

On Site Nutrition Education

Students Learn from Daily Life

(Courtesy of Qiu-Chan Qiu at the Division of Student Affairs and Campus Security)



To improve the fitness of school children, the K-12 Education Administration of the Ministry of Education has vigorously promoted a school fitness counseling and promotion program and commissioned the School of Nutrition and Health Sciences at the Taipei Medical University to plan a series of fitness classes to enable elementary school children to learn nutritional knowledge in the classroom and apply it real life situation. As a result, the students' concentration and learning efficiency have been greatly improved, and they are amazed by how fun these classes can be.

To learn about school children's health and understand the current implementation of school diet education, Wu-Xiu Zhang, member of the Control Yuan, visited the Taipei Municipal XinYi

Elementary School, accompanied by Sun-Lu Fan, Political Deputy Minister of Education, to observe how the class was being conducted. Mr. Zhang expressed his recognition of the school's learning model, in making good use of the resources for on site nutrition education. He stated that children needed to learn to develop a balanced diet from daily life to ensure their healthy growth, and that in addition to the delivery of the nutrition knowledge in the classroom, putting knowledge into practice was even more helpful for students to learn.

This activity is an extension from the textbook for elementary and junior high school students. In addition to letting students learn how to read nutrition facts, they are taught how to calculate the sugar content in food. Meanwhile, on the topic of the “sugar mission” in one of the health and physical education classes, the teacher explained the harm to health caused by eating too much refined sugary food. Students were taught how to read nutrition facts and to identify the “sweet traps” in the diet. The teacher also designed a folder, in which the nutrition facts about gummy bears to which children are familiar with were taken as an example; students needed to use gummy bear stickers to mark the food items they have eaten, figure out how many gummy bear stickers to which their sugar intake was equal, and paste the stickers in the folder.

Right after the class, the students were tasked with a mission; the teacher led the students to a PX Mart near the school. Students were grouped into teams and competed against each other to find the food items with the highest and lowest sugar contents. The team that found the food items with the greatest differences between the highest and lowest sugar contents won the game. The students were very joyful and engaged in discussions. At the end of the class, they shared their experience and was amazed to discover how they enjoy such learning experience. In the future, they also would like to accompany their moms to the supermarket and demonstrate how to calculate calories and identify the traps of sweets. Some parents also participated in this activity, and they were very supportive of such teaching activities in the hope that the Ministry of Education and schools would promote it further.

Political Deputy Minister Fan said that in addition to domain courses in the 12-Year Basic Education curriculum, schools could plan school-based courses to strengthen and promote healthy diet education based on school-based needs, district characteristics, or local life, to enable students to learn from daily life, develop their own healthy diet literacy, identify nutrition facts of food, and have the ability to choose healthy and safe food. In this class observation event, the knowledge was applied on site to facilitate students' learning and to motivate them to put the knowledge learned into practice. The Ministry of Education will further explore students' habits of eating breakfast and cultivate their correct eating habits. Mr. Zhang and Political Deputy Minister Fan both agreed that parents could be invited to this joint learning process, thereby making learning more effective.

The Ministry of Education stated that children's healthy growth required a balanced diet. In recent years, more and more countries have started to motivate children to visit supermarkets and grocery stores to learn about various foods and understand the nutritional content of food. According to international literature, children's visits to supermarkets have had a positive impact on their selection of ingredients and development of regular eating habits as they would choose foods that were less likely to cause obesity and changed into a more diverse diet by eating a variety of nutritious foods. Therefore, the Ministry of Education will continue to motivate schools to incorporate relevant issues into classes, implement teaching activities on site, and enable children to take a healthy head start.