Eating Smart, Eating for Me (ESEM)

TARGET AUDIENCE
This program is for youth who are in 4th and 5th grade and their parents.

SUMMARY
Eating Smart, Eating for Me (ESEM), a school-based eating disorder prevention program, is designed to decrease risk factors, such as dieting, exercising for weight loss, and body dissatisfaction, while promoting protective factors that include healthful eating, regular physical activity, acceptance of self, and a positive body image.

EVIDENCE
Posttest results from a quasi-experimental study in a rural area with white 5th graders demonstrated improvements in knowledge about some aspects of nutrition, the ineffectiveness of dieting, body fat, and fat people. There were no effects on knowledge of other aspects of nutrition, number of fruits or vegetables eaten, understanding of aerobic exercise, physical activity levels in boys, body esteem, or weight-loss attempts. There was a decrease in girls’ physical activity levels and increases in weight-related teasing. Results from a 2-year follow-up, using a new control group with no pretest data, found significant differences in knowledge concerning weight, weight control, nutrition, use of weight loss techniques, and body esteem between the experimental group and the new control group but not between the experimental group and the original control group. There were no differences between groups on attitudes about appearance, weight concerns, depression, and muscularity measures that related specifically to boys. Analysis of the impact of media literacy lessons demonstrated no effect.

COMPONENTS
ESEM intends to provide participants with accurate information about dieting, exercise, and body diversity in order to help prevent eating problems during adolescence. The curriculum has five goals:

- Understand the value of proper nutrition and the importance of all nutrients for growth;
- Learn about the importance of regular, moderate exercise;
- Explore diverse body sizes and shapes, decrease stereotypes about overweight individuals, minimize prejudice and teasing based on body weight, and embrace a positive body image;
- Practice healthy eating, including variety and moderation of all foods, instead of restrictive dieting; and
- Critically evaluate messages from the media concerning body shape and food.

These goals are incorporated into 10 classroom lessons:

- Growth, Change, and Nutrition;
- Nutrition for Growth: My Body... My Choice;
- Myths About Fat;
- Body Shape: Tolerance of Differences;
- Positive Body Image;
- Eating and Exercising for You and Your Health (Part I)
- Dieting;
- Media Literacy;
- What's for Lunch; and
- Eating and Exercising for You and Your Health (Part II).

Lessons are delivered using a variety of methods, including lectures, class discussions, role-plays, cooking exercises, media literacy activities, and guided imagery. Parents receive nine newsletters which are aligned with classroom lessons. Homework assignments are included with each lesson and some require parental involvement.

PREVIOUS USE
The extent to which this program has been implemented is unclear.
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TRAINING
This program is implemented by classroom and physical education teachers. In program evaluations, teachers received a 2-hour training session to familiarize them with the curriculum content. However, additional information on training was not located. Please contact Linda Smolak using details in the Contact section for more information on training.

CONSIDERATIONS
Considerations for implementing this program include acquiring teacher buy-in, offering training to teachers, obtaining food for nutrition lessons, locating space that includes cooking and food storage equipment and can accommodate cooking, and making time in the regular curriculum for program lessons.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

IMPLEMENTATION
If you are interested in implementing ESEM, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

TIME
The curriculum contains 10 45- to 60-minute lessons, which are implemented within 2 to 3 months. Parents receive 9 newsletters, which parallel lesson content.

COST
Implementation costs were not located.

EVALUATION PLAN
To move ESEM to the Promising category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, at least one evaluation with a strong study design and using well-validated measures, in a representative sample, should be performed. This study should demonstrate positive effects, with no evidence of negative effects, lasting at least one year from the beginning of the program or at least six months from program completion.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

CONTACT
Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu
You may also contact Linda Smolak by mail Department of Psychology, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH 43022, phone 1-740-427-5374, fax 1-740-427-5237, or email smolak@kenyon.edu

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