



Nutrition and Health

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Building foundations for health with early childhood education

Early childhood education is imperative as it lays the foundation for a child's academic, social and emotional development. Learning about healthy habits and nutrition during these formative years equips children with essential skills for future success and well-being. The Cooperative Extension System addresses these needs by leveraging its extensive network of land-grant universities and local offices to provide research-based nutrition and health education, training and other resources for children, families and childcare providers.

Here are a few examples of that work:

- In **Kentucky**, Extension professionals created a program that guides early childhood professionals in making changes to practices, policies and environments to support healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors among children. More than 330 childcare programs in the state have created accounts with the program, and more than 60 professionals have been certified. This initiative has led to significant improvements in nutrition and physical activity, impacting over 25,000 children across the state. *University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service; Smith-Lever (3b&c)*. See [full statement](#).
- The Growing Healthy Eaters initiative in **Michigan** led to a 23.6% increase in early childcare providers meeting nutrition and physical activity standards, a 21% increase in including seasonal foods on menus and a 43% increase in featuring local produce. Additionally, hands-on activities like gardening and cooking boosted children's willingness to try new fruits and vegetables, enhancing their diet quality. *Michigan State University Extension; Smith-Lever (3b&c)*. See [full statement](#).

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The National Land-grant Impacts Database (NIDB) documents the individual and collective impacts of the national Land-grant University System of joint research, education and Extension. Much of this work is supported by capacity and competitive funds through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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