



Creating a Nutrition-Focused Day: Food Groups and Healthy Meal Planning

Sample Assignment

Objective

Through interactive activities, students will identify age-specific nutritional needs, evaluate food groups, and design balanced meal plans that meet the dietary requirements of children from birth through age 12.

CCCS ECE 2051 Course Competencies

8. Identify and analyze age-related nutritional needs of children from birth to age 12.
9. Evaluate meal plans and menus to ensure meals and snacks are nutritionally sound, based on program policies and special needs of children.

Instructions

Part 1: Nutrition Detective (30 points)

Goal: Investigate and categorize common foods based on food groups and age-specific nutritional needs.

Steps:

1. Gather your tools: you'll receive a list or set of images featuring various food items (e.g. apples, chicken, rice, milk, etc.)
2. Food group investigation
 - Categories each food item into the appropriate food group: fruits and vegetables, grain, meat and meat alternate, milk
 - Age appropriate evaluation: for each item, note the best age group for the food (infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or school-age children). What is this food suitable for that age group?
3. Create a visual
 - Design a digital chart or diagram (using tools like Google Slides, Canva, or similar platforms) that categorizes the foods into food groups and age groups.
 - Add brief descriptions explaining why each food is appropriate for a specific age group.
 - Submit your chart as an image or a link.

Part 2: Meal Planning Challenge (40 points)

Choose two activities from the list below to complete your analysis.

1. "Kid Foods" in Grocery Stores

Goal: Identify common foods marketed for kids.

Instructions:



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- Visit a grocery store and find foods and meals designed specifically for kids (e.g., Lunchables, packaged snacks, meal kits).
 - Evaluate the marketing strategies (e.g., bright colors, cartoon characters, convenience).
 - Assess the nutritional content and price per serving.
 - Discussion: Do these foods provide balanced nutrition or are they simply marketed for convenience? Reflect on their suitability for children's diets.

2. Nutritional Analysis of Fast Food Kids' Meals

Goal: Evaluate fast food meals for children

Instructions

- Choose 3-4 meals from popular fast food restaurants and collect the nutritional information.
- Evaluate if the meals meet children's nutritional needs (protein, vegetables, fruits, fats, sugars).
- Discussion: Can these meals meet a child's daily nutrition requirements? Suggest improvements for these meals.

3. Cereal Aisle Analysis

Goal: Evaluate cereal targeted at children

Instructions

- Visit the cereal aisle and select cereals with 6 grams or fewer of added sugar per serving.
- Analysis: Compare the nutritional content, sugar levels, and ingredient lists. What trends do you notice in cereals aimed at children?
- Discussion: How do food manufacturers balance marketing to kids while producing healthier options? What would you suggest for improvement?

4. Plant-Based Foods for Kids

Goal: Analyze plant-based food options for children

Instructions

- Choose 8-10 food items, including at least 4-5 plant-based foods, that could appeal to a 4-year-old child and provide at least 5 grams of protein per serving.
- Analysis: How do these plant-based options provide adequate protein for young children? Are they appealing and nutritious?
- Discussion: How can plant-based foods be better integrated into a child's diet? and meal plan, with justifications for each change you made.

5. Infant Food Section Review

Goal: Analyze infant food products

Instructions

- Visit the infant food section and review the ingredient lists of 10 different baby foods suitable for a 9-month-old.
- Criteria: Choose foods with minimal additives and no added sugars.
- Discussion: Are these foods meeting the nutritional needs of infants? Could there be better alternatives?



6. Children's TV Advertising Analysis

Goal: Evaluate the influence of children's TV advertisements

Instructions

- Watch one hour of Saturday morning cartoons and analyze the ads.
- Count the number of ads for sweets and fast food items.
- Analysis: What food groups are least represented in these commercials? How does this influence children's food choices?
- Discussion: Reflect on how advertising influences children's nutrition habits.

Part 3: Interactive Food Labels - Age Group Menu Evaluation (30 points)

Goal: Evaluate and redesign a sample menu or food label for a specific age group to better meet nutritional needs.

Steps:

1. Menu label Review
 - You will receive a sample menu or food label for a child of your assigned age group (e.g., infant, toddler, preschooler, or school-age).
 - Evaluate the menu or label for nutritional balance:
 - i. Are there enough fruits and vegetables?
 - ii. Does the meal balance protein and grains appropriately?
 - iii. Are the portion sizes and calories suitable for the age group?
 - iv. Are there any deficiencies (e.g., too much sugar, insufficient fiber)?
 - v. Does the menu cater to special needs (allergies, dietary restrictions)?
2. Interactive Redesign:
 - Using an online tool or spreadsheet, redesign the menu or food label to better meet nutritional standards.
 - i. Suggest improvements, such as adding more fruits and veggies or adjusting protein sources.
 - ii. Present your redesigned menu with a brief video, a presentation, or a post on a discussion board explaining the rationale behind your changes.
3. Submit Your Work: Submit both your evaluation of the original menu/label and your redesigned version along with a clear explanation of your decisions.

Submission Requirements

1. Report
 - Submit a written report summarizing the activities you completed (choose 3 activities).
 - Include a summary of your findings, comparisons, and reflections on how marketing and food choice impact children's nutrition and health.
2. Visuals: if relevant, include any photos, charts, or infographics you created during your research (e.g. comparison tables, photos of food items).



Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Excellent	Proficient	Developing	Needs Improvement	Points Earned
Part 1: Nutrition Detective	Categorized foods accurately with strong, clear justifications for age suitability.	Categorized foods correctly with some justifications.	Some categories incorrect or poorly explained.	Many incorrect categories or weak justification.	/30
Part 2: Meal Planning Challenge	Creative, balanced meal plans with clear understanding of age-specific needs.	Solid meal plans but missing creativity or some age-specific considerations.	Meal plans missing key nutrients or age-specific foods.	Meal plan lacks balance or key foods.	/40
Part 3: Interactive Food Labels	Thorough evaluation and thoughtful redesign with clear rationale.	Good evaluation and redesign, some rationale for changes.	Incomplete evaluation or redesign, unclear rationale.	Missing evaluation or poorly justified redesign.	/30

Total Score: _____ / 100

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