This event promotes awareness of new foods and healthy eating among K-2 students through fun food stories and tasting activities.

**Objective**
Build literacy skills, encourage reading, and generate discussions about nutritious choices, trying new foods, and being physically active.

**The Event**
Students in kindergarten through second grade read books about healthy food choices and physical activity, and books that involve characters who model healthy behaviors or overcome barriers to lead a healthy lifestyle. Schools can involve multiple grades by matching older students and younger students to read together as “book buddies.” You may also consider inviting notable members of the community to read with the students. A reading challenge, where students read as many books as they can in a month from a list, can be another way to get students involved.

Once the reading is finished, classes can discuss the story and the importance of making healthy food and physical activity choices. Classes can then taste foods related to the book or enjoy storybook-themed meals in the school cafeteria.

**Planning**

**Gather a broad team.** Teachers, librarians, school nutrition directors, and wellness committee members can work to identify books that feature healthy food and physical activity choices, making sure to take into consideration the reading curriculum criteria, book availability, and overall themes. Many schools already plan activities for National Reading Month in March, so this activity may be easy to integrate into the school schedule at that time.

**Choose a theme.** You may wish to focus the reading selections around a specific theme in order to make discussions and tasting activities easier to implement, as well as make the overall message more memorable. Some themes and the books that relate to them are listed below.*

### Breakfast
- *Good Morning, Little Fox*  
  By Marilyn Janovitz (North-South, 2001)**
- *The Hatseller and the Monkeys: A West African Folktale*  
  By Baba Wagué Diakité (Scholastic Press, 2000)**

### Dairy
- *A Big Cheese for the White House: The True Tale of a Tremendous Cheddar*  
  By Candace Fleming (DK Publishing, 1999)
- *Make Me a Peanut Butter Sandwich and a Glass of Milk*  
  By Ken Robbins (Scholastic, 1992)
- *Raising Cows on the Koebels’ Farm*  
  By Alice K. Flanagan and Romie Flanagan (Children’s Press, 1999)
Planning (cont’d)

Food Groups and Meals
The Beastly Feast
By Bruce Goldstone (Henry Holt and Company, 1998)**
Discover MyPlate Emergent Readers
By the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2014
Zachary’s Dinnertime
By Lara Levinson (Star Bright Books, 2012)**

Fruits and Vegetables
Count on Pablo
By Barbara deRubertis (Kane Press, 1999)
Growing Vegetable Soup
By Lois Ehlert (Sandpiper, 1990)
Pumpkin Soup
By Helen Cooper (Doubleday, 1998)
The Trouble with Cauliflower
By Jane Sutton (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2006)
The Ugly Vegetables
By Grace Lin (Charlesbridge Publishing, 2009)**
Yum! ¡Mmmm! ¡Qué Rico! America’s Sproutings
By Pat Mora (Lee & Low Books, 2007)**

Gardening/Farm-to-School
Apple Countdown
By Joan Holub (Albert Whitman & Company, 2009)**
In the Garden with Dr. Carver
By Susan Grgsby (Albert Whitman & Company, 2010)**
Little Critter: A Green, Green Garden
Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!
By Candace Flemming and G. Brian Karas (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2002)
Plant a Little Seed
By Bonnie Christensen (Roaring Book Press, 2012)
The Surprise Garden
By Zoe Hal (Scholastic, 1998)
Tops & Bottoms
By Janet Stevens (Harcourt Children’s Books, 1995)**
Water, Weed, and Wait
By Edith Hope Fine and Angela Demos Halpin (Tricycle Press, 2010)**

Grains
The Little Red Hen and the Ear of Wheat
By Mary Finch (Barefoot Books, 2001)**
The Tortilla Factory
By Gary Paulsen (Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1995)

Physical Activity
The Busy Body Book: A Kid’s Guide to Fitness
By Lizzy Rockwell (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2004)**
Froggy Plays Soccer
By Jonathan London (Viking, 1999)
Giraffes Can’t Dance
By Giles Andraea and Guy Parker-Rees (Orchard Books, 2001)**
Planning (cont’d)

Junie B Jones is Captain Field Day
By Barbara Park (Scholastic, Inc., 2001)

The Listening Walk
By Paul Showers (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991)

Petite the Cat, Play Ball! (My First I Can Read)
By James Dean (Harper Collins, 2013)

Rainbow Magic: Sports Fairies (series)
By Daisy Meadows (Scholastic Press, 2003)

Scholastic Reader Level 1: Bob Books #4: Outdoor Adventures!
By Lynn Maslen Kertell (Scholastic Inc., 2012)

Watch Me Throw the Ball!
By Mo Willems (Hyperion Books for Children, 2009)

Trying New Foods
Bread and Jam for Frances
By Russell Hoban (HarperCollins, 1964)**

Delicious! A Pumpkin Soup Story
By Helen Cooper (Doubleday, 2006)**

Green Eggs and Ham
By Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1960)

I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato
By Lauren Child (Candlewick Press, 2000)**

Two Bite Club
By the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2013

Yoko
By Rosemary Wells (Hyperion Books, 1998)

*Mention of these materials is not an endorsement by the United States Department of Agriculture over other materials that may be available on this subject.

**Discussion questions for this book are provided in Team Nutrition’s Discover MyPlate curriculum (see appendix, page 94).

For children reading chapter books, some popular selections can still provide opportunities to discuss nutrition and physical activity. For instance, The Chocolate Touch by Patrick Skene Catling (HarperCollins, 2006) can start conversations about moderation. Even Bunnicula by Deborah and James Howe (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006) can be the source of creative conversations about vegetables.

Plan how to present and sample the foods during meal times. School nutrition staff can incorporate the reading theme into cafeteria displays, such as labeling special menu items as a book character’s “favorite” or creating storybook-themed menus or food tastings.

Make it fun and memorable. Promote your event with posters and announcements, or in the school newsletter or emails (see page 3 for promotion tips).
Team Up For Success

School
• Ask older students to volunteer to read books to younger students.
• Hold a book parade, where children dress as a character from a book they’ve read and carry foods or sporting equipment featured in the book.
• Create a special display in the library of the books on your students’ list. Create a chart for children to track how many books they read. Give children a small nonfood prize or coupon when they have read a certain number.

Classroom
• Tie books to lesson themes using Discover MyPlate (see appendix, page 94), which includes a Book Club section that connects activities with educational standards for kindergarten.
• If your school offers the Breakfast in the Classroom program, read stories about nutrition and physical activity to children as they eat breakfast.
• Consider a book bag program, in which families check out a bag containing a book, some discussion questions, a simple recipe or physical activity related to the book, and a journal. As students check out their book bags, they can use the journal to describe their experiences with the book and the recipe/physical activity. At the end of a designated period, share some of these experiences with the class.

Cafeteria
• Incorporate story themes into the cafeteria décor and menu. Invite children to decorate placemats with a food-related image from their stories.

Community
• Invite a local children’s book author, chef, or registered dietitian to read a book to the students and lead a discussion on what they like about trying new healthy foods and being physically active.

Media
• Ask students to write about their experiences with a food featured in one of their books. Post those writing assignments on the school’s Web site, along with recipes that feature the book’s food and lists of other books that discuss healthy foods.

Home
• Send students home with recipes that include foods featured in their books, as well as additional books about food recommended by librarians, to encourage their families to read with them and try the foods at home.
• If your school offers a family literacy night for parents and children, create a display or handout of books with positive nutrition and physical activity messages. Provide parents with a copy of Team Nutrition’s MyPlate for Kindergarten Emergent Readers (see appendix, page 97) to take home and read with their child.
Rural Vista School District in Hope, KS, coordinated a Healthy Lifestyles with Dr. Seuss event. The event, held during Dr. Seuss Week, involved junior high and upper elementary students reading a Dr. Seuss book to younger students. Tasting stations were set up based on healthy foods featured in the book, such as a snack of green eggs and ham made with Canadian bacon. Local media highlighted the event, and both students and their families had a fun and educational experience.

In North Marion School District in Aurora, OR, third through fifth graders qualified for a Kids Iron Chef competition by writing nutritional essays based on literary challenges. One of the challenges posed was, “The story of Jack and the Beanstalk does not tell about the crop of beans that must have come from such a big plant. Write about what Jack and his mom did with all those beans. Were they dried beans or green beans? Did they eat them or sell them? How did they cook them?” Students with winning essays were placed on Iron Chef teams coached by a high school student. Teams then participated in a competition during an all-school assembly, preparing two recipes each for a panel of local “celebrity” judges.