

impact

University of Idaho Extension
programs that are making a
difference in Idaho.

North Idaho leads the way in layered Eat Smart Idaho impact

AT A GLANCE

Layering Direct Education with Policy, Systems and Environmental strategies at summer school sites in the Coeur d'Alene School District created a powerful culture of health producing health improvements.

The Situation

Schools are powerful partners in promoting healthy behaviors because they reach children where they learn, eat and play. Layering Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed) activities within school settings allows youth to experience consistent, reinforcing health messages through multiple approaches — nutrition education, physical activity, food access and role modeling.

Eat Smart Idaho recognizes the importance of combining Direct Education with Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) changes to achieve sustainable health outcomes. Direct Education builds participants' knowledge, skills and motivation to make healthier choices, while PSE strategies make those choices easier and more accessible. Research shows that when Direct Education and PSE are layered programs like Eat Smart Idaho can address the complex factors influencing diet and physical activity behaviors. Additionally, the layered approach enables SNAP-Ed to expand its reach, serving more individuals while making the most efficient use of available funding.

In the summer of 2025, Eat Smart Idaho layered SNAP-Ed programming at Northwest Expedition Academy (NEXA) and Winton Elementary in the



Northwest Expedition Academy student creating fruit art after learning about GLOW foods: fruits and vegetables.

Coeur d'Alene School District. NEXA served as a Summer Meals site for low-income youth and the home of SummerPlus, the district's childcare program for elementary students. This setting created the perfect opportunity to layer multiple education and environmental initiatives designed to promote health behaviors.

Our Response

Over 240 youth participated in the SummerPlus program at NEXA and Winton in 2025 and benefited from a comprehensive, multilayered SNAP-Ed experience coordinated by Eat Smart Idaho in Kootenai County.

Direct Education: Youth received seven weeks of nutrition education covering: Youth received seven weeks of nutrition education covering: MyPlate and the

importance of balanced meals; fruits and vegetables and their role in growth and development; hand hygiene and safe food practices; food labels and informed food choices; and physical activity and its impact on a healthy body.

PSE layered enhancements included:

- **Healthy Harvest (nine weeks):** Youth were introduced to a new fruit or vegetable each week, learning how it grows, tasting it and exploring ways to include it in daily meals.
- **Roving Chef (five sessions):** In partnership with the school district's nutrition services director and head chef, students learned hands-on cooking skills and healthy meal combinations which coordinated with the week's Healthy Harvest offer.
- **Soccer for Success (eight weeks):** As part of the obesity prevention initiative, youth learned soccer skills, teamwork and the lifelong benefits of physical activity. Participants received soccer equipment to encourage continued play at home.
- **Positive Role Model Project (seven guests, two college interns, two high school helpers):** Funded through Innovative Project dollars, this initiative brought five community role models to engage with youth about healthy eating, movement and the empowering message of "I can do that too." Coaches also served as healthy role models engaging in story telling activities highlighting professional athletes known for their positive character traits.
- **Art Integration Activities:** Youth creatively expressed their learning by making artwork depicting fruits and vegetables, Play-Doh produce and aluminum foil figures illustrating movement and fitness. These activities reinforced key wellness concepts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Program Outcomes

Layering SNAP-Ed's Direct Education classes and PSE strategies resulted in a vibrant and sustained culture of health at NEXA and Winton during the summer of 2025.

Evaluation Statement	NEXA and Winton Data
Improved their ability to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendation	87%
Improved their food handling practices from baseline	62%
Improved their physical activity practices from baseline	60%

Overall, the data shows that layering Direct Education with PSE strategies produces meaningful behavior changes in youth. Shelly Johnson, who directed the summer programming says "We designed our summer programming to reach youth from every angle — what they know, what they can access and who they look up to. Through education, fresh food exposure, physical activity and positive role models, we showed youth that healthy living is something they can do every day. We couldn't have done this without our strong partners in the Coeur d'Alene School District."

Currently, SNAP-Ed funding has been discontinued, creating uncertainty for future programming. Despite this, University of Idaho Extension Eat Smart Idaho program remains fully committed to continuing meaningful, impactful education and outreach that supports Idaho's families. Through innovative partnerships and program oversight, Eat Smart Idaho will strive to sustain its mission of empowering communities to live healthier, more active lives.