

Regie's Rainbow Adventure[®]



Discussion Guide: Regie's Real Superpower

National Kidney Foundation of Michigan's
nutrition education program for disease prevention
in the early childcare setting

Regie's Real Superpower

A Community Activity

This activity may surprise you! In the middle of our new book, *Regie's Rainbow Adventure*, a mother describes the day her little girl came home from preschool in with a startling request: The girl wanted her family to serve broccoli for dinner. Mom was skeptical. If she went to the trouble of buying and cooking broccoli, would the girl actually eat the vegetable? As it turned out, the girl did enjoy the new food and “to this day she loves broccoli!”

What sparked this new interest? Regie—a broccoli-shaped superhero who stars in the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan's weekly nutrition education program for early childcare programs. “Regie provides a powerful opportunity for parents to talk about food with children,” this Mom says in NKFM's book (see pages 45-57). “Week after week, my daughter would come home all excited to tell me things about food—like I didn't know anything about fruits and vegetables. It was fun! This was all new to her and she just assumed I didn't know anything about the importance of eating these foods. We enjoyed our talks about Regie.”

That's Regie's real super power: “Regie has the power to get entire families talking about nutrition,” as we say in the book.

Here's the background: The NKFM knows that America's wellbeing depends on encouraging healthy eating and active movement throughout life, starting at an early age. That's the core message of our Regie's Rainbow Adventure® program as we invite children in their preschool classrooms to imaginatively travel with our superhero all the way from the Island of Red to the Island of Purple. As they read our Regie picture books and enjoy the related activities, kids taste samples of colorful fruits and vegetables with their teachers. Then, most importantly, they carry that new enthusiasm home with them. As they are learning about nutritious and delicious foods, children also are working on a range of early-childhood learning priorities with their teachers' encouragement. That includes basic literacy, lessons with numbers, letters and colors—as well as the need to reduce the amount of passive “screen time” kids are tempted to fall into these days.

This Discussion Guides is one in a series of guides to help you explore six books about innovative early-learning programs, including our work with Regie. Now more than ever, such efforts need to be lifted up and encouraged nationwide. In recent years, United Way for Southeastern Michigan has been proud to highlight these six programs because we know they work! Rigorous evaluation proves that they shape children's lives and the entire community in positive ways.

Organize Your Activity

Step 1 is inviting people to discuss what we are presenting to readers in these books.

Get a copy of the colorful Regie book. People will want to look at that cover with a little boy giving our superhero a big hug. Then ask something like this: “Can we talk about a fresh idea I’ve discovered that’s part of this program called Regie’s Rainbow Adventure? Kids love it. The whole family could get involved in this activity. We could take these ideas they’re providing and use them or adapt them to fit our needs—right here where we live.”

Are you confronting especially difficult challenges in your neighborhood? You should know that all six of these books—including the Regie program—originated in neighborhoods wrestling with the impact of poverty, low rates of literacy and recent immigration. Our metro-Detroit region has become nationally known for the creative—and effective—responses by the talented professionals working for nonprofits focused on early childhood issues. We’re finding solutions that can work for you, too.

Who might join the discussion? Look around you. Did you know that millions of small groups meet every week across the United States? Group settings include congregations, schools, libraries, civic centers, coffee shops, and individuals’ homes. The intentions of these groups range from religious to recreational, from educational to purely social. Whatever their purpose, a universal concern in these groups is food—ranging from “snacks” provided by members when the group meets to larger concerns



In a typical classroom, young children are eager to sample bowls of fresh fruits and vegetables, in this case green melon and kiwi pieces.

**Learn more and download at:
www.PlaceHolder.org**

about nutrition and hunger issues in our world today. If you propose this idea, you're likely to find interested friends in your small group.

How do you get the conversation started? Use any of the language in this Discussion Guide to get people excited. You can reproduce sections of this text in an email, a flier or as notes to share in person with your group. Point out: "We're all concerned about healthy nutrition in our families. Let's explore this Regie program. We might be able to bring something like this to our community. *Let's take a taste!*"

Remember: This is just one in a series of guides. As this series of guides expands, you'll find more issues to discuss—along with additional group activities we will be suggesting. Look at the last page of this discussion guide for a complete list of all six books and upcoming guides. We'd love to hear your questions and ideas for spreading this news.

A Flexible, Adaptable Adventure

This activity involves organizing a "tasting" of fruits and vegetables in the six color groupings Regie explores week by week in the NKFM program: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Purple and Blue (with options for White and Brown foods that week because there are not as many blue-colored foods). You can make this a simple, fun activity for friends in your living room or church basement—to get them interested in this exciting, colorful concept. The Regie program is expanding across the state of Michigan and soon will be expanding nationwide. You may be interested in bringing Regie to your neighborhood, or you may simply be lifting up the importance of nutrition. In either case, this idea of tasting a rainbow-hued sample of fruits and vegetables is a terrific way to get parents, teachers and community leaders thinking about the need to bring nutrition education into early childhood settings.

You can make this very simple: Ask your small group to let you present this program and start a discussion on nutrition. Visit a grocery store or produce market and prepare fresh, cut-up samples. Bring along some of the Regie materials. We recommend you share a copy of our book or at least pages from this



At a community-wide event in Detroit, parents and children walk through the rainbow adventures of Regie, stopping at each table to taste fruits and vegetables.

Discussion Guide. Think of it as a fresh idea for a conversation among friends in your community with an unusually colorful array of snacks in the center of your table.

Or, if you sense there's real interest among your friends, you could organize a more elaborate, community-wide program to raise awareness around hunger and nutrition issues in your community.

How elaborate can this get? In a school gymnasium in Detroit, NKFM staff and volunteers staged a large-scale version of this activity for men, women and children in southeast Michigan. They set up a series of tables forming the shape of a large rainbow arch. Each table displayed a Regie poster with intriguing information about the superhero's adventures among color-themed islands. At each table along that arch-shaped pathway, people were invited to stop, sample food with toothpicks and hear an interpreter tell a little bit about Regie's lessons on that particular island. Everyone had a nametag and, as people completed their tasting at each table, an appropriately colored star sticker was added to each nametag.

You can read more about that big event, and see more photos, at ReadTheSpirit online magazine. (<http://www.readthespirit.com/explore/regies-rainbow-adventure-comicbook-hero-shows-us-his-true-super-power/>) The magazine story, which you may want to share with friends to build excitement for this activity, starts this way:

We traveled.

We tasted.

We talked.

It was all in a day's work for the broccoli-shaped superhero Regie, who left a crowd in Detroit savoring the flavors of colorful fruits and vegetables—and pondering the rich role that food plays in our lives. Regie—both in a 6-foot-tall costumed version and in the form of a 1-foot-tall plush puppet—had top billing as the star of the show. But, a Michigan state senator who appeared with Regie, and told his own story of a life-long struggle with diabetes, clearly won the hearts of the crowd.

Thanking Regie for his expanding campaign to encourage healthy eating, state Sen. Morris W. Hood III, the minority leader in Michigan's senate, told the crowd about keeping a Regie puppet handy in his Lansing office.

“It gets everybody talking, like: What is this puppet? It's a great way to introduce other senators—and others who are in Lansing—to this important program,” Hood said.

In fact, that's the green superhero's true power, Hood said. “Regie gets people talking about the foods we eat,” he said. “Regie starts the conversation about healthy living. One of the biggest preventive measures we can have is Regie's Rainbow Adventure in our communities.”

Hood feels so strongly about the public health value of the Regie program, which was created by the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan (NKFM), that he wrote the preface for NKFM's new book, called: Regie's Rainbow Adventure—National Kidney Foundation of Michigan's nutrition education program for disease prevention in the early childcare setting, available in paperback and Kindle versions. (<https://www.amazon.com/Regies-Rainbow-Adventure-Foundation-Prevention/dp/1942011644>)

In his preface, Hood writes: “Each child's life is the beginning of our future. In our world today, we could find ourselves distracted by the many obstacles we face and we could forget about the health and education of our children. But, we cannot let that happen. Early childhood education and health go hand in hand in raising children to reach their full potential. We know that their

success is truly our success as they become our next generation of leaders. If we give our children a strong and healthy head start now, they will help us build a better world.”

Linda Smith-Wheelock, COO of NKFM, appeared with Hood and other speakers at the event to celebrate the expansion of the Regie program from serving about 12,000 children currently—to about 24,000 over the coming year. “As the prevalence of obesity in children increases, so does the rate of type 2 diabetes, which is a leading cause of kidney failure. One in three children who were born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime,” Smith-Wheelock writes in the new book.

Get in touch with us.

Share your ideas.



Contact NKFM if you would like to see additional Regie materials that can help you spark interest in your community.

Adapting this idea? Please, share your innovation with us.

If you are a veteran of small groups, you may want to develop your own approach to this activity, tailored to the experiences and needs of your own community. Be creative! If you live near a large outdoor produce market—something like Detroit’s huge Eastern Market, which is filled with produce early every morning—then you might want to introduce the Regie concept by organizing a small-group tour of your regional market. You’ll see the whole rainbow of colors displayed by vendors.

If you wind up touching off lively and helpful discussions about nutrition, please get in touch with us and share your thoughts. These books—and the accompanying Discussion Guides—were published to encourage conversations coast to coast. We would like to hear about your fresh ideas.

Here are some ways you could start this process:

BEGIN by orienting your group to the book, which describes the overall story behind this group activity and NKF’s ongoing concern for healthy nutrition, especially as it relates to disease prevention. That introduction will be most effective if you can describe the book and this activity in your own words. Something about this inspired you. Share that excitement directly with your friends. If you want to read aloud from a passage of the book on this theme, look for excerpts in pages 45 to 57.

ASK QUESTIONS: One way to get people to start talking is by asking, “What’s your biggest challenge at meal times?” Everyone can relate to that question. In fact, that one question might fill an hour of spirited discussion among parents.

Or, consider asking, after you’ve arranged an array of colorful samples: Are there any samples on the table in front of us that you’re not familiar with? (This depends on how many varied choices you can bring home from your produce market. You could find some samples that spark real curiosity. For instance, you might find a different kind of melon or some unusual regional berries or perhaps an Asian or South American vegetable.)

Another possible question: If there’s something here that you don’t know, then what do you **predict** about this unusual sample’s smell and taste? (Teachers regularly ask children that question in the Regie program, promoting curiosity among the kids.)

Have fun with this! If your samples are all fairly common, you could ask participants to sample the foods “blind”—relying on their sense of smell and taste and the texture to identify the food. That’s more difficult than it sounds!

The basic idea here is Regie’s main theme: Get people talking about nutrition and the challenges of feeding their family—and ultimately improving the health of the entire community.

Expand the Conversation

If you’ve read this book, used this Discussion Guide and care about these issues, then please help with the larger overall effort. Now more than ever, Americans need to be reminded of the challenges we face in early childhood education and nutrition. With funding cuts and shifting public priorities nationwide, assistance from community-based nonprofits will be urgently needed. You can help meet these needs by letting others know about your personal interest—and the potential of group discussions. Many men and women feel isolated in their concern for the welfare of young children. Simply letting other people know of your concern can help to touch off a growing community-wide awareness.

One way you can expand the conversation is by visiting the book's Amazon page and adding a review of the book. Of course, we hope you've found this book helpful, so we welcome Amazon reviews that may prompt others to pick up a copy and extend the discussion.

But that's not all! Share your thoughts on Facebook or in your own newsletters. *(Note: You are free to quote from our book in a blog post or column you might write about your experience in reading and discussing Regie's Rainbow Adventure. We want you to share these important ideas far and wide.)*

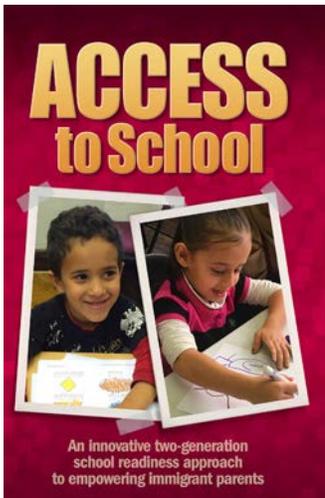


The power Regie felt he just couldn't believe.

"Please give me my purple stripe before I must leave.

A sample page from one of the Regie adventure books.

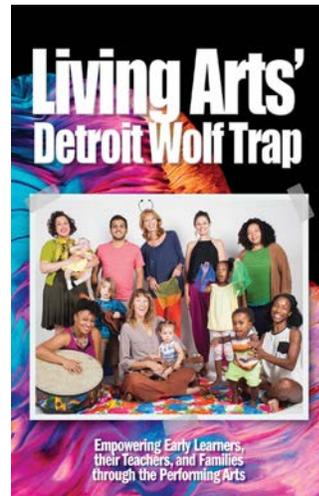
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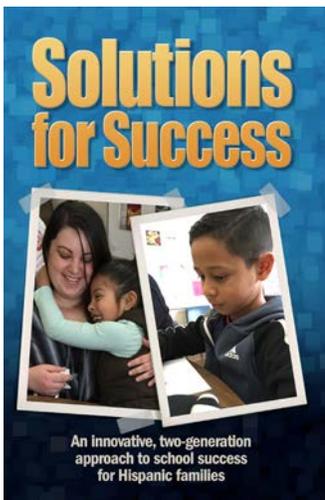
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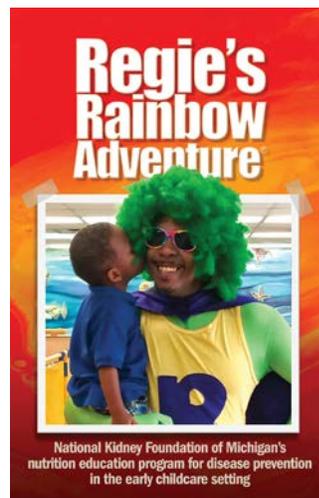
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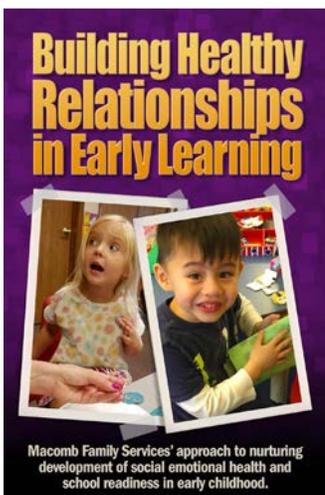
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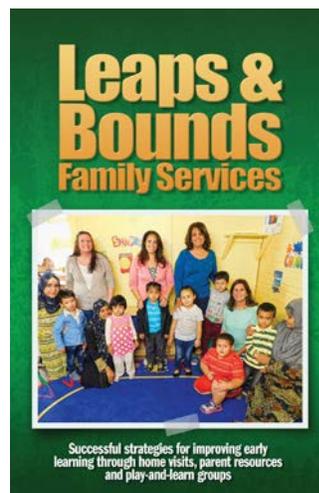
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