



Background

Program Goal

The goal of the LANA Preschool Program is to help young children learn to taste, eat and enjoy more fruits and vegetables each day for good health.

How was the LANA Preschool Program developed?

Originally designed as a 24-week program, the LANA Preschool Program was developed through a grant from the National Cancer Institute to the Minnesota Department of Health. Working with preschool children, their parents, and staff in 22 child care centers, researchers from the Minnesota Department of Health and the University of Minnesota partnered with New Horizon Academy, a childcare corporation based in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area of Minnesota, to develop and test the LANA Preschool Program.

What was learned from the study?

Twenty childcare centers participated in the research study testing the effects of participating in the LANA Preschool Program. Ten centers offered the program while the others waited until after the study was completed to implement the program. At the end of the study, researchers compared the amounts of fruits and vegetables eaten by the children who had participated in the program to the amounts eaten by the children who did not participate. Children who participated in the LANA Preschool Program ate significantly more vegetables at lunch and more total fruits and vegetables throughout the day.

Why is it important for children to eat more fruits and vegetables?

Childhood represents a critical time in human development. Adults who eat more fruits and vegetables report having done so as children, suggesting that it is a habit that begins in childhood. Developing healthy eating habits in childhood can reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes later in life. Eating fruits and vegetables also promotes healthy weight. Despite these important benefits, American children and adolescents do not consume the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables.

How does the LANA Preschool Program help change children's eating behaviors?

The LANA Preschool Program is based on well-established nutrition education and behavior-change theories. LANA helps children learn to eat more fruits and vegetables by:

- Increasing opportunities for children to taste and eat fruits and vegetables
- Providing opportunities for hands-on experiences with fruits and vegetables
- Creating a supportive environment for eating fruits and vegetables
- Providing children with role models who eat fruits and vegetables
- Connecting classroom or child care activities with their home environment

Although the original LANA Program targeted or encouraged consumption of 8 highly nutritious fruits and vegetables, the approach can be used to introduce any new fruit or vegetable to young children. Since the study ended, LANA has continued to be offered in child care centers and has been successfully adapted and implemented in dozens of family child care homes.