



Child Care
Center
implementation
snapshots

Hillcrest Children's Center



Family-Style Dining

Hillcrest's preschool children really seemed to enjoy family-style dining. Some of the WIACC grant funds were used to purchase child-size family-style dining equipment—child-size pouring pitchers, utensils, bowls, plates, and cups. The staff found that it was a great way to teach portion control and sharing. Children are able to select what food they want to eat and the amount of food, and strengthen their basic gross motor skills when passing bowls of food to one another.

Staff and Parent Outreach

Hillcrest kicked off the WIACC grant by conducting a staff training on NFSMI's *More Than Mud Pies* and Dr. Craft's *Active Play!* manual. They incorporated *Active Play!* activities and newly purchased WIACC grant equipment into their annual family barbecue in order to get parents on board with physical activity and nutrition education.

Nutrition Education

Children and teachers read the book *I Will Never Not Eat a Tomato*, and then drew pictures about the story. One parent donated green tomatoes and the children made fried green tomatoes with a skillet set-up in their classrooms. Almost all of the children tried the tomatoes, though few children liked them. Most of the activities Hillcrest conducted were hands-on. Hillcrest staff found that this kinesthetic approach helped the children remember the things they learned.

The children were able to actively participate in cultivating their own vegetables, allowing them to learn what certain produce items look like in their original form. They were then able to create meals with these homegrown produce items. Cooking can be a scientific experiment that you eat, and through this experiment the children of Hillcrest were able to learn the different sources of food, how they grow, and how they can be prepared. Simple nutrition education activities like this not only educate children about what food looks like in its original form, but through preparing the food themselves they learn new vocabulary, basic quantity concepts such as measuring, and basic food safety awareness, in addition to improving gross motor skills.

Hillcrest Handy Hint: Child care centers and parents should subscribe to *Chop Chop* magazine. It's filled with good cooking ideas for children!



Rock of Ages Daycare

Parent Involvement

Rock of Ages Daycare actively involved and educated the parents on the WIACC grant process and their goals. They provided parents with an informational newsletter that explained how to eat healthy on a budget, as well as some tips, tricks, and information on the benefits of family-style dining. Rock of Ages noticed that children's desire to eat certain foods increased as parent involvement with their children's meal times increased. Almost every physical activity and nutrition education activity had these elements of parent involvement.

Physical Activity

Rock of Ages was able to purchase a large parachute, jump ropes, soccer balls, hula hoops, and other miscellaneous materials for the implementation of physical activity and *Active Play!* activities. The children loved the games they were able to play with their parachute, and Dr. Craft's Alligator Pit seemed to be a favorite. Rock of Ages now plays Alligator Pit and Swat the Fly at least once a week. Rock of Ages staff said, "Children love the new games we play, and they really help burn off built-up energy!"



Family-Style Dining!

Nutrition Education

Rock of Ages children made "food cards" with the help of staff. These cards list foods on one side, with "healthy choice"/"unhealthy choice" on the back side. The center uses these flash-cards to teach kids which foods are healthy and which foods are unhealthy. At the end of each day the children took home the "food cards" they created so they could practice with their parents too.

Rock of Ages worked hard to get their parents actively involved in cooking with their children. Children made a recipe book of their favorite healthy recipes to take home and share with their families. Children were even able to sample some of their favorite recipe items from the Rock of Ages garden, also funded by the WIACC grant. This will aid in the development of the children's preference for foods that are homegrown, and teach them how food gets from its original form to their plates. It's also a great way to incorporate healthy foods into some of their favorite recipes!



Tanaina

Child Development Center

Tanaina Child Development Center kicked-off the grant by hosting a staff in-service that focused on developing activities to facilitate outdoor play and to promote gross motor development with their toddlers and preschoolers. Teachers worked together to create activities that could then be incorporated in the classroom.

Nutrition Education

Tanaina values healthy cooking, so each teacher implements cooking activities into his or her year-round curriculum. The fall season provided Tanaina with numerous opportunities to conduct such activities. The children prepared apple pies and applesauce from crab apples that grow on their playground. They were also able to explore pumpkins by cutting them, baking the seeds, and making pumpkin pies. These activities usually span a week or two because they greatly emphasize this step-by-step preparation (harvesting the apples, cleaning the apples, cutting and peeling the apples, etc.). This slow process allows children to learn more about the food items they are working with, while providing ample time to learn proper food preparation.

Physical Activity

Tanaina CDC had students come in from an Anchorage elementary school in order to promote literacy within their center. The reading buddies also turned into their physical activity buddies. After reading books with their elementary-aged friends, children at Tanaina would grab their buddy and head outdoors. Staff at Tanaina created an outdoor curriculum involving long walks around their campus. These walks included spurts of walking, running, skipping, crouching, sneaking, and dancing. These walks were specially geared toward developing young children's basic gross motor skills.



Enep'ut

Children's Center

Nutrition Education

Enep'ut conducted two weeks of daily nutrition-based lessons on healthy eating, USDA's "My Plate", and proper table manners. During each lunch session teachers would lead discussions about the different food groups while the children enjoyed their healthy meals—family-style!



In addition, Enep'ut planted a garden containing tomato, marigold, basil, lettuce, chives, parsley, spearmint, lemon mint, purple cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini, nasturtium, carrot, green onion, and sweet pepper. All of the gardening materials were purchased with the WIACC grant funds they received. The garden has been the focal point of several other nutrition education activities. They have had lessons on where food comes from and how plants grow. On nice days, the children often go sit out in the garden and sketch what they see. So far, the students have harvested and served two salads from their garden. Enep'ut Children's Center grew a giant zucchini, which they named Zeke. Zeke was the main attraction for the children at Enep'ut because of his enormous size. They decorated him and entered him in the Tanana Valley Fair in the "Food as Art" category and won second prize!

At the beginning of summer, Enep'ut's pre-school children were given the opportunity to plant one sunflower seed each in a pot of their own. They cared for them all summer, watching them grow until they became too big for their original seed containers. Staff explained to the pre-schoolers that plants can get "root-bound" and need more room to grow. The children understood this concept, and helped in the repotting process. They avidly watched their sunflowers grow, often giving their teachers exciting updates.

USCG Kodiak

Child Development Center (CDC)



Girl enjoys fresh radishes

Physical Activity

Since the WIACC grant began, the Kodiak CDC has emphasized physical activity and nutrition on a regular basis. February 2012 was “Healthy Bodies: Fitness and Nutrition” month. They did a series of physical activities throughout the month, while also hosting a mini-olympics at the end of February to wrap-up their month of fitness and nutrition-based curriculum. Mini-olympic highlights included a jog-a-thon, jump rope, weight-lifting (made from old milk jugs and sand), bowling (made with cardboard and foam balls), and a healthy foods bean bag toss. Many of the activities were created using recycled items, so they could be easily duplicated by participants in their home. The children of Kodiak CDC loved their month of fitness and nutrition-based activities.

Community Outreach

Shortly after the spring 2011 regional WIACC trainings, the Kodiak CDC participated in a local children’s fair. They used this as an opportunity to educate the Kodiak community about the importance of physical activity in the lives of children. Several *Active Play!* activities were demonstrated, and educational brochures about the importance of physical activity were made available for parents and attendees to take home.

Nutrition Education

Kodiak CDC hosted a “healthy foods tasting party” as a way of implementing nutrition education. Each classroom prepared its own healthy foods for the party. The toddler room made a rainbow out of bite-size fruit pieces; the preschool room made a yogurt parfait, and the pre-k room made edible sculptures out of vegetables. The children loved that they were not only able to create their own dishes to share, but also able to try new fruits and vegetables.

Farm to Child Care

With the help of the Farm to Child Care grant, USCG Kodiak CDC planted a variety of seeds and seedlings in their garden. Several of the seeds and seedlings flourished during the warm summer months, and the children were able to harvest pumpkins, zucchini, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, radishes, beets, peas, potatoes, swiss chard, lettuce, and lots of nasturtiums. The children helped with the general upkeep of the garden and were excited to come in every day to see how the garden developed.

In late July the kids were finally able to harvest their radishes. The Kodiak CDC’s cook helped the kids wash and cut the radishes. They were served raw! The Kodiak CDC thought this was a great opportunity for all of the children. It’s not often that children get to grow their own foods, and taste their final product.

Imagination Station

Family Style Dining

Imagination Station has been using family-style dining with their children 3 years and older for several years.

However, after receiving training focused on family-style dining they decided to implement it with their 2-year-olds as well. With WIACC grant funds they were able to purchase small, lighter child-size cups. Since the purchase of the cups they have been able to get two toddler rooms completely off of sippy cups. They have also purchased child-size serving utensils so the children can easily serve themselves. Imagination Station reported that the children love serving themselves, and seem to feel more independent and in control of the food they eat. Staff found that with patience and practice the 2-year-olds were able to pour their own milk, serve themselves, and pass food to one another.



Kids playing "Clean up the Backyard"

Farm to Child Care

Imagination Station used funds from the Farm to Child Care grant to create their very own on-site garden. The garden became the centerpiece of their nutrition education activities. In the spring of 2012 they purchased various fruits and vegetables for the children to transplant. They held a parent lunch with plenty of healthy snacks and the parents helped their children transplant all of the fruits and vegetables. All participants loved the activity. The children participated in the upkeep of the garden all summer, and were able to learn several things about healthy eating from their garden.

At each meal time the children identify each fruit and vegetable on their plate, and thanks to their garden, they've been able to try several fruits and vegetables in their raw form. Imagination Station staff stated, "Children seemed more inclined to try new food now that they have seen where their food comes from, how they can identify each food, and what they should call it."

Petersburg Children's Center

Farm to Child Care

The preschoolers at the Petersburg Children's Center have been having a blast this summer planting vegetables and herbs. From carrots and radishes to basil and thyme, they have been avid planters. Perhaps more importantly, the children have been fully involved in the process from the very beginning. They learned how to get the starter boxes prepped, soak the various seeds, plant the soaked seeds and then transfer them to the garden box.

According to the Petersburg Children's Center pre-school teacher, "All of the gardening around our school has truly sparked their interest in all things flora, as well as their sense of responsibility in helping to keep our starters and garden



Kids watering their garden

flourishing. Every morning they come in eager to see how much our starters have grown and changed since they last saw them." The children frequently check to see if watering is needed, and eagerly volunteer to help rehydrate their garden.

Teachers at the Petersburg Children's Center have been avidly observing the successes and failures of their first venture into a large garden at their school, not to mention sharing in the joy of the process with the children. They have been diligently taking notes to improve the process for next summer, and are excited that they were able to participate in the Farm to Child Care grant as it greatly enriched the curriculum at their center.



Family-Style Dining!



Chugachmiut

Head Start



Hands-on activity with squash

Physical Activity

Children have been introduced to many activities in the classroom, including Dr. Craft's "Clean up the Floor" game, a favorite at their Nanwalek site. Children at the Seldovia site enjoy daily yoga, while children at the Port Graham site love the new scoot boards they were able to purchase with WIACC grant funds. Due to inclement weather in the winter, games such as "All Stop and Go to Music" and "Music and Movement" have become popular activities. They are simple games and don't require a lot of space or supplies.

Nutrition Education

Staff at Chugachmiut Head Start conduct bi-weekly nutrition education activities with the children. These activities range from cooking activities to food tasting parties. Chugachmiut created a nutrition education activity worksheet that teachers complete for each bi-weekly nutrition activity that is conducted at each site. It lists the supplies needed, which activity they did, and what the children liked the best. Staff are also required to check the type of activity that was conducted (cooking, discussion groups, games, gardening, taste testing, etc.). Staff at each Head Start then submit their nutrition education activity worksheets to the Chugachmiut director monthly for review, which ensures that all staff are completing nutrition education activities on a weekly basis.



RurAL CAP

Head Start

Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAL CAP) is one of Alaska's largest Head Start organizations, with 26 sites located throughout the state. RurAL CAP has been implementing principles of the WIACC best practices for years, so this grant provided them with additional resources to further implement physical activity and nutrition education.



Physical Activity

Various supplies were purchased for each of RurAL CAP's sites so that indoor physical activities could be conducted more frequently and with greater ease. One of their larger purchases was stepping stones for each site. These stepping stones are actually plastic, and can be laid out throughout a classroom. Children can step, skip, hop, or jump from stone to stone. Combining the stepping stones with music and movement is another fun way to implement this activity. The stepping stones are simple, but they direct a child's movement and help with balance. Many of the RurAL CAP sites reported that the stepping stones have become a daily activity.

Nutrition Education

Most of RurAL CAP's sites had previously been conducting nutrition education activities at least once a week, but after the grant began a few sites increased their activities to at least 2–3 times per week. Such activities include: cleaning and gutting cultural fish, growing orange seeds and plotting their growth, preparing yams, and creating playdough out of edible materials. Each of these activities is guaranteed to increase children's gross motor development, teach them about basic quantity concepts, and enrich their vocabulary. It was reported that the children loved the new activities, and staff noticed that they seemed more responsible and apt to assist with the clean-up process for cooking activities.