



Angelena Chapman • Daily Times

Students at Tiogue Elementary School listen Tuesday to Chef Heidi Carla of the Kids First "Power Up" program tell them about whole grains and other aspects of developing healthy eating habits.

Kids learn being smart means eating smart

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Special to the Times

COVENTRY — Fifth graders at Tiogue Elementary School got to practice healthy eating as part of the Kids First "Power Up" classroom program Tuesday.

Kids First is a program that works across the state to "promote and educate" healthy eating for kids and also works with the schools to implement the Rhode Island Nutrition Requirements (RINR). Chef Heidi Carla was at the school to teach the kids about healthy choices and demonstrate a recipe they could try at home.

Tuesday's program was a great follow-up to wellness week during which the students were introduced to a lot of fruits and vegetables, said school nurse Shirley Hall, who booked "Power Up."

Hall said changes to the school lunch program have been going on for a while, but the problems with childhood obesity have "spurred this movement" to teach kids to make healthy choices now that will affect them later.

The "Power Up" program is free of charge and offers a variety of topics from eating local to trying new things, Hall said.

Whole grains was the topic for the Tiogue students. "What makes it a whole grain?" Chef Carla asked the class. "It's more brown," one student responded. Another said, "It's more natural."

Carla explained to the students that a grain has three parts: the bran or outside layer, the wheat germ, which houses the most nutrients, and the endosperm, the largest part of the grain. "It needs to have all three parts" to be a whole grain, she said.

Fiber is one thing that comes from whole

grains, Carla told them. "You clean [your] outside, but who cleans the inside?" "We eat foods that leave behind a lot of gunk," she told them, some that even would "clog the kitchen sink. Fiber is like a scrub brush. It pushes the food through."

She asked if any of the kids had ever had a grain cereal in the morning before school. One girl suggested Cheerios, but Carla said, "They did the work for you. They cooked the grain." She wanted the kids to try a freshly prepared whole grain like Breakfast Couscous.

The couscous was cooked in apple cider, honey and spices the night before and Carla added apples, mangos, golden raisins and yogurt before giving it to the kids.

"This is some good stuff," one student said.

"It tastes like apple pie!" several agreed.

One girl said "It was okay, but I didn't like the bead things!"

Carla laughed, "The couscous!"

Would they make it at home? A couple of students said they would

She also told the kids about the "billions of dollars" being spent to use the front of a package to "attract [their] eye." They use "something you like already," she said, like a cartoon or a sports image.

"Where on the box can you get your truth?" she asked them. She told the kids that by law the Nutrition Facts Label or NFL has to tell them what's in the food.

Chef Carla said the healthiest things often have the simplest names. One student raised her hand and said she had been told "If you can't pronounce it you probably shouldn't eat it."

"The way you start eating now sets the tone for what kind of adult you'll be," Carla told the kids.