

ABOUT THE HEALTHY EATING LESSON PLAN SERIES

How did the lesson plans come about, who developed them, and why?

Language learning is essential for newcomers' integration and wellbeing. Proficiency in an official language has been associated with immigrants' employment rates, self-reported health and health outcomes. To address language as a key determinant of health while tackling priority health concerns for immigrants, a collaborative project that includes staff from Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) has been established to develop and implement lesson plans on various health topics.

This collaborative work has enabled the integration of health content into language instruction through two programs: English as a Second Language (ESL) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). As a result, ESL/LINC instructors, in collaboration with OPH staff, have designed a first series of 24 lesson plans on eight healthy eating topics for adult learners. Field tested in a variety of ESL/LINC settings and reviewed by a multidisciplinary team, the lesson plans are not only relevant, accurate and easy to follow but appropriate for learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and at different levels of language proficiency. The lessons are based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) which is a descriptive scale of language ability. Each topic includes a lesson plan at each of the following levels: ESL Literacy-CLB 1, CLB 2-3, and CLB 4-5.

What is included in each lesson plan?

Each lesson plan has been designed following the same template and includes instructor notes, a variety of easy to use activities, assessment tasks, and a self-reflection task.

- The ***Instructor Notes*** at the beginning of the lesson plans provide guidelines and suggestions on how to use them.
- Each ***activity*** has been designed to focus on a particular skill area of listening, speaking, reading or writing and on certain competency areas. The activities are ready to use, which may minimize the time instructors need to prepare engaging sessions. Some of the worksheets (e.g., cards, game boards) can be laminated and re-used. The activities are interactive and encourage learning through participation and dialogue.
- The ***assessments*** have been designed as a way to gauge learning from the lesson plan and may be used as a Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PLBA) tasks.
- The ***learner self-reflection*** task captures a learner's intention to adopt a desirable practice as a result of the knowledge acquired.

Often healthier than the Canadian-born population when they first arrive in Canada, immigrants' health deteriorates over time

Known as the "healthy immigrant effect," this phenomenon has been observed particularly among non-European immigrants. The reasons for this deterioration are complex. The process of immigration itself is stressful and may impact immigrants' health. Financial constraints, employment problems or the lack of a social support networks can affect their health and overall wellbeing. Immigrants may also adopt unhealthy behaviours that are common in their new country. Also, medical problems arise as they age just like anyone else.

Source: Ng E., Wilkins R., François Gendron F. and Berthelot J-M. The Changing Health of Immigrants. Statistics Canada, autumn 2005.

Who are these lesson plans for, and how can they be used?

These lesson plans have been designed for anyone who teaches ESL/LINC, and who would like to incorporate important public health content into their language teaching. As mentioned in the Instructor Notes of each lesson plan, they have been designed in a way that they can be adapted to the individual needs of the learners in a classroom.

The lesson plans seek to introduce newcomers to Canadian culinary culture and recommended healthy eating practices, while encouraging learners to maintain the healthy habits from their countries of origin. Given Canada's wide and rich cultural diversity, it would have been impossible to include preferred foods and practices of all learners in a classroom. However, acknowledging the rich variety of cultures through examples that resonate with learners is essential. For this reason, instructors are encouraged to begin discussions with learners on popular foods, culinary and healthy eating practices from their countries of origin. Public health staff/nutritionists can assist with the adaptation of traditional dishes (e.g., replacing unhealthy with healthy oils) as needed.

The lesson plans have been designed for instructors to use on their own as a tool for language teaching, but they can also be used in coordination with visits from public health staff. Although there is no cookie-cutter approach for the use of the lesson plans, some promising practices are emerging in different contexts in Ottawa. In some cases, an ESL/LINC instructor introduces a public health topic by covering basic concepts and vocabulary while leaving the more complex issues for a public health staff to discuss during a health session in the classroom. In other cases, the ESL/LINC instructor uses activities from the lesson plans prior to, or in conjunction with, an OPH-facilitated session, in which case both ESL/LINC and OPH staff agree on the content and sequence of activities in advance. In some cases, the OPH staff, in consultation with the ESL/LINC instructor, adapts an activity from a lesson plan focusing on the health content and leaving the language instruction component to the instructor. In any of these cases, both the instructor and the OPH staff member use the lesson plan as a *coordination tool*, ensuring that the vocabulary and content being shared with the learners is consistent, accurate, and language-level appropriate.

How can I provide my feedback on the lesson plans?

Geared towards continuous quality improvement, the *Language Learning for Health* collaborative project is in constant evolution. Your comments and suggestions regarding the lesson plans will be greatly appreciated and can be emailed to: OPH-ESL_LessonPlans@ottawa.ca.

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