

# Getting Staff On Board!

Getting staff on board with healthy eating and physical activity changes is a challenge many programs face. Some staff members might be hesitant about their knowledge of what “healthy” means, while others might feel conflicted because they drink too much soda, don’t eat enough healthy foods, or spend more time in front of the television than being physically active. The good news is that Food & Fun Afterschool teaches kids, family, and childcare staff a simple set of healthy goals to live by and provides fun activities and accessible information to help change behaviors and environments. Staff are encouraged to learn along with the children and families and make healthy changes in their own lives. Below you’ll find some simple tips for involving staff with Food & Fun!

## Who & What?

All staff should understand the healthy messages of Food & Fun Afterschool. Although the whole staff does not need to know how to deliver the curriculum, it is important for consistency and clear messaging that all staff know about the basic health objectives. One way to get started is to review the **behavioral goals** and **key messages** for kids at the beginning of each unit with your staff so they have a sense of what children are learning. You could also walk staff through the **Environmental Standards for Nutrition and Physical Activity in Out-of-School Time Programs** or the **parent communications** as a way to teach the aims and rationale of the curriculum.

## Where and When?

Afterschool is a busy, bustling place! Try to incorporate review of the key messages or environmental standards into your **current routine**—maybe during a monthly staff meeting or during set up at the beginning of the afterschool day. The goals of Food & Fun Afterschool are designed to be easily incorporated into the way the program runs and shouldn’t feel like a lot of extra work. You should also try to have **trainings** and **periodic refreshers** for staff who are in charge of delivering the curriculum. This way staff (new and old) will continue to feel confident about their knowledge and Food & Fun will start to become a regular part of your afterschool program.

## Why and How?

Equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to successfully delivery Food & Fun Afterschool has many benefits! First, staff will likely gain confidence and enthusiasm for implementing the curriculum. Reviewing key messages with the entire program staff will help with consistency and facilitate program change. With these pieces in places, the curriculum will be able to make a positive impact on children and their families. Try to make use of the many materials available in Food & Fun Afterschool 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. There are staff **tip sheets** with practical strategies for making healthy changes in afterschool

programs, the **Snack Sense Guide** with healthy and low cost snack ideas, and colorful **posters** to reinforce the environmental standards.

While all staff should be expected to have a common understanding of the healthy objectives of the curriculum, it is important to work with the staff who deliver the curriculum to develop more in depth skills and knowledge. Note that there are discussion questions included in each of the sections below which can be used during trainings, meetings or one-on-one discussions with your staff. These discussion questions are designed as a jumping off point for conversations with the staff at your program.

**Getting started:** Sometimes the hardest part of taking up a new program or curriculum is just getting started! Food & Fun Afterschool 2<sup>nd</sup> edition has 11 units, each with lots of fun activities to try out. Although you can follow the month-by-month schedule on page 3 of the About Guide, you might want to **start with units that seem most exciting to your staff**. Getting started with topics that interest staff will likely lead to more use in the future! Once you or your staff choose a unit, makes sure to review the **key information for program staff** and **instructions** for the activities you will be using so staff feel comfortable with the content they will be delivering

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*Discussion Questions*

*-What unit from the Food & Fun curriculum is most exciting to you?*

*-What needs to be done to best prepare for success of this unit?*

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*Discussion Questions*

*-What are some of the healthy decisions you have made recently?*

*-How might you want to change your current behavior to be healthier?*

**Kids look up to afterschool staff:** It is important that staff role model the healthy behaviors they are teaching in Food & Fun. This means participating in physical activity along with kids as well as eating and drinking healthy during the program time. It's likely that the kids won't take the curriculum messages seriously if they see staff sitting down during physical activity time, drinking soda during the program, or regularly talking about their love of French fries and sweets.

**Considering the diversity of the children and families you serve** is key to making Food & Fun Afterschool relevant and useful. When you think about diversity this can mean the race, ethnicity, family income, disability status, age, and gender of the kids in your program. You might also think about the influences of urban or rural settings as well as neighborhoods. You can make sure to incorporate all kids' experiences by having conversations about the types of foods and drink they have at home as well as the ways they get physical activity. Many of the

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*Discussion Question*

*-How can you create a safe environment that is conducive to healthy conversations about the nutrition and physical activity choices of the kids and families in your program?*

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lessons have prompts for these kinds of conversations, but they are a great way to start off any unit!

**Talking about nutrition & physical activity:**

Encourage staff to start each unit by teaching the key messages for kids.

They should always try to focus on the positives of

feeling great and being healthy over talk of losing weight. Try teaching staff to use kids' questions as "teachable moments"—if they don't know the answers they can always look them up with the resources in each unit. Check out these questions for ideas to start dialog with kids, and encourage staff to role play with one another for practice.

**Food & Fun Question for Kids**

- What types of foods do you eat with your family?
- What is your favorite way to get physically activity?
- Why is it important to eat whole grains/be active etc?
- How can you try to eat more fruits/drink more water etc.?