e.g. those who are tube fed, may be able to participate by tasting small amounts of foods which are compatible with their feeding plans and through this experience will gain sensory enrichment.

Purpose of Lesson/Objective: To encourage each student a) to identify her or his own food preferences, b) to recognize that each individual has unique food preferences, c) to

learn how food preferences affect the food choices she/he makes, d) to learn how to integrate food preferences into a healthy diet. In order to do this, DCD students require levels of support from moderate to pervasive. Some students will only be able to demonstrate food preferences; food choices will be made for these students. Other students may be able to choose their own foods at school or at home. Eventually after studying food groups and what constitutes a healthy diet, a few students may be able to make food choices based on knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet.

Materials/Equipment/Environment:

-Data Collection Form

-Depending on the food to be prepared, a variety of prepared foods (e.g. crackers, chips, bread, and peanut butter/jelly) and natural foods (e.g. fruits, vegetables, raw and cooked) may be used. Lessons may begin with relatively simple, basic foods from the five food groups from which to prepare foods by cooking and baking. Also useful are foods from school lunches and foods sent from home for the group to share and compare.

Large button switch (e.g. AbleNet “Big Red”)

Switch control box for use in controlling appliance with a switch (e.g. AbleNet Power Link

Food processor

-Voice output switches may be used for a student a) to request “more” or b) to declare “all done”/“finished” with one food or another (choice of 2 foods, e.g. chicken patty vs. salad at lunch) and the number of requests for each recorded.

Eating utensils and dishes/cups.

Group Size: 2-6

Lesson Procedure:

Students are offered tastes of various foods. One lesson may consist of tasting crunchy/salty and/or sweet snack foods sent from home to share. Another lesson may consist of tasting a variety of fruits. Another may explore tastes of vegetables, with and without dips or dressings. Another lesson may offer deserts, either pre-packaged to sent from home. E.g. cookies, cake, pie. Meat may be the focus of another group. Another group may offer or contrast warm and cold foods (even the same food served warm and cold, e.g. cheese sandwich vs. grilled cheese).

A student is scored through systematic observation of her/his reactions to foods and verbalizations, if applicable.

A student’s acceptance or refusal of each food is recorded and the observer initials each entry. Note that students may refuse food because of taste, smell, an unfamiliar eating utensil, an unfamiliar caregiver, or other reasons not directly related to the food.

To ascertain that a student is refusing a particular food and to rule out factors external to the food itself, the student may need to have two or more opportunities to taste the food during each of two or more sessions/days.

A log is kept for each student and preferences for each food group summarized. Copies may be sent home for use in planning balanced diets for each student. Favorite foods may be used as treats, rewards, motivators.

A tasting party may be planned for the end of the unit to which another class, parents, etc. are invited. Some of the food is prepared by the students in cooking lessons and includes some of each student's favorite foods.

Additional activities include:

- Food collage prepared by each student given assistance as needed. Included are foods from each of the 5 food groups sorted by "favorites" and not so favorite foods.

- Study of the 5 food groups, tasting foods from each of the groups.

- Field trip to a restaurant.