

EDLR 1161/NUSC 1161-Husky Reads: Introducing Food and Nutrition to Children through Reading

Husky Reads: (1credit) Supervised field work and experiential learning in nutritional literacy for preschoolers and young children, geared to individual, dual, and team activities. Readings and reflections.

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Introduction to Husky Reads

Many preschool children have limited literacy and little understanding of healthy food choices. Modeled after the nationally recognized Reach Out and Read program, the Husky Reads program promotes good health and nutrition habits by reading nutrition-focused, health-oriented books to children in waiting rooms of primary health clinics and in preschool programs. Husky Reads has been a highly successful, service learning class at the University of Connecticut since 2000.

Students participating in this community-based experience follow a defined curriculum that uses a weekly nutrition theme. Following the lesson plan, students read nutrition- and health-themed books to preschoolers, provide small food tastings and do hands-on activities that support the basic nutrition/health theme of the week. These activities are designed to promote basic health literacy as well as an understanding of healthy food choices.

Low literacy and limited access to healthy foods is particularly acute in urban youth living in poverty. This class provides undergraduate students with the opportunity to deliver basic nutrition information and promote literacy to inner city preschoolers. Students work in pairs or in small teams, using prepared lesson plans that allow the UConn students to focus on food and nutrition literacy activities, while at the same time, acquiring classroom management skills. In addition, students benefit from experiential learning in community settings that increases their cultural competence with the groups served.

As an experiential learning course, Husky Reads combines community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and evaluation. This course provides a general introduction to the key tenets of service learning, a key element of which is reciprocity of learning between the service providers (UConn students) and service recipients (children and families in the community). It is axiomatic that the children and families with whom students work teach the UConn undergraduates as much as the UConn students teach the children.

Instructional Pattern:

Students begin the course with an orientation session before embarking on their community experience. Prior to each weekly site visit, students review the lesson plan and participate in a training session. After each community site visit, they complete and submit an evaluation form, reflect on the community experience in writing, receive feedback on their work at the site, and participate in group discussions about site visit successes and opportunities for improvement.

Course Goal

The overall goal of Husky Reads is to provide basic nutrition information and healthy food tastings to young (preschool-aged) children living in under-served urban areas in Connecticut. Additionally, the Husky Reads experience provides students with opportunities to participate in advocacy, education and service to the community in the areas of public health and nutrition.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester students are able to:

1. Deliver simple nutrition lessons to the targeted age group of preschool-aged children.
2. Understand the importance of delivering community-based nutrition and literacy programming.
3. Read books to children about healthy eating, healthy habits, “My Plate” (based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans), provide general health messages that help preschool children learn age-appropriate nutrition facts, model reading behaviors, and promote literacy.
4. Follow a basic nutrition-themed lesson plan while providing food tastings and supplemental activities to reinforce the learning objectives.
5. Understand the commitment necessary to successfully participate in service learning educational experiences and community engagement activities.
6. Articulate issues regarding cultural awareness and the communities being served.

Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites for this course; familiarity with the basic principles of community service and civic engagement is helpful. This course is a prerequisite for all other Husky courses.

Site Attendance

The success of Husky Reads relies on students’ absolute commitment to attendance, punctuality, respect, and active participation in delivering basic nutrition lessons and literacy activities in preschool classes or health clinics for 2 hours each week. Pre-visit

training, set-up, transportation to and from sites, clean-up, and debriefing/discussion add an additional 2 hours each week. If students miss a class, they must make up the points by attending another section time within 2 weeks of the missed day. Students may miss and make-up a maximum of 2 site visits per semester, beyond that, students need to repeat the class for credit.

The course instructor or course manager visits each site twice during the semester to observe each individual student's performance and assess group performance.

Evaluations and Site Visit Contact Sheet

Each student is expected to complete a lesson evaluation form after every site visit. It is strongly suggested that students complete the evaluation form on the same day as the site visit. Students are encouraged to participate in group discussions with others while being transported back from the community site in order to complete the evaluation form. If they cannot complete the form during the return trip, students may submit it to the Program Coordinator by e-mail within 1 week of the class. All completed evaluations are due prior to departure for the next weekly site visit. The evaluation helps Husky Reads staff identify ways to improve the experience and provides input on better ways to meet the nutrition education needs of the community. The evaluation also documents the hours of community engagement, an extremely important factor for grant funding for this class.

Enthusiasm, Active Participation and Punctuality

Husky Reads plays a significant role in bringing literacy and nutrition education to the community, making active participation, respect and enthusiasm by each student crucial to the success of the program, qualities most effectively demonstrated by reliability and punctuality in departing from UConn and arriving at the site. Attendance at each and every site visit and being on time shows respect for the community, the site staff who work so hard every day, and the children who gain so much from the program. Husky Reads faculty and staff members evaluate students' participation at the sites and provide feedback.

Assignments Summarized

1. Attendance and punctuality is not only critical for the success of the program but also is an important benchmark for the success in this class. In the case of an unexpected emergency or urgent situation that prevents attendance, they must contact the Program Coordinator immediately.
2. Come to site each week prepared, having read the lesson plan. Be ready to actively and cheerfully participate at the site.
3. Complete all paperwork, including 1) the Lesson Evaluation form – each student must complete one per site visit, and 2) the Site Visit Contact Sheet – each pair/group must complete one per site visit

Since this is an experience-learning class, grading is weighted toward attendance, respect, enthusiasm, and active participation at community sites. Our continued good relations and ability to participate with community sites depend on students' commitment to the sites.

Again, Husky Reads staff members evaluate each student's performance at the site and provide feedback.

Grading – A Visual Summary:

Requirement	Points Each Week	Portion of Grade
Site Visits	Attendance and Punctuality: 3.5 points	35%
Evaluation and Contact Sheets	Contact Report: 1 point Site Visit Evaluation: 1 point Timeliness: 1 point	30%
Performance at Community Site	Active Participation: 1.5 pts Preparation: 1 point Enthusiasm: 1 point	35%

This class follows the standard UConn system for assigning grades:

93-100 A	73-76 C
90-92 A-	70-72 C-
87-89 B+	67-69 D+
83-86 B	63-66 D
80-82 B-	60-62 D-
77-79 C+	<60 Fail

Requirements & Student Assessment

On site participation is evaluated as follows:

- Engagement with preschool children, classroom teachers and/or parents
- Active participation in delivering lessons
- Knowledge of the nutrition message for each week
- Conveying a positive attitude
- Assisting with loading and unloading of materials for the site and site set up
- Staff receiving the weekly contact forms immediately after each session and evaluation forms before the next class, preferably on the same day. .

EXAMPLE Site Observation Form:

Husky Reads Observation Form

Student's name: _____

Date: _____ Observer: _____

Site: _____

Criteria	Maximum number of Points
Engagement with students (1 point)	
Active participation in delivering the lesson (1 point)	
Knowledge of the nutrition message for each week (1 point)	
Conveying a positive attitude (1 point)	
Assisting with loading and unloading of materials for the site and helping with setup/cleanup (1 point)	
TOTAL	

Comments:

Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships

The University is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination or discriminatory harassment directed toward any person or group within its community – students, employees, or visitors. Academic and professional excellence can flourish only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an academic and work environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination or discriminatory harassment. In addition, inappropriate Romantic relationships can undermine the University's mission when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their authority. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment, as well as inappropriate Romantic relationships, and such behavior will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University. More information is available at <http://policy.uconn.edu/?p=2884>.

Sexual Assault Reporting Policy

To protect the campus community, all non-confidential University employees (including faculty) are required to report assaults they witness or are told about to the [Office of Diversity & Equity](#) under the [Sexual Assault Response Policy](#). The University takes all reports with the utmost seriousness. Please be aware that while the information you provide will remain private, it will not be confidential and will be shared with University officials who can help. More information is available at <http://sexualviolence.uconn.edu/>

HUSKY READS WEEKLY EVALUATION FORM

Name: _____

Name of Site: _____

Date of lesson: _____

Name of lesson: _____

LESSON EVALUATION

Please answer the following questions about today's lesson to help us improve the program delivery. To receive full credit, thoughtful answers must be provided for each item.

Which books/activities did you do with the children in your classroom(s)?

Describe how each of the books/activities was received. Which ones kept the children's interest, or were at an appropriate level? Which ones lost their interest, or were not a good fit? Why?

What parts of the book/activity did you emphasize with the children to support the lesson theme? Did you come up with any helpful sayings/phrases with your own words?

What 1 change would you recommend to improve this lesson?

Was the site prepared for you when you arrived? Did you have all the supplies students needed for the Husky Reads visit? If not, what supplies were missing? If not, how did you manage the situation?

HUSKY READS WEEKLY EVALUATION FORM (Page 2)

Name: _____

Did you face any challenges at the site? (ie: classroom management issues, conflicts, not enough materials for the lesson, more children than expected). If yes, how did you manage the challenge(s) you experienced?

What additional information or training will help future Husky Reads students carry out this lesson with children?

Please describe the role that you and each of your group members played on site and share any concerns that you have about the site or the group.

Please reflect on the experiences at site in one to two paragraphs. The reflection should include what you observed today at the site that you found interesting, surprised or caused you concern?

HUSKY PROGRAMS CONTACT FORM

Submitted by: _____ Other students in group: _____

Name of site: _____ Circle one: Reads Nutrition1 Health Fair Market Other _____

Date of lesson: _____ Topic/Theme of lesson: _____

Direct Contacts (participate in lesson)

Class room # or name:			
Age	Female	Male	<i>Total by age (admin use)</i>
Less than 5 yrs			
5-17 years old			
18-59 years old			
60 years or older			
<i>Total by sex (admin use)</i>			

Class room # or name:			
Age	Female	Male	<i>Total by age (admin use)</i>
Less than 5 yrs			
5-17 years old			
18-59 years old			
60 years or older			
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5-17 years old			
18-59 years old			
60 years or older			
<i>Total by sex (admin use)</i>			

Number of Indirect Contacts:	Total Count
Someone who is passively hearing our lesson/topics/display boards)	

Example of a HUSKY READS semester schedule

(See <https://www.snap4ct.org/husky-reads-curriculum.html> for a detailed description of each lesson)

Week	Topic
Week 1	Orientation Syllabus review, discussion-ROAR, Literacy Gap, Service Learning, SNAP, Childhood Obesity, transportation & logistics
Week 2	Site visit and Hartford Tour Orientation – part 2- Reading Strategies for Preschoolers, Classroom Management, Food Safety, 1 st lesson review components, forms, Husky Reads sampler video
Week 3	First week on site Lesson theme: What I Like About Healthy Me
Week 4	Site visit Lesson theme: Filling MyPlate with Healthy Choices
Week 5	Site visit Lesson theme: Fruit for All!
Week 6	Site visit Lesson theme: Various Vegetables
Week 7	Site visit Lesson theme: Dairy for Healthy Teeth and Bones
Week 8	Site visit Lesson theme: Grains Help You Go!
Week 9	Site visit Lesson theme: Power Up with Protein
Week 10	Site visit Lesson theme: Let's Make MyPlate Healthy
Week 11	Site visit Lesson theme: Taste a Rainbow of Color
Week 12	Site visit Lesson theme: Taste Explorers!
	Final group meeting Summary and discussion