



THE JUNIOR CHEFS PROGRAM

Sometimes, getting kids involved in improving their reading skills is a real challenge. But an innovative program in Saskatoon has removed the barriers by turning the process into something comfortable and familiar—cooking. What could be more universal? The only restriction is the size of the kitchen which is usually made available by the program sponsor. If the kitchen is too small to accommodate those enrolled, a second session is added.

Typically, working with students between the ages of 8 and 13 (although a program with Grade 9s is starting in the New Year) the volunteers help write up a different recipe each week. The recipe is posted on a flip chart and copied onto index cards. The kids then learn how to double the recipe so that some can be shared or taken home. The recipes are simple and the ingredients readily available. At the end of the term, all the kids are given an index card cookbook so they can continue to make the recipes for their families. Students learn basic reading and comprehension skills, writing, math, nutrition and practical kitchen management—all while having fun. It has been hugely successful as exemplified by a lovely story about a very withdrawn little boy, Jordan, who, over time, began to participate, to smile and eventually to take out a Public Library card. A big step for Jordan that might never have happened in a more traditional reading program!