

Word Walls Help Fight Childhood Obesity



A word wall is a systematically organized collection of words displayed in large letters on a wall or other large display place in the room. Child Nutrition Managers who choose to use Customer Care in their implementation of word walls will expand the categories to include the themes of specialty cooking terms and nutrition.

The most effective word walls have some basic commonalities.

- Colorful
- Interactive
- Change weekly
- Include pictures when available

To make the word walls interactive the students use the words in chants, word play, rhyming games, etcetera. Promoting word walls in the cafeteria setting encourages the continuation of learning outside the classroom. Providing word walls, allows students to make new connections based on the learning they have already acquired. There are no set “rules” as to how to design your specialty word wall. However, there are some guidelines.

Add words gradually, no more than five per week.

Make the words accessible, so that all students can see them.

It is recommended to write the words in black, unless you are color coding words by nutritional

value, for example, carbohydrates are red and proteins are green.

Your word wall can be by theme (frog), nutrition (choices), food groups (dairy), cooking utensils (spatula), and so on.

Goals for the word wall include fostering reading and writing; providing a visual map to help students make connections between words and the characteristics forming the categories; and developing a growing core vocabulary. Nutritional terms are a required part of this growing vocabulary.

Using a word wall in the cafeteria will raise awareness and help students to fight obesity by helping them to learn words that will better enable them to make wise choices about food selection.

Make learning new vocabulary fun by challenging students to use the new words. If you are using words such as sauté, roast, grill, broil, and bake, ask the students to tell you how they think each dish was prepared. Examples: The beans were boiled; the fish was grilled; the onions were sautéed; the chicken was roasted; and the pie was baked.

Ask students to define the words on the word wall in their own words. Adding photos to the word wall will help students by providing meaning because they can recognize the concept in the photo. (*It is appropriate to stage student photo opportunities with utensils to accent your word wall.*)

Students need opportunities to hear the words, read the words, chant the words, and write the words. The more they use the words, the quicker they will become a part of the working

vocabulary. Thus, the entire child nutrition team should use the words with students present. Remember to offer to share your words with the teaching staff.

Child Nutrition Managers have an important role in teaching students how to eat healthy. This is the major step toward fighting childhood obesity. Word walls become another avenue to support the learning and decision making of smart, healthy food choices. *Child Nutrition Managers have the potential to empower this generation and change the nation!*

A person must be exposed to a new word forty times before it becomes part of their active vocabulary. Creating a word wall in the cafeteria provides students with that additional exposure to rich vocabulary that will increase their lexicon. Start today and empower a student’s vocabulary as well as their healthy food choices and fight childhood obesity...*obesity period!*

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