



# Chapter 1

## What is Power Panther Preschool?

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### Power Panther Preschool is...

an activity of the 2004 Team Nutrition grant awarded to Child Nutrition & Wellness, Kansas State Department of Education. The program is designed to encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables and promote physical movement for preschool age children.

Power Panther Preschool was developed to:

- Increase children's exposure to a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Encourage children to learn to enjoy fruits and vegetables
- Provide fun, seasonal experiences with food
- Make trying new foods a positive experience
- Encourage children to become more physically active
- Help children learn more about how their bodies function through movement



Eat Smart. Play Hard.<sup>SM</sup>  
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

### Power Panther is...

the spokescharacter for USDA's **EAT SMART. PLAY HARD.** campaign.  
**EAT SMART. PLAY HARD.** is Power Panther's motto.

### Team Nutrition is...

a USDA program that encourages children to make healthful food choices. Team Nutrition is a nationwide, integrated initiative designed to encourage children to:

- Eat a variety of foods
- Eat more fruits, vegetables and grains
- Eat lower fat foods more often and
- Be physically active

## Before you begin...

- 🐾 Review this Implementation Guide to familiarize yourself with the requirements (page 3)
- 🐾 Review the activities and determine how many lessons you will implement (**a minimum of 5 lessons is required**). Lessons are listed on page 10
- 🐾 Review the contents of the tote bag listed below
- 🐾 If you need help or have questions, contact the Team Nutrition Consultant for your area of Kansas (page ii)

## General Information & Project Overview



Power Panther Preschool is a ten-lesson health education program for Kansas preschool age children enrolled in centers and homes that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Power Panther Preschool encourages consumption of fruits and vegetables and increased physical activity among young children. Each of the ten lessons has **EAT SMART** (nutrition) and **PLAY HARD** (movement) activities. Each Power Panther Preschool lesson is designed so that its scope is limited only by your imagination! You may choose to spend only a minimal amount of time on a lesson or you may choose to expand the lesson for a more in-depth experience for the children.

## Tote Bag Contents

Materials and supplies in the Power Panther tote bag are provided by the Kansas State Department of Education. Additional materials that are needed are listed at the beginning of each activity. The Power Panther tote bag contains:

- **Implementation Guide** with program guidelines, detailed instructions for classroom activities, two music CD's, additional suggested resources, newsletters ready to copy and send home to parents, and an evaluation form
- **Six children's books** used for implementation of the lessons
- **Power Panther materials** including stickers, tattoos, table tents and posters which may be used at the discretion of the program facilitator

## Requirements for Participating Centers and Sponsors

Each Power Panther Preschool participant must agree to the following terms:

- Sign the commitment card provided when receiving Power Panther Preschool materials. This card assures KSDE that you will implement Power Panther Preschool activities.
- Become familiar with the Power Panther Preschool Implementation Guide and use it as a resource when implementing program activities.
- Implement a minimum of one **EAT SMART** and one **PLAY HARD** activity from each of five (5) Power Panther Preschool lessons before the end of April 2006.
- Complete and submit a 1-page report at the conclusion of the project. The project evaluation form is provided on page 119.

## Timeframe

October 25, 2005	Power Panther Preschool introduced at CACFP workshop
October 2005 to April 2006	Activities implemented in participating centers & homes
April 30, 2006	Evaluation due to KSDE



## Why is Power Panther Preschool Needed?

In the first years of life children grow physically, intellectually and socially at a remarkable rate. What children eat and how they view food and health will affect them throughout their lives. Children's day-to-day experiences with food and eating establish the foundation for lifelong choices of foods.

Only one child in five eats the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Many children are not regularly exposed to a variety of high quality, well-prepared fruits and vegetables. Too often children's food options include a disproportionate amount of highly processed foods that are appealing, tasty and inexpensive, but offer little nutritional value.

Child care programs offer an opportunity for preschoolers to be exposed to a variety of nutritious foods. Nutrition education provides children with new food experiences and reinforces the importance of becoming familiar with many foods.

Preschool children are also forming attitudes and expanding experiences through physical activity. Activity is called "play" for a preschooler. A balance between nutrition and play is essential. Power Panther Preschool used in a child care program can create a positive environment for children to learn the balance necessary for a healthy lifestyle.



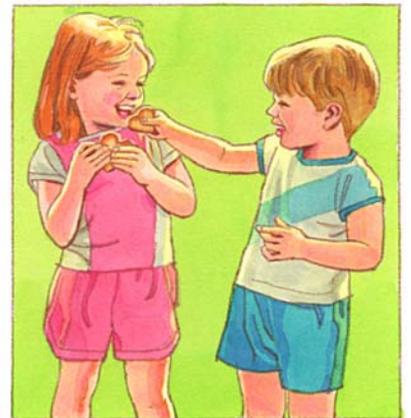
## Introducing New Foods to Children

When children learn to enjoy many different foods, they have more choices for smart eating throughout life. A variety of foods promote growth and health in different ways.

A variety of foods makes eating more interesting and fun too! Remember that seeing, trying, comparing and talking about different foods is part of learning.

**Good feelings about trying new foods help lead to a lifetime of healthful eating. Try new fruits and vegetables as fun experiences with the children in care.**

- **Offer a new food before familiar foods.** Children usually are more willing to try new foods when they are hungry.
- **Have children choose new foods themselves.** Trying new foods is more fun for children when they make choices themselves.
- **Do a taste test.** Talk about a new food. Have children describe the color, shape, feel, smell, sound, and taste.
- **Try new foods with children.** Children learn from adults who model positive behaviors.
- **Prepare foods in different ways.** Many children prefer to pick up raw vegetables with fingers. That may seem better than the same vegetable that is cooked.
- **Try and try again.** A new food needs to be introduced seven to ten times. It's normal for children to be cautious at first.
- **Relax.** The child doesn't need to like every food. Everyone has different food favorites.



## Tasting with the Senses

Sometimes we confuse “tasting” new foods with “eating.” Encourage children to use all five senses when “tasting” new foods. When children are allowed to experience new foods using several different senses, they are more likely to make the choice to eat the food. Always acknowledge the efforts children make by saying, “I see you tasted the food with your eyes” or “I like the way you smelled the food when we passed it around during circle time.”

We all taste food with our eyes first. Talk about the color of the food, its shape, or other foods that look like the new food. Try to relate the new food to one that is familiar to the children.

Some foods are easily identified by their smell. Choose a food that has a familiar smell—like an orange or banana. Place it in a covered container before the children have seen the food. Loosen one corner of the lid and pass the container around at circle time so each child may smell the food. Try to identify the food by its smell. Talk about other foods that smell good such as fresh strawberries, pineapple, lemons.

Allow children to hold or touch a new food. If you are introducing a new fruit or vegetable, try to have that food fresh for the children to touch. Then have them verbalize how the food feels.

Does the food make a sound when you bite it? Think of the crunchy sound a carrot makes when you take a bite. This is a good time to talk about different textures of foods. Compare or contrast the texture of the new food with one that is familiar.

Now the children may be ready to use their sense of taste to eat the food. Eating may be as simple as touching the new food to the tongue. It does not necessarily include taking bites. Remember that children are learning about new foods in a variety of ways. Give children opportunities to make choices by asking if they would like a little or big taste. And always reinforce their decisions. It may take several exposures to the same food before a child chooses to eat that item.

“Tasting” activities need to be pleasant for both children and adults. End each activity with positive reinforcement for learning about a new food. Try to include the new food in one of the menus served during that week. Most importantly, have fun!

