

The Farmer Grows a Rainbow



Introduction

The Farmer Grows a Rainbow: A MyPyramid Companion Resource

The inspiration for this set of Pre-Kindergarten through Fifth Grade lesson activities came when it was noted that the majority of teachers attending North Carolina Ag in the Classroom workshops in the summer and fall of 2005 reported that they had not seen and/or were not aware of MyPyramid, the newly released food guide developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). MyPyramid was developed using statistics about the American population and its changing dietary needs. The need to fight obesity and the many chronic diseases that stem from it, along with the fact that teachers lacked familiarity with MyPyramid, played a strong part in the development of “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow” and the desire of the North Carolina Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom staff to include it as part of several teacher inservice opportunities. Teachers need a tool to help students understand the individualized nature of MyPyramid. To maximize learning experiences through the use of “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow,” it is strongly recommended that teachers acquire the lesson plans (<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/resources/mypyramidclassroom.html>) and “My Pyramid for Kids” poster (<http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html>) offered free by the USDA. You will note that materials are leveled according to elementary grades - Level 1 (grades 1-2); Level 2 (grades 3-4); and Level 3 (grades 5-6). The goal of “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow” is to enhance MyPyramid lessons, integrate them with traditional academic subjects, and emphasize the vital role played by the farmer in food production.

The idea for the rainbow analogy came from the look of MyPyramid, which resembles a rainbow seen from its base. Many popular dietary guidelines indicate that including foods of a variety of colors on one’s plate ensures a balanced and healthy diet. In researching facts and activities for the Ag in the Classroom plans, it was noted that many programs reference the rainbow of colorful foods in terms of good nutrition, but none was found that gave agriculture credit for providing those nutritious foods. Thus, this set of lesson plans recognizes the actual producer of the many healthy foods MyPyramid recommends – the American farmer.

Although the color pattern of MyPyramid is not identical to the arrangement of colors that is a rainbow, most rainbow colors are represented in the pyramid. This variation creates a teachable moment in which students can compare the color sequences of a spectrum of light and MyPyramid.



(found at www.wpclipart.com)



(found @ www.mypyramid.gov)

In preparation of these lessons, a discrepancy was noticed in the presentation of Oils. Some USDA lessons presented Oils as a food group and others classified Oils apart from the group represented on MyPyramid. “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow” lessons include Oils as a food group and emphasize limited consumption. Educators are encouraged to use professional judgment when discussing Oils as a part of MyPyramid.

New guidelines provided by MyPyramid include a focus on physical activity as a vital component of healthful living. To accompany these guidelines, each “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow” lesson includes a physical activity entitled “Run the Rainbow Challenge.”

Desired Outcomes stated in these lesson plans are those recognized as national standards in various academic disciplines including science, literacy, math, and social studies. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans published by USDA as well as National Health Education Standards for Students were consulted as lesson activities were developed. Desired Outcomes for “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow” reflect national learning expectations.

“The Farmer Grows a Rainbow” lesson plan set is presented in two different forms. This training set contains print and ancillary materials needed to deliver all curricula to students. This kit is designed to be used by state and regional level educators in train-the-trainer events. For educators using the boxed training kits, professionally produced lesson materials are provided. The “Main Course” lesson as well as each grade level set is contained in a separate folder appropriately labeled for your convenience. Certain magnetic manipulatives are stored outside grade level envelopes. In the “Materials Needed” section of each lesson design, items may be listed that teachers will need to obtain (magazine pictures, supermarket ads, etc.) In addition to the training kits, all lesson plans, blackline masters, patterns and videotaped segments of each lesson can be accessed online at www.agclassroom.org/rainbow. For teachers making use of the online lesson set, the video contains directions for displaying and storing lesson materials using a flannel-lined pizza box. Also featured in the online video presentation is a recording of the song from the “Main Course” lesson entitled, “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow.”

Many educators define learning as an acquisition of knowledge that results in permanently changed behavior. The primary goal of “The Farmer Grows a Rainbow” lessons is that young learners will take on many new facts, concepts, and skills that will enable them to:

- become more successful students/citizens,
- make healthy dietary choices,
- keep physically fit,
- live healthy lives, and
- show appreciation for the American farmer and all s/he provides.

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