

# **You Are What You Eat**

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## **Abstract**

The intention of the curriculum unit, “You are what you eat”, is to initiate a “health literacy” program for children in a kindergarten classroom. Lessons focus specifically on nutritional issues as they relate to everyday concepts such as eating, shopping, cooking, and food groups. Children will learn the origins of familiar foods, observing and describing the characteristics of different foods in the food pyramid. The kindergarten students will learn the role of eating healthy foods in helping the body grow and providing energy to play as well as keeping the mind healthy and preventing them from getting sick.

The specific topics I reviewed related diet and hunger to health and learning. Proper nutrition underlies good health. Diseases directly caused by improper nutrition, from the effects of malnutrition to obesity and its various comorbidities, abound and strike too many children in the United States. Indeed, malnutrition hinders cognitive development and performance. There is also a great deal of evidence on *acute* effects of food on learning and academic performance—findings that were made most relevant to school aged children with the institution of school breakfast programs. Therefore, the purpose of this curriculum unit will be to help children recognize what a balanced diet is and its importance for staying healthy and strong. If these lessons are taught early to children, many adult public health issues may be prevented.

The unit should be completed after the second marking period when students have developed basic concepts of print and can engage in and experiment with reading and writing. They can also match spoken words with written ones and are able to write most letters and some high frequency words. “You are what you eat”, a title which in and of itself uses high frequency words and is simple to remember, will enable students to understand and use information to make healthy choices that could reduce their potential (numerous) health risks. The teacher will provide opportunities for children to write through daily journal writing and create a health literacy rich environment by incorporating a word wall for the unit. The lessons can be completed in three to five days during the health and science classroom time periods.