



# Balancing Food & Play

The Promoting Healthy Weight Initiative was established in 2006 as a way to collectively pool resources within the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to address the rising rates of childhood obesity. A multi-disciplinary team developed an integrated, interactive third-grade enrichment curriculum on nutrition and physical activity. The curriculum is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

## Relevance

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans reiterate the importance of maintaining a healthy weight throughout the lifespan. Obese children have an 80% chance of staying obese their entire lives. In Texas, 20% (one in five) of children are obese. Childhood obesity is associated with an increased risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, and adult overweight/obesity.

MyPyramid for Kids describes a healthful diet and encourages physical activity for children ages 6 to 11 years. Some research suggests consumption of sweetened beverages may be associated with increased body mass index (BMI). Additionally, most Texas children do not get the recommended amount of 60 minutes of physical activity each day. In Texas, only 1/3 of third-grade children can complete all components of the FitnessGram test. Furthermore, children spend 4.5 hours a day in front of a screen, exceeding the Academy

of Pediatrics' recommendation to limit screen time to 2 hours or less.

## Response

The *Balancing Food & Play* curriculum was designed to improve knowledge and behaviors related to:

- snacking on fruits and vegetables,
- drinking milk with meals and water with snacks,
- encouraging at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and
- limiting screen time to two hours or less per day.

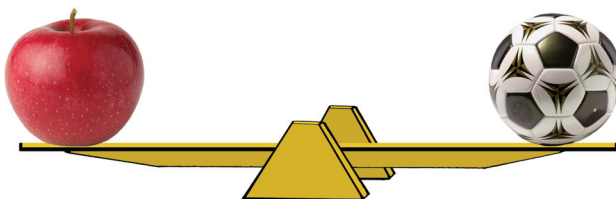
## Results

To date, approximately 5,800 students have received the curriculum. During 2010, Texas AgriLife Extension Service agents recruited third-grade classroom teachers to participate in the program. A total of 1,589 matched pre/post student surveys from 27 counties were analyzed.

At the completion of the curriculum, behavior and knowledge improvements occurred, including:

- The percentage of students who correctly identified how much of a dinner plate should be covered with vegetables or fruits and vegetables increased from 30% (506) to 62% (993).
- The percentage of students who correctly identified the number of teaspoons of sugar in a regular (not diet) soda increased from 20% (340) to 64% (1,018).
- The percentage of students who reported always or almost always drinking regular (non-diet) soda decreased from 22% (371) to 12% (199).

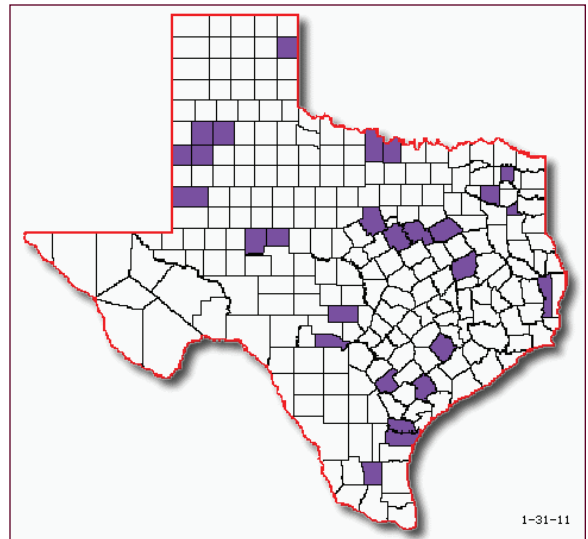
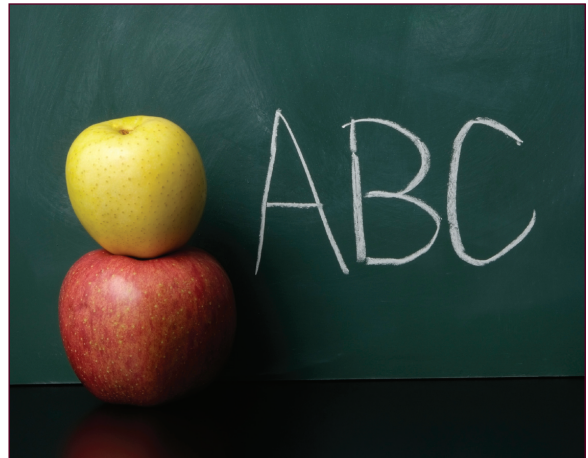
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- The percentage of students who correctly identified 60 minutes as the recommended amount of daily physical activity increased from 47% (781) to 83% (1,317).
- The percentage of students who correctly identified the recommended screen time limit of 2 hours or less increased from 24% (400) to 70% (1,113).
- The percentage of students who reported having 60 minutes or more of physical activity increased from 54% (906) to 71% (1,115).
- The percentage of students who reported having excessive screen time (3 hours or more) decreased from 20% (349) to 14% (210).

Student comments regarding *Balancing Food & Play* include:

- “I’ve been making a Healthy Plate, and I’ve been physically active.”
- “Made sure I drank water with snacks and milk with breakfast, lunch and dinner.”
- “I’ve barely watched TV, and I play outside more.”
- “I jog with my Mom instead of watching TV.”



Texas Counties Participating in Balancing Food & Play in 2010.