

# Eat.Move.Talk!

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

DeKalb County and the City of Clarkston

### 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?

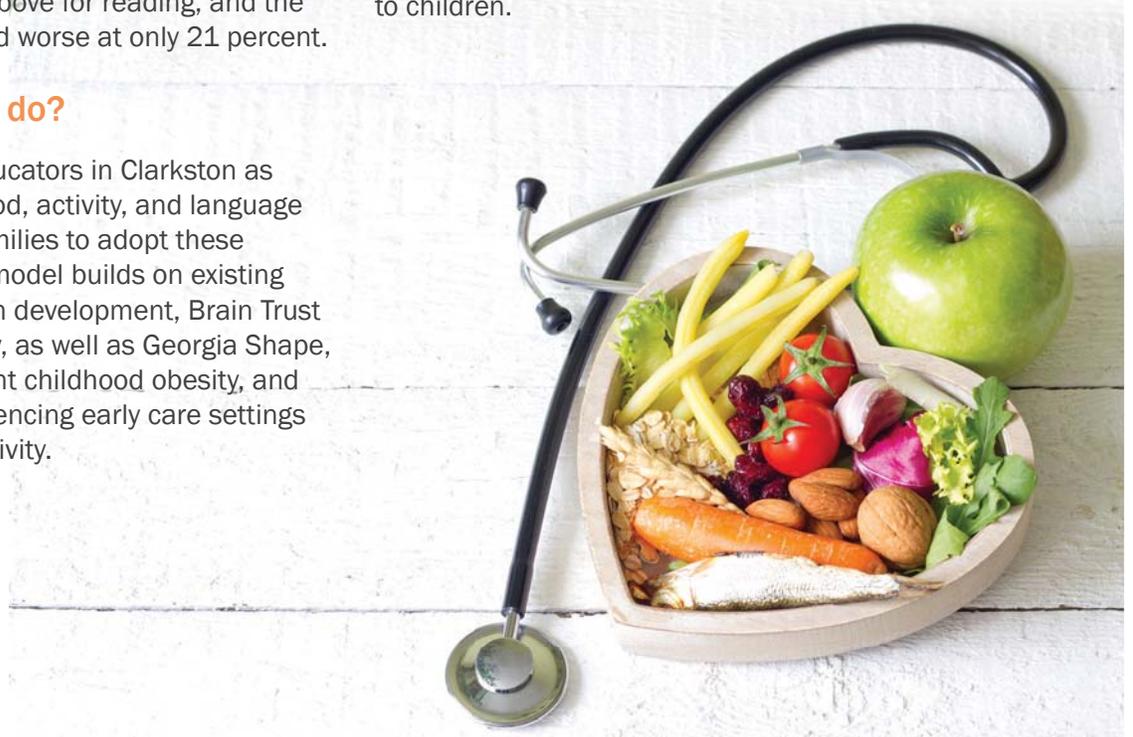
DPH will train early childhood educators in Clarkston as coaches, who will model good food, activity, and language nutrition practices, and teach families to adopt these healthy behaviors at home. The model builds on existing initiatives in early childhood brain development, Brain Trust for Babies and 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 DeKalb County and the City of Clarkston?

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. Clarkston is a small city in DeKalb County that is known as a refugee haven and has been described as the, "most diverse square mile in the United States." The City of Clarkston has a high percentage of foreign born residents at 53.5 percent. In DeKalb County, 9.23 percent of the residents 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home and speak English less than "very well." This is higher than for all of Georgia at 5.66 percent.

### What are DeKalb County's and the City of Clarkston'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.





**Table 1: Percent of foreign born persons in DeKalb County and the City of Clarkston**

Region	Percent
Georgia	9.7%
DeKalb County	13.1%
City of Clarkston	53.5%

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

In DeKalb County an estimated 393,348, or 70.9 percent 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 a healthy BMI, neither overweight nor underweight. Data from the 2015-2016 school year shows that in the City of Clarkston, 69.05 percent of third grade boys and 70.4 percent 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, DeKalb County and City of Clarkston. This project aims to increase language nutrition for young children, keeping them on track to third grade reading proficiency and high school graduation.

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

Region	Percent
U.S.	75.7%
Georgia*	75.7%
DeKalb County	70.9%

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 DeKalb County and the City of Dalton, 2015-2016 School Year**

Region	Boys	Girls
Georgia	66.67%	63.87%
DeKalb County	67.89%	65.68%
City of Clarkston	69.05%	70.74%

Source: Georgia Department of Education, 2016

**Table 4: Four-Year graduation rate by race, ethnicity, and English-learner status in DeKalb County and City of Clarkston, 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%
DeKalb County	71%	Too few students	65%	58%	71%	85%	77%	47%
City of Clarkston	63%	Too few students	55%	Too few students	71%	Too few students	Too few students	53%

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2015 Notes: \*Too few students – any data for less than 10 students are not reported. \*\* Whitfield County and City of Dalton are two separate school districts.