

On track with healthy eating for low income audiences

2009

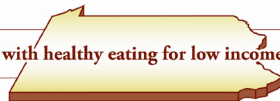
Preschool Track

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education
Across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**



**PENNSYLVANIA
NUTRITION EDUCATION TRACKS**

On track with healthy eating for low income audiences



PENNSYLVANIA NUTRITION EDUCATION TRACKS
FY 2009 PRESCHOOL TRACK REPORT

Acronyms and Abbreviations List

Adagio	Adagio Health, Inc.
AEHN	Albert Einstein Healthcare Network
CAPLANC	Community Action Program of Lancaster County
CEO	Commission on Economic Opportunity
DPR	Digital Photo Receiver
EARS	Education and Administrative Reporting System
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
F.U.N	Families Understanding Nutrition Initiative
MFHS	Maternal & Family Health Services, Inc.
PA	Pennsylvania
PSU	The Pennsylvania State University
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SNAP-Ed	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education
STARtracks	Statewide Technical and Administrative Reporting [for TRACKS]
TRACKS	Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Tracks
TRAILS	TRACKS Ready to Adopt and Implement Learning Structure
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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PRESCHOOL TRACK

OVERVIEW

The Preschool Track is Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Tracks' (TRACKS) statewide plan for providing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) to eligible preschoolers and their caregivers. The statewide plan consists of locally-tailored interventions delivered by TRACKS-contracted agencies (Local Partners).

Direct education for preschoolers employs a sensory approach, including food tasting and recognition of a variety of healthy foods. Classes involve hands-on activities, songs, games, poems, books, and/or crafts, all related to the nutrition content of the lesson. Classes and one-on-one education for caregivers reinforce messages presented to children and address questions or concerns relevant to family meals and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. Supplemental nutrition education is often provided to preschoolers and their caregivers via school or community events, food tastings, displays, newsletters, and fact sheets.

FY 2009 Preschool Track programming resulted in a total of 126,630 direct education¹ contacts to 6,932 participants². Programming was delivered by 6 Local Partners in 9 counties, as shown in Figure P1. Counties served by each Local Partner are shown in Table P1.

The Preschool Track experienced significant growth during FY 2009; education contacts increased by 132% over FY 2008 figures (from 54,561 to 126,630).

¹Direct education is interventions where a participant is actively engaged with an educator and/or interactive media.

² A participant is an individual who received education one or more times during the fiscal year.

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Figure P1. FY 2009 Preschool Track Program Delivery Map

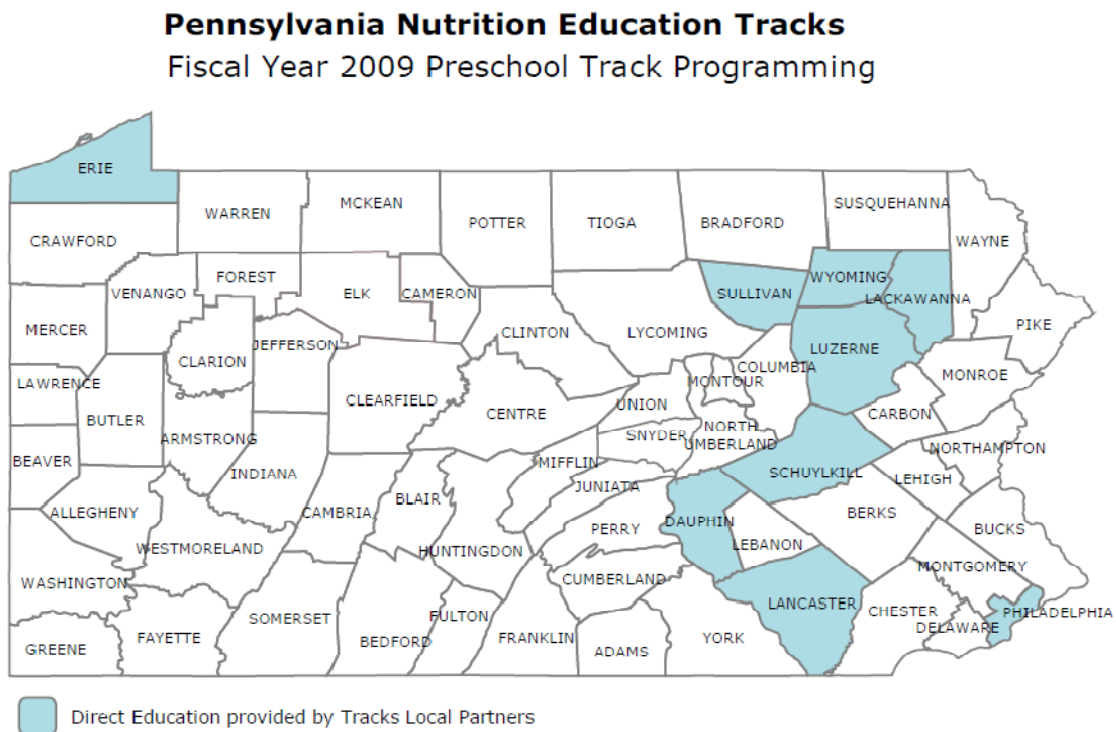


Table P1. FY 2009 Preschool Track Local Partner Programming

Local Partner	Counties Served
Adagio Health, Inc.	Erie
Albert Einstein Healthcare Network	Philadelphia
Commission on Economic Opportunity	Lackawanna, Luzerne
CAP of Lancaster County	Lancaster
Maternal and Family Health Services	Lackawanna, Luzerne, Wyoming
PSU Nutrition Links	Dauphin, Schuylkill, Sullivan

PROGRAMMING REACH AND SCOPE

STARtracks, TRACKS' web-based Statewide Technical and Administrative Reporting system, enables collection of program delivery data. Local Partners enter information on education interventions delivered and demographic data about audiences served. STARtracks stores data required for the national SNAP-Ed Education and Administrative Reporting System (EARS) and provides ongoing process evaluation data to guide local and statewide program development and evaluation activities.

Demographics. Preschool Track programming resulted in a total of 126,630 direct education contacts to 6,932 participants. Participant demographics are shown in Table P2. 135 preschoolers are reported in the Adult/Senior Track report for two Local Partners who did not officially participate in the Preschool Track, but provided nutrition education activities for preschoolers accompanying adults to education sessions. Data collection methods for future programming will be modified to ensure all preschool education is reported in the Preschool Track. Teenage participants reflect education provided to teen parenting groups.

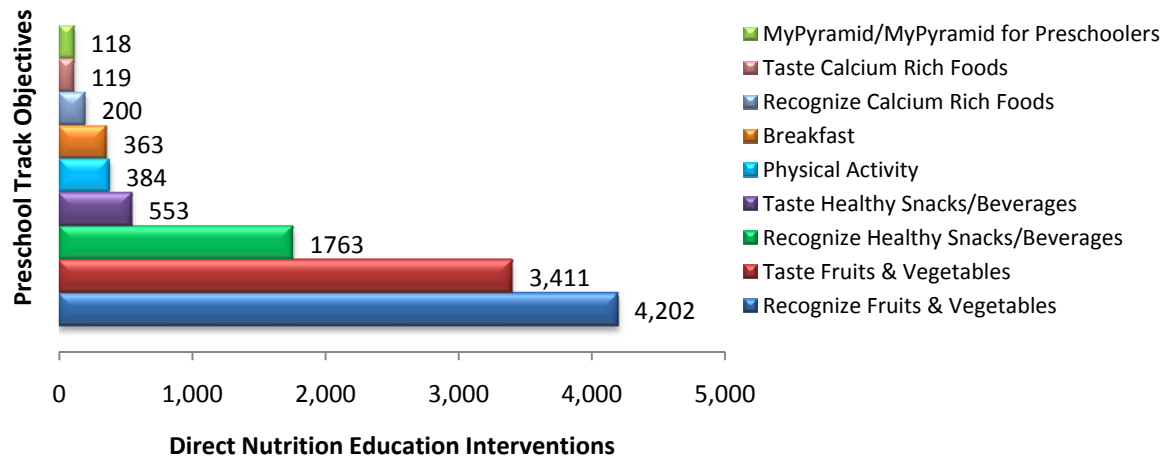
Objectives. Preschool goals and objectives are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA *MyPyramid/MyPyramid for Preschoolers* food guidance system and are developmentally appropriate for this Track. As shown in Figure P2, the most common objective addressed for Preschool Track programming is recognition of fruits and vegetables.

Table P2. FY 2009 Preschool Track Direct Education Participant Characteristics
Total participants = 6,932

	N	%
Gender		
Female	3,840	55.4
Category		
Preschooler	5,384	77.7
Teenagers	374	5.4
Caregivers	1,174	16.9
Race		
White	2,154	31.1
Black/African American	3,538	51.0
Asian	1,142	16.5
Multiracial and Other	98	1.4
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	871	12.6
SNAP Status		
SNAP Recipients	5,568	80.3

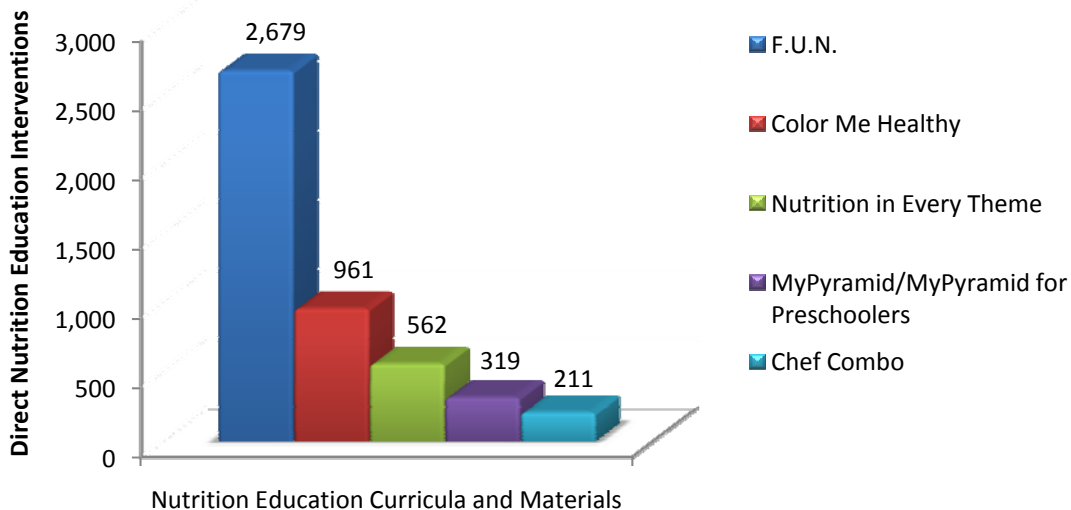
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Figure P2. FY 2009 SNAP-Ed Preschool Track Objectives



Curricula/Materials. Local Partners use various TRACKS-approved curricula and supporting materials to deliver nutrition education programming. Figure P3 displays the five most commonly used preschool curricula for direct education programming.

Figure P3. FY 2009 Top Five Curricula/Materials, Preschool Track Direct Education Programming

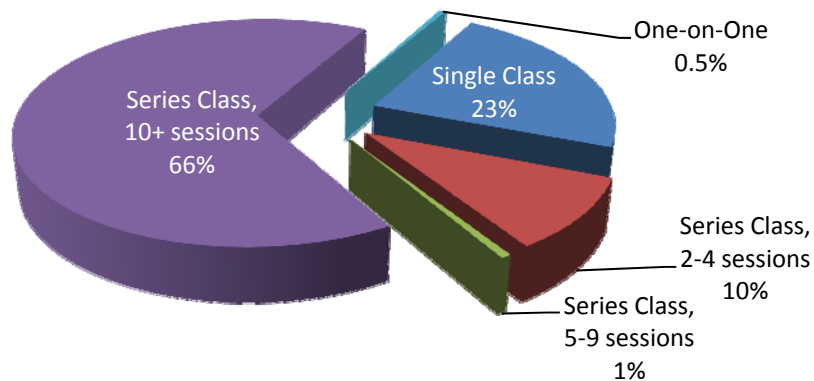


Educational Strategies. Preschool Track programming contacts are made through both direct and indirect education methods. Direct education includes interventions that actively engage participants in the learning process with an educator or interactive media. Indirect education is distribution of information and resources and may include mass communications, public events, or materials distribution and can be used to educate large numbers of people efficiently and cost-effectively. An individual may receive one or more contacts during a fiscal year.

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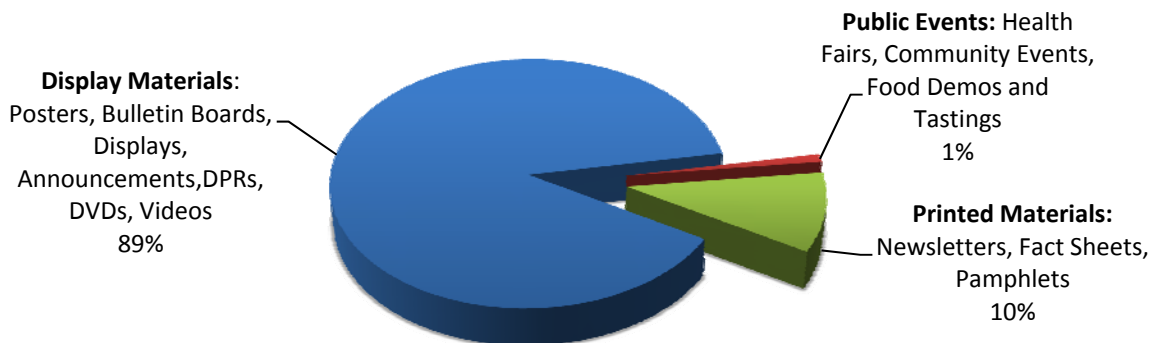
Direct Education. In FY 2009, direct education strategies included single and series classes (which often included food tastings), and individual one-on-one sessions. 126,630 nutrition education contacts were made to 6,932 preschoolers and/or preschool caregivers by 6 Local Partners. Of the 126,630 total contacts, an estimated 10,210 were to caregivers. Mean number of contacts per individual participant was 18.3, and varied from 1 to 21.5 among Local Partners. The Preschool Track experienced significant growth during FY 2009; education contacts increased by 132% over FY 2008 figures (from 54,561 to 126,630). As shown in Figure P4, the primary direct education strategy for preschoolers and caregivers was series classes of 10 or more sessions. This reflects the opportunity to provide repeated exposure in preschool settings. Most series classes of 10 or more sessions (89%) ranged from 20-60 minutes per class. Single classes ranged in length from approximately 10 minutes to 2 hours.

Figure P4. FY 2009 Preschool Track Contacts by Direct Education Strategy, Total Contacts: 126,630



Indirect Education. FY 2009 TRACKS indirect programming included display materials, public events, and printed materials. Preschool caregivers are reached through these strategies with messages that correspond to direct education. An estimated 7,485 indirect education incidents occurred during FY 2009; percentages of indirect nutrition interventions by category are shown in Figure P5.

**Figure P5. FY 2009 Preschool Track Indirect Nutrition Education by Category
Total Incidents: 7,485**



SOME HAPPENINGS IN PENNSYLVANIA PRESCHOOLS

Families Understanding Nutrition (F.U.N.) F.U.N., is a TRACKS initiative developed and implemented by Albert Einstein Healthcare Network (AEHN) that consists of a 32-session series of 45 minute classes for preschoolers. Each session utilizes a multi-sensory approach that includes hands-on activities, songs, and pictures that promote the importance of healthful eating and physical activity. Songs integrated into children’s musical repertoire reinforce lesson messages. Stories, craft projects, worksheets, and games are used by preschool teachers to enhance lessons provided by AEHN nutrition educators. Children are provided a weekly opportunity to taste, feel, and experience healthful foods. AEHN received a 2009 Community Outreach and Engagement Achievement Award from the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania for this initiative.

A caregiver survey developed by AEHN was piloted in Philadelphia County to examine the frequency with which fruits, vegetables, fried foods, milk, and soda were served for family meals. Pretests (n=108) were completed at annual kickoffs in the fall and post-tests (n=160) were completed at food festivals in the spring. Pilot pre- and post-test data indicate:

- Increased number of families who served ≥ 6 different types of vegetables in the past week, increased number of families who served ≥ 6 different types of fruits in the past week, and increased number of families who served milk with dinner ≥ 6 times in the past week
- Decreased number of families who served soda with dinner ≥ 6 times in the past week
- No change in frequency of serving fried foods

Preschool Teacher Feedback Guides Education Delivery. 7 preschool teachers in northeastern Pennsylvania provided feedback on preschool lesson components (such as activities, games, newsletters). Survey focus was on whether or not 1) preschooler knowledge increased, and 2) the lesson was relevant for their students. Teachers had the opportunity to include specific comments.

Findings revealed that knowledge had improved and the lesson was relevant for 84% of the components for all 7 teachers. Components that received negative feedback informed revisions to FY 2010 programming. For example, “Moo Mask” activity was removed because it was not age appropriate, and a juice taste test was replaced with whole fruit because juice was not relevant to the lesson focus.

TRAILS For Tots. In response to FY 2009 preschool needs assessment findings, TRACKS began compilation of *TRAILS For Tots*, focused on the psychodynamics of feeding behaviors (e.g. caregiver leadership with feeding, child autonomy with eating). *TRAILS For Tots* will consist of nutrition education lessons for preschoolers and their caregivers. *Mealt ime is Family Time*, a digital photo receiver (DPR) program for preschooler caregivers, was developed and will be distributed to Local Partners in FY 2010 to strengthen caregiver education. *Mealt ime is Family Time* aligns with *TRAILS for Tots* content and FNS Core Messages, with focus on making time to prepare and eat healthy meals, encouraging families to eat together at meal times, and role modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. FY 2010 field testing will include focus group and target audience interviews, as well as staff feedback to guide the revision process.