



Sligo/Leitrim County Childcare Committee

Pre-School Workbook Evaluation

Early Years Health Promotion Project
12/14/2010

Introduction:

The pre-school workbook was first developed and printed in 2007. The aim of the workbook was to promote Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and other Health Promotion topics to both children, childcare staff and parents. It was delivered to a number of services in Leitrim and Sligo on a pilot project basis and from the information received, the workbook was changed in line with this. The workbook was changed from A5 to A4 format as it was a lot easier for children to use once it was bigger. Sections were added on Oral Health and Outdoor Play also. This book was re-printed in 2009 with thanks to funding from *safeFood*.

Project workers delivered training to all services with children aged 3-5 years participating on the Early Years Health Promotion Project. This training was provided in order to support practitioners in the delivery of the pre-school workbook and provided support to the services throughout 2009 & 2010. This included 11 services from Leitrim and 14 services from Sligo. The program project workers asked for a page by page evaluation form to be completed by both parents and childcare workers in relation to the pre-school workbook. The Pre-School Workbook is available on www.sligochildcare.ie and www.leitrimchildcare.ie.

The following is the evaluation of the Pre-school Workbook from both childcare workers and parents.

Childcare Workers Comments:

Childcare Workers Evaluation of the Pre-School Workbook

9 out of 11 services in Leitrim and 9 out of 14 services in Sligo sent back their evaluations of the pre-school workbook. Some services did not give a page by page evaluation but they did give an overall view of the workbook.

The feedback was very positive in relation to the workbook. Services found the book easier to use in A4 format and the staff felt *“it was an extremely fun way to introduce these topics to the children”*. They found that it was very beneficial to the children and they learned songs and activities that they could do with the children throughout the year. *“The children loved learning the new songs and proved helpful for teaching them to wash their hands and teeth”*.

Some services felt that it was difficult to get the workbooks returned to the service once sent home with one service suggesting *“wallets with sheets which could go home and the workbook to stay in school until the end of term”*. However children did like the idea of bringing the book home as it was like they had homework the same as their older brothers and sisters.

Most services found the **“Portion Size”** page a little difficult as younger children can't really draw, they prefer colouring, childcare workers found themselves having to try and draw on every child's workbook. Other pages that proved a little difficult were **“Where Food Comes From”** and **“Dairy Food”** but for the majority of services they were able to adapt the page to suit the child's needs.

One suggestion that could be very helpful for the childcare staff is to have the names of the songs on the pages with music so that staff knew what tune to sing the songs to.

Staff also felt that *“the workbook gave focus for planning meetings and covered more health related topics for the year than they normally would”* and *“a group talk with parents about the workbook before starting it may have ensured better participation and return of books”*.

Page Title	Comment
Where Food Comes From	<p>Page allowed for discussion at home, maybe an activity for older children who could have the ability to cut the pictures and mount onto card and then do the matching.</p> <p>Excellent, easy to understand and age appropriate.</p> <p>Some of the 3 year olds found the concept of things growing in different places hard to understand.</p> <p>Enjoyed this activity, children asked a lot of questions.</p> <p>The children will be tasting fish tomorrow for dinner.</p> <p>The children really enjoyed the discussion today.</p> <p>The children loved colouring the pictures and the illustrations are lovely.</p> <p>The children found the Grain to Bread a little difficult as grain was not something they were used to seeing daily.</p>
Fruit & Vegetables	<p>Very good page.</p> <p>Carrot picture a bit confusing for children, perhaps a wider range of fruit and veg.</p> <p>Children enjoyed this.</p> <p>Really enjoyed this and children got to taste different fruits.</p> <p>Children were very interested and when at home could name all the vegetables parents were cooking.</p> <p>Good introduction to the different types of Fruit & Vegetables.</p> <p>Children showed good recognition of colours and were able to identify a lot of the pictures (7)</p>
Proteins	<p>Staff and children discussed various types of fish and different ways eggs could be cooked and eaten.</p> <p>Good for discussion, children learned a new word and had little knowledge of the association between fish and fish fingers.</p> <p>Children loved the colouring activities.</p> <p>This page resulted in a discussion on the different types of food and their colours.</p> <p>(6)</p>
Portion Size	<p>Service developed activity on discussing portion sizes during lunch time.</p> <p>Worked better with older children as they were better able to draw in small</p>

	<p>spaces, maybe better as colouring activity and not drawing activity. Childcare worker had to do most the drawings on this page. Using the food pyramid made this page a bit easier. It was a little difficult for younger children. Children found this section a little hard.</p>
Mealtime	<p>Pictures were very interactive. Enjoyed by children (x2) This page resulted in a lot of discussion on the children's likes and dislikes (5)</p>
Meals	<p>Pictures were very interactive. Children more interested in the party food than dinner. Children really enjoyed this especially the party plate.</p>
Dairy Food	<p>Content was good but not enough hands on; an idea would be to colour the food that comes from the cow. Worked well in small groups, good for discussion. All children knew that cows made milk but only some knew about cheese and yogurt. The children found this page a little difficult so we discussed more about where foods come from. (4) Found this page really made the children aware of where foods come from.</p>
Energy	<p>Content very interesting Difficult concept but good to start a discussion. Surprised that children understood this so well. Children loved this and they learned a lot. Found that this page started a question and answer session.</p>
Food Pyramid	<p>Service could develop this by making a pyramid and bringing in various items for each shelf. Pictures could be clearer to get children's attention, real food photos may have been better. Started the book with this page and felt that was very beneficial for the rest of the book. Children really enjoyed this as service made a pyramid with different colour cards/paper etc. and all children were involved.</p>

<p>Hygiene</p>	<p>Very interactive page if workers develop it by showing the children how to wash their hands and then getting the children to do it. Enjoyable. Children found this easy as they are in a routine before lunch time anyways. The children were able to relate well to this page as we have been talking a lot about Swine Flu lately.</p>
<p>Wash Your Hands</p>	<p>Maybe introduce song in Irish? Found it hard to put the words to the tune. Maybe have the names of the tunes beside the songs. Lovely song to learn.</p>
<p>Tooth Decay</p>	<p>Very good pages as starting tools for children. Made a collage, great fun. Children enjoyed cutting out pictures of foods that are bad for your teeth. Great way to teach them. Really enjoyed the fun involved in creating a collage.</p>
<p>Me & My Teeth</p>	<p>It created a great discussion and we showed the children the difference between an old and new toothbrush. Children enjoyed this. Had a visit from a dental hygienist last year and hope to do the same this year. Created a discussion on foods that are good /bad for your teeth. Learnt new song. Child found it hard to brush teeth up and down.</p>
<p>The Way We Brush Our Teeth</p>	<p>Song fits the tune well and this helps the children to remember the song. Children really enjoyed singing this song. Found that the last few pages involved a lot of discussion rather than actual activities. Maybe a match and colour page or a picture page would be good e.g. a picture of "visiting the dentist".</p>
<p>Twice a Day</p>	<p>Page resulted in discussing "night" and "day". The pictures on this page were helpful.</p>
<p>Outdoor Play</p>	<p>Activity was very good. Children were really interested and were able to talk about the difference between the pictures in great detail. The outdoor activity we chose to do was an Obstacle Course and the children</p>

	really enjoyed it.
All Year Round	Find it hard to get out in Winter as parents do not dress the children for outdoor play. This page got us talking to the children about suitable clothing for the time of year; it helped them to understand the differences between the different sessions.(3)

Parents Comments:

Parents Pre-School Workbook Evaluation

34 parents in Leitrim and 51 parents in Sligo sent back the evaluations of the pre-school workbook and the overall evaluation is based on this feedback. Overall, the pre-school workbook went down very well with the parents of the children who completed it. Some parents found it very “*age appropriate*” and “*very interesting*”. One parent commented that the “*cheerful pictures make it more interesting*” with another parent stating that the “*book was done well*”. Every page in the workbook received positive comments. One parent found that the “**Me & My Teeth**” page was “*too advanced for his (child) age group*” with another parent commenting that it was “*Great for making 3 year olds mind their teeth from an early age.*” One parent said “*Excellent booklet, Healthy eating has to start early*” and “*my child loves doing homework*”.

The “**Where Food Comes From**” page received great feedback with most children enjoying and understanding this page. One parent commented that it was a “*Good exercise but could have had more to choose from as very easy.*”

The “**Fruit & Vegetables**” page and the “**Proteins**” page were found to be a great way to encourage children to try out foods that they don’t like.

Some positive comments from the parents in relation to the children included; “*Child was excited to tell me where all the food grows and comes from*”, child “*Now separates foods into different portions on his plate*”, “*Child has swapped coco pops for Weetabix*”, and “*Child now telling them in the supermarket what’s good food and what’s bad food*”. Another parent commented on how their child had asked “*can we buy asparagus next time we go shopping?*” and one child told a staff member that “*she had helped her dad plant fruit trees in the garden after they had completed the workbook*”.

The “**Me & My Teeth**” page and the “**Outdoor Play**” page also received very positive comments from parents. One parent said “*the song has taught my child to slow down and take time while brushing teeth*” with another parent saying that “*the page was very informative and feels that a visit from hygienist would be very beneficial*”. One parent commented that “*since taking part in the workbook we have started to participate in more family outdoor activities*”.

From the evaluations received from the parents, there does not seem to be any major changes needed with the workbook. The only recommendation would be that more matching exercises may need to be put in the “**Where Food Comes From**” page.

Attached is a page by page evaluation of the workbook from the parents.

Page Title	Comment
Makes me Grow	<p>Child enjoyed looking at photos of when they were younger.</p> <p>Child had great fun picking out photos for activity x 2</p> <p>Child and parent enjoyed learning about different foods.</p> <p>Child understands that they need different foods to grow x 4</p> <p>Lovely book and looking forward to the rest of the book.</p> <p>Parent felt that the child learned more about foods in this way rather than being told by a parent as it was fun.</p> <p>Started discussion on other healthy food.</p> <p>Child discussed that cake makes you fat.</p> <p>Child knows that milk is needed to make his bones grow stronger.</p> <p>Excellent idea and my child is more eager to try new fruits and vegetables.</p> <p>Child felt very grown up as he considered it Homework and enjoyed doing it.</p> <p>Excellent booklet, Healthy eating has to start early. My child loves doing “homework”.</p> <p>This is a lovely book, ideal for this age group.</p> <p>My child really loves doing the workbook as she feels it is like homework.</p> <p>The matching activity was nice and easy for my child to do.</p> <p>Child was able to recognize that the more you eat the more you grow.</p>
Where Food Comes From	<p>Child enjoyed this section, helps to understand where food comes from.</p> <p>Had difficulty understanding this topic before but now is starting to understand a bit more.</p> <p>Gives children a good view of where food comes from, not just the fridge.</p> <p>Cheerful pictures make it more interesting. Great way to show where the food comes from. (x7)</p> <p>Favourite exercise. Book done well, loved going through the pages.</p> <p>Good exercise but could have more to choose from as very easy.</p> <p>Child loved this and had a good idea where food came from.</p> <p>Child was excited to tell me where all the food grows and comes from. Child was able to tell what season foods grow in.</p> <p>As a follow on child has helped her dad plant fruit trees in the garden.</p> <p>Found the concept of time to grow foods difficult to understand.</p> <p>Created further discussions on fruit and veg and how grain is made into flour.</p> <p>Excellent booklet, Healthy eating has to start early. My child loves doing “homework”</p> <p>Child understands the need for water and sun to make foods grow.</p> <p>Parent found the book bright and colourful which helped the child to understand the topic.</p>

Fruit & Vegetables	<p>Enjoyed this exercise (x3) Very good for children. Good exercise to stimulate conversation on fruit & veg. Child now recognizes the importance of eating fish and veg. Good pictures, encouraging them to eat or even try some foods that they don't like. Enjoyed finding out where fruit comes from x2 Talked about the benefits of the different fruits and veg. Child identified fruit and vegetables in her meals. Introduced new fruits to the child as a result of this exercise. Child is very interested and is delighted at the attention she receives when she knows the answer. Discussion around how to prepare fruit and veg before eating them. Child had asked parent to buy asparagus next time they go shopping. Child and parent discussed the difference between foods cooked and uncooked. Compared fruit to sports candy as it is in the children's programme Lazytown. Child became more familiar with the names of the fruit. Child tasted the fruit but didn't like it.</p>
Proteins	<p>Child loves fish now. Child now knows that he needs good food to be big and strong. Child thought fish just swam, not that we could eat them. Enjoyed colouring the pictures x2 Great way to encourage them to eat or even try some foods that they don't like. Child enjoyed this activity. Likes peas and fish but not eggs and discussed foods that you can eat with them. Child couldn't understand the meaning of protein. Understood after time that scrambled egg was a protein. Child had heard that protein makes your hair grow long and keep your skin healthy. Parent recognises that they need to introduce more fresh fish in their diet as currently only fish fingers /Donegal Catch.</p>
Portion Size	<p>Now separates foods into different portions on his plate. Child talks more about portions at meal times x2 Parent explained to child that some foods are needed more than others. Child explained that too much fat is bad for you. Child does not understand about portion size. Understood the activities to date but this one proved difficult for child. My child really enjoyed separating his food on his plate into different groups.</p>

Mealtime	<p>Excellent pages. Child has swapped coco pops for Weetabix. Parent commented how these food types are different from her own cultural foods but expressed her interest in how other foods are put together. Enjoyed this page x2 A lot of dislikes came out as a result of this page, will have to look at mealtimes in detail. Child was very knowledgeable of the appropriate foods suitable for each meal. Child eats lots of different food types but doesn't like fruits or salads.</p>
Dairy Food	<p>Went through the contents of the fridge. Like this section x3 Discussed how milk comes from a cow. Child was able to explain what dairy food stuffs were good for. Child understood which one was the odd one out and why. After this exercise the child who is not a lover of milk was now consenting to trying milk on his cereal. Practised pronouncing the names of the different dairy foods.</p>
Food Pyramid	<p>Child now telling them in the supermarket whats good food and whats bad food. Really enjoyed this (x3) Very good. Child very interested in this. Great to introduce the concept, he now realizes that sweets and treats have to be kept to a minimum. Lovely illustration.</p>
Energy	<p>Like this page it was fun x3 The whole family joined in and like this page. Maybe parents need to be educated on this topic also. Child understood the need for electricity and petrol as an energy source but could not grasp that food was a source of fuel for humans. Parent has a language barrier but the pictures helped.</p>
Drink Plenty of Water	<p>Parent felt the need to look into the type of foods they eat. Need to be more alert as to the amount of snack foods eaten, felt that the Food Pyramid was a good way of explaining this to the child./Nice colourful page. Enjoyed seeing where the food that we'd eaten appeared on the pyramid. Good understanding of the Food Pyramid x2 Like consulting the Food Pyramid at mealtimes. Child enjoyed the exercises and like getting involved in food preparation at home. This was a great page and my child helps me prepare foods when I cook. He only gets a treat once a day.</p>

<p>Hygiene</p>	<p>The song makes this one fun. Song gives great encouragement to wash their hands. Singing the song helps make hand washing fun. Good topic for children Parent felt it was very important to learn about hygiene at this early age x2 Child loved the song and was singing it at home, though he still needs constant reminders to wash his hands. Child loved the song and has a good understanding of the importance of hygiene. She is able to use the toilet and wash her hands without assistance. Child enjoyed the song and realises the importance of hygiene after using the toilet x2</p>
<p>Tooth Decay</p>	<p>Child loves having homework to do. Had fun singing the tooth brushing song. Great to introduce the effects of sugary food on teeth. Had great fun doing this. Good understanding (x3) Great to let them know that eating too many sweets will destroy their teeth. Makes him want to brush his teeth 20 times a day. Child realises that too many sweet thing are bad for your teeth x3 Have noticed that the child is now preaching to his younger brother as to what food stuffs are good/bad for your teeth. Child has attended the dentist for check-ups and understands that snacking on sugary drinks and foods can cause tooth decay. Good illustrations. Discussed the need for dental visits and the importance of cleaning your teeth x2 Parent pleased to see that dental care is discussed in pre-school, as a result the child is now even more aware of this necessity. Child understands the need to wash hand before eating. Child was able to tell the parent that she needs to wash her hands after playing with her dog.</p>
<p>Me and My Teeth</p>	<p>After this section he is looking for me to buy him a new toothbrush. Great for making 3 year olds mind their teeth from an early age. Too advanced for his age group. Feels that a visit from hygienist would be beneficial. Child realises how important it is to brush your teeth. Child enjoyed singing song while brushing teeth x 2 Good illustrations in the book. The song has taught my child to slow down and take time while brushing teeth.</p>

	Nice book.
The Way We Brush Our Teeth	<p>The book was done very well.</p> <p>The song is a really good way to keep it in their head.</p> <p>Loves the song.</p> <p>Child finds the circular motion difficult when brushing teeth.</p> <p>Child enjoys the song.</p>
Twice a Day	<p>Now he hops out of bed every morning to brush his teeth without being told.</p> <p>Child has become very independent when brushing teeth and doesn't want help.</p> <p>Child was very interested in learning about brushing routine and module is very good for reinforcing habits at home.</p> <p>Child has become more co-operative when brushing his teeth.</p>
Outdoor Play	<p>Loves playing outdoors (x5)</p> <p>Child has really enjoyed the pre-school workbook.</p> <p>Child prefers outdoor play more than indoor play.</p> <p>Child enjoyed doing art outside as she didn't have to worry about making a mess.</p> <p>Parent and child aware of the importance of suitable gear for outdoor play and sunscreen when sunny.</p> <p>Has encouraged to participate in more family outdoor activities.</p> <p>Child enjoys beach and sand.</p> <p>Good that the importance of fresh air and outdoor activities is explained to children.</p>
All Year Round	<p>Would like to see the playschool taking the children outside more often.</p> <p>Important that children get out all year round.</p> <p>Child has become fussy about wearing certain clothes. Playschool and booklet has helped him understand appropriate clothing for outdoors in different seasons x 2</p> <p>Child observes the weather and knows what clothing should be worn. Enjoys learning about the seasons.</p> <p>Child has really enjoyed the booklet and has learned a lot from it.</p>

Recommendations

From compiling the information from both childcare workers and parents, some recommendations have been made about the pre-school workbook. They are as follows:

Portion Size:

Childcare workers found the activity on this page difficult to complete with children in their services. Children found it hard to draw the foods in the small sections and childcare workers sometimes had to draw in the food themselves for each child, which is very time consuming. The recommendation for this page would be to change the picture on this page to a plate with the foods in their correct portions already drawn on the plate and that this page could be used a visual aid for parents and childcare staff. This topic could then be a discussion rather than an activity. Another suggestion would be to show what a portion of fruit actually is e.g. child's fist open with fruit/other foods in it. The activity could be changed to "cut out different foods from magazines/book and get children to stick them onto the plate".

Mealtime:

These pages were used more as a discussion rather than an activity. Childcare workers and parents found that discussion was interesting around this topic. An activity for this page could be added for children to do at home/pre-school. Children and parents/staff can cut out pictures of their favourite foods and stick them on paper plates. This could then be displayed in pre-school or at home.

Wash Your Hands:

Children loved to sing the 2 songs in the booklet. Childcare workers found that sometimes they forgot what tune they were meant to be singing the song to so a recommendation for this would be that the name of the song needs to be added to this page so that the staff and parents know what tune would accompany the words.

The Way We Brush Our Teeth:

This recommendation is the same as the one above. The name of the song needs to be added to this page so that the staff and parents know what tune would accompany the words.

Delivery of Training to Services:

The way in which the pre-school booklet is delivered to the practitioners may also need to be changed. In Sligo, the services wishing to use the pre-school workbook met as a group and training in relation to the pre-school workbook was provided with follow up support available when needed. In Leitrim, the training was provided on site in each childcare service which worked more effectively. Childcare workers were more likely to ask questions about how the workbook could be rolled out in their own service rather than if they were part of a big group. A recommendation for this would be that when delivering the training for the workbook that an onsite visit to all services would be more effective or maybe cluster a couple of groups together.

Conclusion:

The workbook worked very well and received a lot of positive feedback from parents, children and childcare workers. Children loved the novelty of having their own book and homework to do. Childcare workers found that the book was a great resource for them to use within the service and gave them some very focussed ideas on how to talk about health promotion topics to children. Parents found that it was very interesting to see how their child responded to the workbook and the topics included.

If this workbook was to be re-printed, a couple of minor changes would need to be made to the workbook and the delivery of training in relation to the workbook as made in the previous recommendations. They are in summary:

“**Portion Size**” Page: Change the activity that the childcare workers need to do.

“**Meal time**” page: Add in an activity that childcare workers can do.

“**Wash your Hands**” and “**The way We Brush Our Teeth**” pages: Insert the name of the tune at the top of the pages.

Training:

When delivering the pre-school workbook, services should receive onsite support visit or perhaps cluster group training.