

Tips from the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center for Bringing the Nutrition Detectives™ Program to Schools

Thank you for your interest and enthusiasm for bringing this program to schools in your local area! We are happy to share some tips, based on our own experience and those of our community partners. Please refer to the general guidelines below, which will help you get started in the process.

Determine the best way to approach the school or district

To gain the attention – and ultimately the acceptance – among decision-makers in a school system, it is important to learn the proper channels of communication. If you already hold a position within the school or district, you may already know who to approach with your idea of bringing in this program. If not, you will need to find out how best to proceed.

If your goal is to bring the program to an individual school, it might be best to start first with the principal, then the teachers, then the parent-teacher organization (PTO). If your goal is to bring the program to an entire district, you need to determine the proper channels within which to communicate your goal. The communication channels, process, and decision-makers will vary from one district to the next. Ultimately, your efforts will be most successful if you can gain the interest, support, and sanction of the school district superintendent, because he/she can communicate the importance of the program to principals, school personnel, and the PTO. However, if you are operating from outside the school system, you may not always have direct access to the superintendent.

One initial portal to the superintendent or other high-level school administrators is through a school district's wellness committee. Typically, these committees meet on a regular basis to discuss health-related issues and programming, and include representation from school personnel and community partners. If you can find out when the committee meets, you may be able to gain permission to get your idea on their agenda so you can present it at the appropriate time. If they like your idea, they may offer advice on how next to proceed with gaining additional acceptance.

Provide information about the Nutrition Detectives™ program

Once you have gained the attention of the decision-makers, you next need to show them why you feel it is important that they offer the program. Some may be satisfied with a brief description of the program, while others will want evidence of the program's effectiveness.

In brief, here the main "selling points" of the program:

- *All program and evaluation materials are available free of charge.*
- *The program involves little or no cost to implement,* other than photocopying the teacher manuals and optional Nutrition Detectives handouts, or buying samples of food products for the Nutrition Detectives hands-on activity (which can be re-used during future teaching sessions).
- *It requires little advance training or preparation to implement,* other than reviewing the materials and reading the manuals. An optional training PowerPoint provides an overview of information covered in the teacher manual, and can be used as part of a 2-hour teacher training workshop.
- *It takes little time away from the existing curriculum.* Nutrition Detectives is a 90-minute program.
- *It offers schools flexibility in how and when they offer the program.* Nutrition Detectives can be taught as one 90-minute session, two 45-minute sessions, or three 30-minute sessions.
- *It is meant to complement current health promotion programs,* not to replace them.

It is up to you to decide how much specific information about the program materials is appropriate to share. We have assembled a variety of information that you can use to let schools know about the program. These include the following:

- Flyers that describe the program
- Instructor training PowerPoint that can be used to present an overview of the program to school administrators and/or as part of an optional teacher training workshop
- Publications that document our successful partnership with the Independence School District in Missouri to offer this program in their elementary schools
 - Katz DL, Katz CS, Treu JA, Reynolds J, Njike V, Walker J, Smith E, Michael J. Teaching Healthful Food Choices to Elementary School Students and Their Parents: The Nutrition Detectives™ Program. Journal of School Health. 2011 Jan; 81(1):21-28.
 - Treu JA, Hinson J, and Walker J. Inspiring School-Based Solutions to Childhood Obesity. Childhood Obesity 2011 June; 7(3): 242-244.
- Program materials (PowerPoint or video*, teacher manuals, handouts, and evaluation materials) that can be downloaded free of charge from any of the websites listed below:
 - The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center at <http://www.yalegriffinprc.org/>
 - Program developer Dr. David Katz's website at <http://www.davidkatzmd.com/>
 - The Turn the Tide Foundation at <http://turnthetidefoundation.org/>

* To present the program, instructors can choose between a PowerPoint that lets them interact directly with the students, or a video version of it being taught by program developers Dr. David Katz and Dr. Catherine Katz to a group of students in a "magical classroom," with special effects used to convey the program's messages.

PLEASE NOTE: We ask that you give proper credit to Dr. David Katz and Dr. Catherine Katz as the developers of this program, rather than presenting it as your own program.

Be patient and respectful of the acceptance process within the school system

If you don't already play a role within the school system, you may not be aware that acceptance of a new program can take time. It may take even longer for someone coming to the district as an "outsider", even if the idea being shared is a good one. In addition to channels of communication about a new program idea, there are also channels of decision-making with regard to accepting the program. Sometimes the process can take weeks, months, or even a year or longer, depending on what plans have already been made for a current school year. Sometimes, even after a wellness committee or principal has approved a program, it may require further approval from the superintendent of schools and the district's board of education. There may be issues or questions raised concerning will play the role of implementing the program, what time commitments are involved, and/or whether the program will take away time from other school subjects.

We do not mean to discourage you, but rather to advise you to be prepared in advance so you can address any questions and alleviate any concerns on the part of administrators. If you are coming in as an outsider and plan to serve as the instructor (or bring in a team of others who will do so), have a plan for how you might work with teachers or other school personnel to do so. If you plan to charge a fee to deliver the program yourself or provide teacher training, be clear about this in advance and emphasize that this fee is separate from the cost of the program materials, which are meant by Dr. Katz to be offered free of charge.

Work with schools to deliver the program

If the school administrators accept your idea, congratulations to you on your hard work and persuasion! Now you will need to take additional steps to gain “buy-in” from other school personnel, who may not yet be aware of the program and who may play a role in program implementation.

These school personnel will also need to learn about the program, the value of the program, what steps will be involved in bringing in the program, and what particular role – if any – that they will be asked to play. If the program will be offered in multiple classrooms, someone will need to play the role of coordinating everyone’s schedules, arranging times for the program to be taught, and work out the details of who will implement the program.

In working with the schools, you need to be respectful of their wishes for how this plan will be worked out, and for whether the coordination of this will be done in collaboration with the principal or other school administrator, or arranged directly between you and school personnel.

Regardless of how the planning is done, we advise that you PLAN EARLY and take into consideration daily schedules, academic calendars, time required for standardized testing, the potential for weather-related cancellations of the school day, and other issues that could affect program implementation.

Thank you for serving as an ambassador for our program!

We wish you the best in bringing our health programming into your local area, and hope you enjoy the process and the program! Thanks for playing a role to benefit the health of our nation’s children and “turn the tide” of childhood obesity.