

# Eat.Move.Talk!

## An Integrated Food, Activity, and Language Nutrition Curriculum for Early Childhood Educators

### Whitfield County and the City of Dalton

#### What is Food, Activity, and Language Nutrition?

In early childhood, food nutrition is the practice of providing healthy foods to infants and children that will help their bodies develop and grow. Activity nutrition is the physical activity within children's everyday lives that can set healthy patterns lasting into adulthood. Language nutrition is just as important. It is the practice of exposing children, from birth, to words that support brain development. The amount and the type of words, like healthy food, are critical to developing babies' brains.

Early exposure to language sets the foundation for cognitive ability, literacy, school readiness, and educational achievement. A child's vocabulary at the age of three years is a key predictor of school readiness at kindergarten and third grade reading comprehension. Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is an important indicator of future outcomes, from academic to health to economic. In Georgia, only 34 percent of fourth grade students scored at the proficient level or above for reading, and the state's low-income students fared worse at only 21 percent.

#### What will *Eat. Move. Talk!* do?

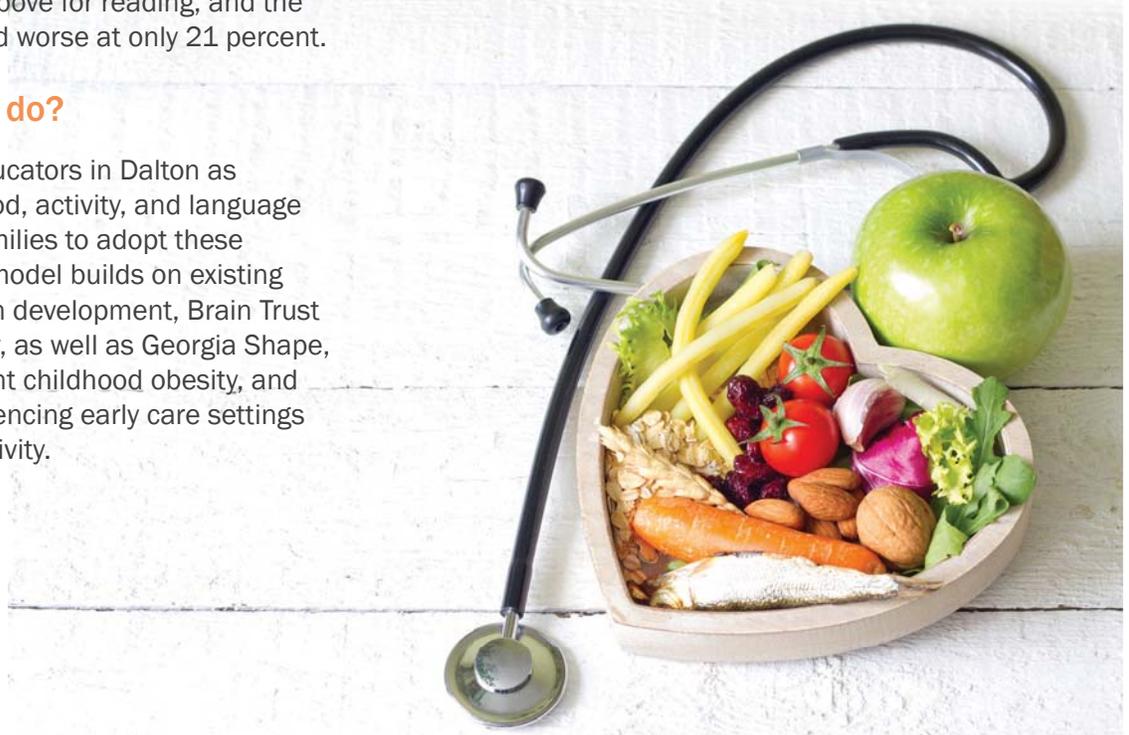
DPH will train early childhood educators in Dalton as coaches, who will model good food, activity, and language nutrition practices, and teach families to adopt these healthy behaviors at home. The model builds on existing initiatives in early childhood brain development, Brain Trust for Babies and Talk with Me Baby, as well as Georgia Shape, the Governor's initiative to prevent childhood obesity, and the Growing Fit approach to influencing early care settings around nutrition and physical activity.

#### Why Whitfield County and the City of Dalton?

DPH is focusing on communities that have a high percentage of the population that speaks a language other than English in the home and/or a high percentage of racial and ethnic minorities. According to the last five-year estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau, 27.7% of the City of Dalton is foreign born. While the percent of the population has limited English proficiency is not available for Dalton, 15.87% of Whitfield County residents 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home and speak English less than "very well."

#### What are Whitfield County's and the City of Dalton's baseline measures?

The goals of this program include increasing the number of fruits and vegetables children eat, increasing the quantity and quality of physical activity that children engage in, and increasing the quantity and quality of words spoken to children.





In Whitfield County, an estimated 51,405 or 79.3% of adults over the age of 18 are consuming less than five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Adults with children 0-5 years old who have inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption are less likely to provide adequate fruit and vegetables to their children.

Beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, Georgia students participated in fitness assessments that have included measures of Body Mass Index (BMI) once a year. Students are assessed on whether they fall in the Healthy Fitness Zone, meaning they are at healthy BMI, neither overweight nor underweight. Data from the 2015-2016 school year shows that in the City of Dalton, 57.41% of third grade boys and 64.81% of third grade girls are in the Healthy Fitness Zone, neither overweight nor underweight. One of the long term outcomes of this project is to decrease childhood obesity and thereby increase the percentage of third graders in the Healthy Fitness Zone.

A child's vocabulary at the age of three is a key predictor of school readiness at kindergarten and third grade reading comprehension, which can be a powerful predictor for high school graduation and future health outcomes. Table 4 shows the four-year graduation rate for students in Georgia, Whitfield County and City of Dalton. This project aims to increase language nutrition for young children, keeping them on track to third grade reading proficiency and high school graduation.

**Table 1: Percent of foreign born persons in Whitfield County and City of Dalton**

Region	Percent
Georgia	9.7%
Whitfield County	18.4%
City of Dalton	27.7%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2010-2014

**Table 2: Percent Adults with Inadequate Fruit/ Vegetable Consumption in Whitfield County**

Region	Percent
U.S.	75.7%
Georgia*	75.7%
Whitfield County	79.3%

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Accessed via the Health Indicators Warehouse. US Department of Health & Human Services, Health Indicators Warehouse. 2005-09. Source geography: County

Note: \*This indicator is compared with the state average.

**Table 3: Percent of 3rd graders in the Healthy Fitness Zone for Body Mass Index in Whitfield County and the City of Dalton, 2015-2016 School Year**

Region	Boys	Girls
Georgia	66.67%	63.87%
Whitfield County	75.00%	80.77%
City of Dalton	57.41%	64.81%

Source: Georgia Department of Education, 2016

**Table 4: Four-Year graduation rate by race, ethnicity, and English-learner status in Whitfield County and City of Dalton, 2015**

Region	Overall	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black/ African American	White	Multiracial	English Learners
Georgia	79%	73.6%	88%	72%	75%	80%	No data	56%
Whitfield County**	75%	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	81%	67%	72%	77%	63%
City of Dalton	81%	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	81%	62%	85%	Too Few Students	66%

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2015. Note: Too few students - any data for less than 10 students are not reported.