

Funny Food Workshops

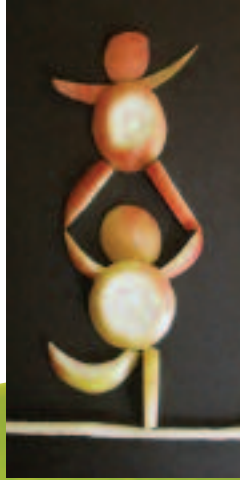
Making it fun for children to learn about nutrition by making and eating balanced breakfasts.



“It’s about balance.”

- Michelle Obama

In response to the childhood obesity and diabetes epidemic in the U.S., Claire and Bill Wurtzel lead fun workshops in schools to improve children’s eating habits. Children learn the importance of a healthy balanced breakfast, the meal that helps them focus in school. They are shown how



to make imaginative breakfasts that combine food groups. In this hands-on, playful atmosphere, nutrition lessons are learned and remembered. The Wurtzels’ experiences can be used as a guide for others to develop similar workshops wherever there is a need.

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Because Claire has worked with NYC public schools for over 30 years and knows many principals, she has access into many schools.

We began in an elementary school in a poor under-served neighborhood on the Lower East Side of Manhattan where the incidence of obesity is very high.



With the support of the principal, we met with the parent coordinator, the special events person and the nurse practitioner who was planning lessons on

nutrition. The parent coordinator was interested in having parents participate in the workshops and was eager to have the parents shop for the food. She was eager to teach the parents about foods they might not buy on their own such as whole wheat flour for pancakes. We provided the parent coordinator with a grocery list of nutritious ingredients including fruits, vegetables, low fat and low calorie products.



The parent association provided funds for the ingredients.

We led three breakfast sessions in this school for the same group of parents and their children (ages 8-11). Each week we introduced another breakfast special: pancakes, eggs and cereal.

Parents helped wash and cut up fruits and vegetables. We developed a pre and post workshop questionnaire to assess what the parents and children knew about healthy breakfasts and what they learned from the three sessions.

Our aim is to help children become more informed about what's on their plate so that they can make healthier choices.

The participants are emotionally connected to the activity and the learning is powerful. Because participants make their own funny food, they are more willing to taste foods they have not eaten before. They learn that healthy foods can also be delicious.



The First Workshop

Bill opened the workshop with a brief introduction about us. Then, images of Bill's breakfasts were projected on the smart board. Kids and parents alike loved the photos. Parents photographed the images with their cellphones. There was an exciting buzz in the room. Teachers popped in to see what was happening on and urged us to come back and do workshops with their classes. The kids were very attentive and busy identifying the breakfast images.





creating fun images. Before eating it, each person was photographed with his/her breakfast creation. The excitement was palpable. As people worked, we asked them to identify the food groups on their plates. The workshops proved to be overwhelmingly successful with every age group.

To get the participants imaginations flowing Bill led a discussion about seeing images in clouds. He then had the kids look at a pancake.



Bill explained that if you look carefully at your pancake you're likely to see what it might become. He showed that his pancake had a chin. The kids were enthralled.

Bill asked the children and parents to help him make a pancake face using food groups. They eagerly offered ideas. If Bill had already used grapes (fruit) for the eyes, he asked for another food group for the nose.

There was a table display of labeled food groups from which to make the creations. Parents and their children worked side-by-side

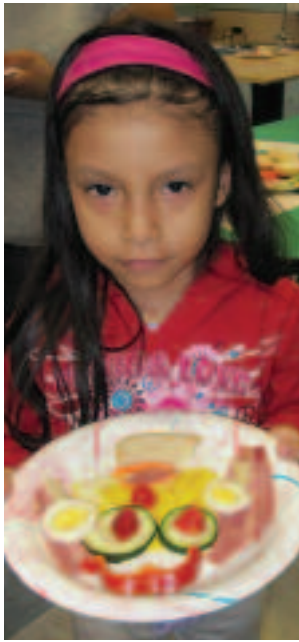


Each school has its own culture, and in some schools the workshops are for students only.

Funny Food Workshops are an effective way to learn about nutrition, develop healthy eating habits, and help prevent childhood obesity and diabetes.



Children and Parents at Funny Food Workshops



Questionnaire

Assesments show that children learn about food groups that constitute healthy breakfasts.



Before

Grace could not name the food groups.

Name Grace Date _____

Name the 4 food groups ?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

List a food in each food group ?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

After

Grace named the food groups, but was not yet able to accurately name a food in each group.

1. Fruits and Vegetables - Apple
2. Carbohydrates - Lettuce
3. Protein - Nuts
4. Fat, Oils and Sweets - ?

Name Grace K-H Date 4/15/11

Pre Test

Name the 4 food groups

1. Fruits + Vegetables

2. carbohydrates

3. Protein

4. Fat oil and Sweets

List a food in each food group

1. apple

2. lettuce

3. Nuts

4. Biscuits

Before

Liam named one food group.

Name Liam Sidibe Date 4/14/11

Name the 4 food groups

1. Fruit

2. Vegetables

3. _____

4. _____

List a food in each food group

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

After

Liam named the food groups

1. Fruits and Vegetables
2. Fat, Oils and Sweets
3. Protein
4. Carbohydrates

Liam named some healthy foods (bacon, bananas, lettuce, pancakes and syrup). He may not have understood the task.

Name Liam Sidibe Date 4/15/11

Name the 4 food groups

1. fruits, vegetables

2. vegetables

3. fat oil Sweets

4. protein carbohydrates

List a food in each food group

1. Bacon

2. Bananas, lettuce

3. pancakes

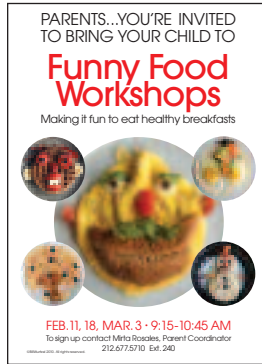
4. Syrup

Workshop Steps

Three Workshops:

A. Pancakes B. Eggs C. Cereals

1. Post a flier in the school to advertise the Funny Food Workshops.



2. Questionnaire to access children's prior knowledge of food groups.

3. Show the fun, healthy breakfasts that Bill and children have made.



4. Explain the importance of a balanced breakfast. Show poster comparing



unbalanced, typical breakfast kids eat to a balanced one with food groups noted in the new ChooseMyPlate guideline.

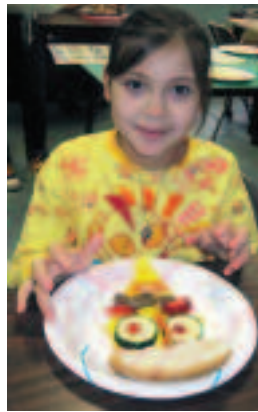
5. Demonstrate how to make the breakfasts using participants' suggestions. Ask why their ingredient selections are healthy.

6. Direct participants to table with ingredients grouped and labeled by food group.



7. Participants make their own breakfasts.

8. Have them explain why their artistic creations are healthy.



9. Take photos of kids and their work to display in the school.

10. They eat the breakfasts and taste that healthy can be delicious.

11. Questionnaire to determine what they have learned.

Ingredients



Pancakes

Prepare whole wheat pancakes of various sizes and shapes. Provide fresh and/or dried fruits, lettuce, and protein. Sweeten with maple syrup, apple sauce and honey.



Eggs

Prepare hard boiled, scrambled and fried eggs. Provide healthy meats, whole wheat breads, low fat cheese, peppers, greens, broccoli, carrots, black olives, cooked beans, and salsa.



Cereals

HOT: Old fashioned Quaker Oats. COLD: Rice Krispies, Cheerios, Cornflakes. Low fat milk. Provide fresh and/or canned and dried fruits, and nuts. Sweeten with maple syrup, apple sauce and honey.

Utensils

Plastic knives, spoons (small & large), forks, spatulas and cutting surface. Paper plates & bowls 6 to 8", mixing bowls, napkins and paper towels. Cooking: hot plate, microwave oven, and grill.



Materials

- Posters for each workshop
- Typical unbalanced vs balanced breakfast
- Bill's creations as a model for kids

Funny Food Workshops


Making it fun to eat healthy breakfasts

Unbalanced Breakfast



- Brown Carbohydrates
- Fruits & Vegetables
- Protein
- Fats • Oils • Sweets

Balanced Breakfast




- Brown Carbohydrates
- Fruits & Vegetables
- Protein
- Fats • Oils • Sweets

Pancakes

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Eggs

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Cereals

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Background

Bill “I’ve been making fun, healthy breakfasts to amuse Claire since we were married. About five years ago Claire urged me to photograph the creations. All the breakfasts are done spontaneously with simple healthy ingredients and are easy to copy or use as models.”

Claire “When I was a kid we lived in a tenement building on the lower East Side of Manhattan. We were fortunate to live directly across the street from The Henry St. Settlement House which provided quality programs and social service activities for immigrants. During the Second World War and throughout the 1040s my mother, an immigrant from Poland, attended sessions on cooking and nutrition. She was very proud, and delighted in sharing what she learned. In addition to learning how to stretch meals when supplies were scarce during and after the war, she learned about the importance of a good breakfast and how to cook vegetables to retain their nutrients.

In preparation for this piece I called my three siblings to check on my memory. Each added something. My sister mentioned that Mom learned to cook potatoes in their skins to enhance their nutritional value. My brothers reminded me that Mom learned the dietary value of raw vegetables. We all still enjoy eating raw cabbage, carrots, celery, green beans, turnips and peas.

The powerful memories of my mother’s openness to explore and change her long engrained cooking habits and her joy in learning how to prepare more nutritious meals are an inspiration. Being bombarded with news about childhood obesity and the rise in childhood diabetes, we began to explore ways to use Bill’s creative and joyful breakfasts to teach the importance of a healthy and balanced first meal of the day.

All of Bill’s breakfasts meet national guidelines for nutritious meals.”



A balanced breakfast, combining food groups, made by a child in a Funny Food workshop.

Claire & Bill Wurtzel



Claire Wurtzel has been an educator for 40 years. Her focus is on supporting teachers who work with students struggling with learning and/or behavior difficulties. Claire was on the faculty of Bank Street Graduate School for 17 years. She taught and was chair of the Department of Special Education. She works with teachers, administrators, families, psychologists, librarians, and museum educators both nationally and internationally.

Bill Wurtzel was an award-winning advertising creative director by day and jazz guitarist at night. In 1989, he switched to a full time music career. He has played with the Count Basie Countsmen among other jazz legends . Bill is a busy guitarist on the New York jazz scene (billwurtzel.com). He is a founding director of the Jazz Foundation of America, which helps jazz musicians in need (jazzfoundation.org).

Claire and Bill have been married for 50 years, have two daughters, three grandchildren, and live in New York City.

Funny Food

By Bill & Claire Wurtzel

365 Fun, Healthy, Silly, Creative Breakfasts

Published by Welcome Books to be distributed by Random House in April 2012

www.funnyfood.us





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