

Introduction to MyPlate

6th – 8th Grade

Overview

(Materials adapted from www.learningzonexpress.com)

Depending upon the prior knowledge of the students, this overview of MyPlate might be a quick review lasting 1-2 days OR it might be a series of short lessons over a longer period of time (4 days). Read the activities and decide on a suitable breaking point. Materials for ALL activities are listed below.

Materials:

- One colored MyPlate printout for class to see
- A black and white MyPlate Printout for each student
- Crayons/colored pencils for students
- Crazy Colors worksheet for each student
- Timer
- Visual of a whole grain
- Optional: Food labels from various foods – some containing whole grains and some not
- 4 x 6 index card – one per student

Teacher:

Show students the MyPlate poster. Introduce the food groups. As you introduce them to the categories, have students color their plates and label the categories. When all categories have been introduced, have students partner with another students and list at least 10 foods that fit in each category. Discuss as a whole class to see if there are gaps with any particular food group before moving on to a more detailed review of each food group. Emphasize the importance of eating a variety of healthy foods and how easy it can be.

I. Fruits and Vegetables:

Tell students that in addition to the colorful logo, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) also listed several important health messages to help people make healthy food choices. Look at the MyPlate poster. Ask students how much of the plate is covered with fruits and vegetables (1/2). The first message is:

Fruits and Vegetables: *Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables.*

Have students write the health message in the rim of their plates near the Fruit/Vegetable section. Ask the students how much of their plates are *normally* taken up by fruits and veggies. Ask them how they feel about trying new fruits and vegetables. What could make it easier? Read on to find out WHY we should eat lots of fruits and vegetables.

Health Benefits of Fruits and Vegetables: Fruits and vegetables provide dietary fiber which helps keep our digestive systems health. They also provide Vitamin A, which helps our night vision and Vitamin C which helps heal our bodies.

List and discuss the following tips:

- ❖ Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables. (Which forms are the best? All have health benefits, but fresh, whole fruits and vegetables have lots of dietary fiber, so they're best.)

- ❖ Eat red, orange, and dark green vegetables, such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and broccoli, in main and side dishes. (What are some examples of dishes you like that include these foods?)
- ❖ Use fruit as snacks, salads, or desserts. (Why is fruit a good dessert choice?)
- ❖ Keep raw, cut-up vegetables handy for quick snacks. (List some veggies you could use for this.)
- ❖ Choose whole or cut-up fruits more often than fruit juice. (Why is this a good idea? Dietary fiber.)
- ❖ Check juice labels to ensure that they are 100% juice.

Activity: Crazy Colors

Set a timer for 1 minute, 2 minutes, or whatever amount fits the needs of the students. Instruct the students to list as many fruits and vegetables as they can for each color (You may decide to have students work in pairs for this.) When the timer sounds, have the student groups take turns sharing the foods they came up with for each color. If another pair/group has the same foods, EVERYONE must cross off the foods from their lists. The winning group is the one with the most foods left on the list.

II. Grains:

Begin by asking the students to name some grains. (*Wheat, corn, barley, oats, rice, etc.*) Refer to MyPlate visual for “Grains” portion. Tell them that the second health message is:

Grains: *Make at least half of your grains whole.*

Have students write this health message on the rim of the plate near the grain section.

Health Benefits of Grains: Grains provide dietary fiber, B vitamins and minerals. These nutrients help keep our digestive system healthy and provide energy to our bodies.

Explain that every grain that grows is a whole grain in its ORIGINAL form. A whole grain is made up of three parts. (Show the visual of a whole grain). Each of the three parts contains important components for our nutrition. The bran is the outer shell of the grain which protects the seed. It has fiber and B vitamins. The endosperm is in the middle of the grain and provides carbohydrates and protein which give us energy. The germ is the inner part of the grain that sprouts when the grain is planted. It has antioxidants, vitamin E and B vitamins and healthy fat. Emphasize that at least half of the grain choices we make should be whole grain.

The difference between whole grains and refined grains is that whole grains include all three parts of the grain and refined grains have been stripped, leaving only the endosperm portion of the grain.

Optional: Divide the students into groups of 3-4 students and give each group a food label. Allow a couple of minutes for the students to look at the labels. Then ask each group to tell whether or not their food contains whole grains or not and how they can tell.

III. Protein and Dairy:

Refer to the section of the MyPlate poster that shows Protein. Begin by telling students that protein is necessary for building strong muscles and body tissues and that it helps sustain energy so that we do not get tired as quickly. There are many sources of protein – meat and non-meat. It is important to eat from a variety of protein sources. Protein portions should be small and lean (not fatty).

Have students write the following health message on the rim of the plate near the Protein section.

Protein: *Vary your protein food choices.*

Health Benefits of Protein foods: Protein foods provide protein, B vitamins, Vitamin E and minerals. Seafood provides Omega-3 fatty acids. These nutrients are good for building tissues, carrying oxygen throughout the body, and helping release energy in the body.

Refer to the section of the MyPlate poster that shows Dairy. Explain to students that dairy products contain calcium – a nutrient that helps build strong bones and strong teeth. Using non-fat (skim) or 1% dairy products still gives a person the same amount of calcium as 2% or whole milk products but with less fat and fewer calories.

Have students write the following health message on the rim of the plate near the Dairy section.

Dairy: *Switch to non-fat (skim) or 1% dairy products.*

Health Benefits of Dairy Foods: Dairy foods provide calcium, potassium, and Vitamin D. These nutrients are good for building strong bones and teeth and maintaining healthy blood pressure and proper levels of minerals.

Draw a T-chart on the board or a large piece of paper. Label one side protein and the other dairy. Have students list as many foods as they can think of that would fit in each of these categories. Then have volunteers circle the healthiest choices (i.e. grilled or broiled meats, low fat or skim dairy products.)

VI. Physical Activity:

Begin by listing several activities like walking, swimming, gardening, jumping, skipping, etc. and ask the students what those things are examples of (physical activity). Explain to the students that physical activity is a very important part of staying healthy. The energy we get from food is used when we are active.

Have students write the following health message on the bottom of the MyPlate poster.

Be Physically Active Your Way Every Day

Most children and adolescents need **60 minutes** of physical activity each day. Ask the students to share their favorite ways to be physically active. Then have them list some ways that they can be active and ways that their families can be active together.

V. Goal Setting

Say to students: *Now that you have learned a little more about MyPlate and making healthy food and activity choices, it's time to summarize what you've learned and it's time to come up with TWO personal goals to help you stay healthy. On the 4 x 6 index card, you will share your knowledge with a family member and you will write down your two goals -- one healthy eating goal and one physical activity goal.*

Postcards should include:

- 1-2 key ideas of the MyPlate logo;
- 1-2 health messages related to food groups and/or activity;
- One personal healthy eating goal for this week;
- One personal physical activity goal for this week.

Use Formulaic Language as desired for goals:

(Healthy Eating Goal)

This week I plan to _____.

(Physical Activity Goal)

This week I plan to _____.

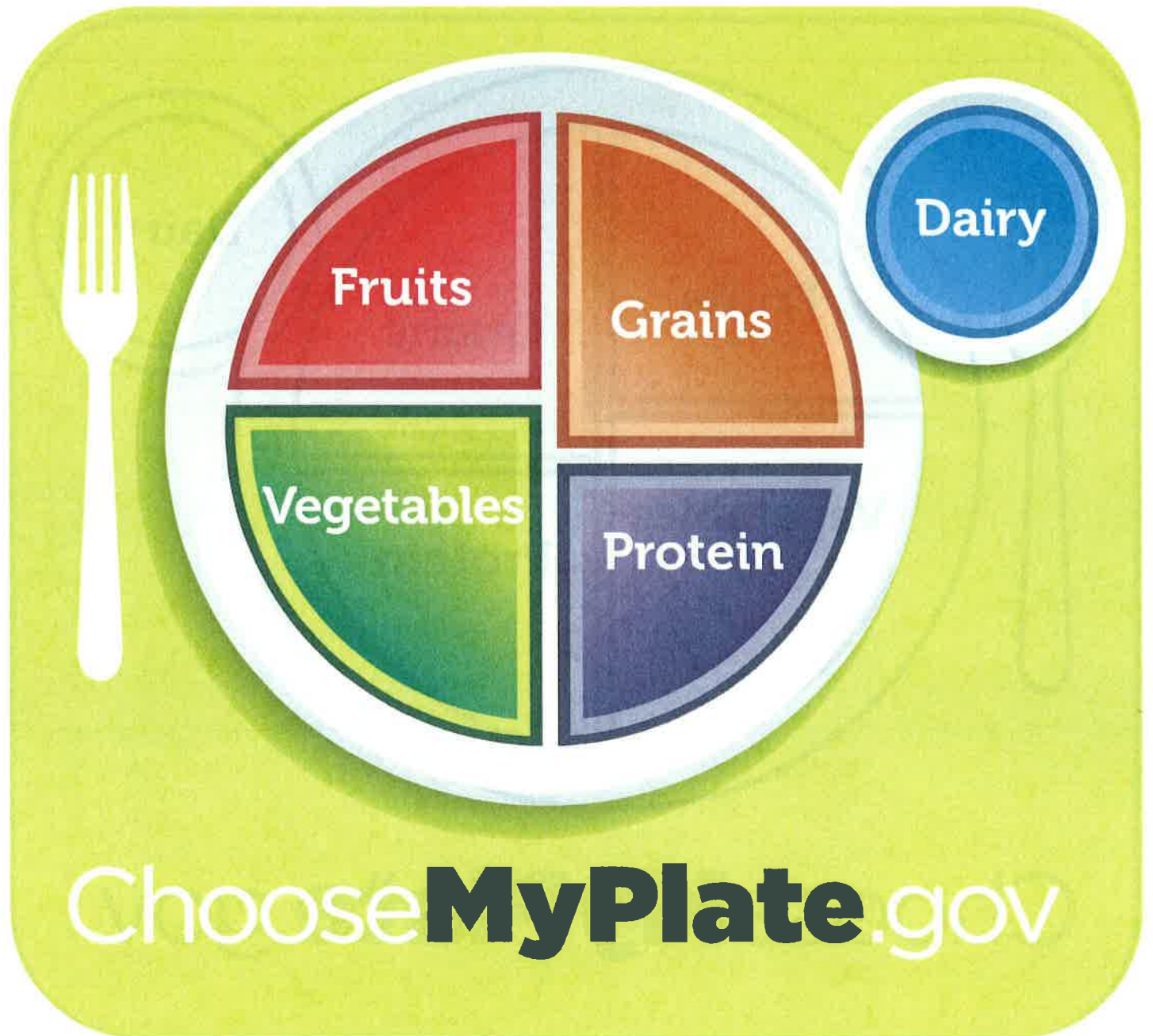
On the other side of the card, students should draw a colorful visual that incorporates the MyPlate logo and illustrates the topics and goals that they've written about.

Share with the class as time permits.

On the following week, have students re-visit their goals and rate themselves on how successful they were in achieving their goals (5 = Very Successful; 1 = Not Successful). Have them explain their rating.

Food Group Health Benefits
Grades 6-12

Food Group	Examples of Foods	Health Benefits
Vegetables Group (3 servings)	Fresh, canned, dried, and frozen vegetables; 100% vegetable juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide dietary fiber, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, potassium: are naturally low in calories (but watch out for high-calorie sauces!) ▪ These nutrients help keep the digestive system healthy, help with night vision, and help heal the body.
Fruits Group (2 servings)	Fresh, canned, dried, and frozen fruits; 100% fruit juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide dietary fiber, Vitamin C, potassium; are naturally low in calories (but be sure to eat more whole fruits and less 100% fruit juice.) ▪ These nutrients help keep the digestive system healthy and help heal the body.
Grains Group (6 servings)	Bread, cereal, rice, tortillas, crackers, noodles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide dietary fiber, B vitamins, and minerals. ▪ These nutrients help keep the digestive system healthy and provide energy to the body.
Protein Group (2 servings)	Meat, poultry, fish, peanut butter, eggs, dried beans, nuts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide protein, B vitamins, Vitamin E, and minerals. Seafood provides Omega-3 fatty acids. ▪ These nutrients are good for building tissues, carrying oxygen throughout the body, and helping release energy in the body.
Dairy Group (3 servings)	Plain or flavored milk, cheese, yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide calcium, potassium, Vitamin D. ▪ These nutrients are good for building strong bones and teeth and maintaining healthy blood pressure and proper levels of minerals.



Choose **MyPlate**.gov

MyPlate Final Assessment



Crazy Colors Worksheet

Green	White	Red	Yellow/Orange	Blue/Purple

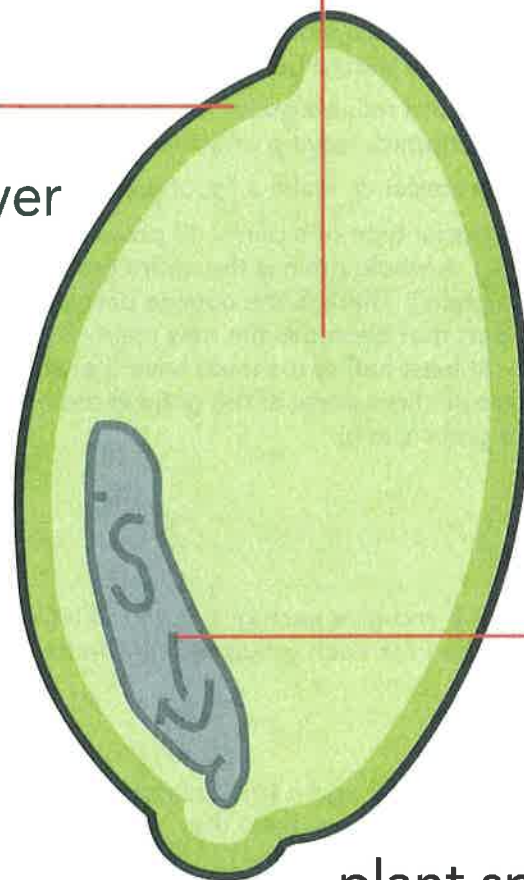
THE Whole Grain Kernel

Bran

This outer layer of the grain kernel is rich in fiber.

Endosperm

The bulk of the kernel that contains small amounts of vitamins and minerals. Refined grains contain mostly endosperm.



Germ

This inner layer is where a new plant sprouts. The germ is rich in nutrients.

**"100%"
whole grain uses
all 3 parts**