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**Kids and produce- senses and experiences**

**The proof is in the carrots**

*Zata Vickers, PhD with the University of Minnesota, conducted an experiment involving measuring senses and experiences to answer the question as to “why do we like fruits and vegetables.” She provided a presentation at the Produce Marketing Association’s annual food service convention. Her presentation can be downloaded at:*

<http://fsc.pma.com/sites/default/files/Interactive%20Flavor%20Lab.pdf>

The study describes “liking” as the pleasure one experiences when eating or using a product. Humans acquire liking a taste through biological/physiological; social/cultural; or relevance.

The social/cultural aspect of liking something was enhanced when pairing a food with a liked person or social setting.

The study goes on to talk about how “People don’t eat enough fruits and vegetables. How can we get them to eat more?” The answer:

**Increase fruit and vegetable consumption in school cafeterias!**

When the study measured a school cafeteria, they found that out of 663 kids, 80 took carrots (12%); 298 took applesauce (45%); 227 took oranges (34%); and 42 took green beans (6%).

They then added two new concepts to encourage kids to make better choices. #1 they added a photo of pictures of fruits and veggies on their plate: and #2 they served the fruits and vegetables first.

The results? 134% increase in the number of kids that took green beans and 209% increase in carrots.

“We believe this part of their study backs up our feeling that when kids see the fun, loveable fruit & veggie pictures on their play’tes, they will choose it more often,” stated Susan Sternitzke with Limelight Creative Group.

The POWER PLAY'te program that is going to into elementary schools is designed and created by Kristan Sheppard and Susan Sternitzke of Limelight Creative Group. The POW'er PLAY'te program consists of the PLAY'tes as well as a "crop of the week" educational program geared to encourage teachers to introduce kids to healthy fruits and vegetables. The program is being unveiled September 12, 2012 in Yuma, Arizona. Every elementary school in Yuma School District One and Crane Elementary School District will serve lunch on the PLAY'tes once per week.

The philosophy of the POW'er PLAY'te program is.. don't try to educate them every time they pick up a fork. "Children will learn to love fruits and vegetables when they are introduced in a fun, playful, kid-relatable way! Just like teaching kids to read, teachers will be far more successful if they instill a love of books, creativity and imagination before they teach their students how to read. The PLAY'te is designed for play and before you know it, they are trying something new that they thought they didn't like," added Kristan Sheppard, a former first grade teacher.

JVSmith Companies funded the Yuma project so that every child will eat on the PLAY'tes in schools. Smith is a local grower specializing in lettuce varieties, green onions, leafy greens and organic produce.

The program can be found at [www.powerplayte.com](http://www.powerplayte.com) or by calling 928-276-3408.

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