



Partnering with IEP Students to Improve Nutrition Label Education and Literacy

Olivia Bittner, Brian Davidson, Natalia Iannarino, and Caroline Symons

Advisor: Dr. Ann Biswas

Abstract

We revised a previous existing document, from the FDA, on how to read a nutrition label. We did this to make it appropriate for level two IEP students who wanted to better understand American nutrition labels.

Method

- Visited the IEP students to learn their understanding of the topic. After the visit, we found an FDA document that fit their interests.
- A SMOG and a Flesch-Kincaid readability test was done on the document.
- Taking the information from the document, we revised and redesigned it to be more cohesive, more organized, and more adjusted for those with a low health literacy.
- A SMOG and Flesch-Kincaid was done on the revised document. We returned to the same IEP classroom to present our new document and get any final feedback.

Result

The original document was written at approximately a seventh grade reading level. It used a distracting color scheme and advanced mathematical concepts. Through the field testing, we learned that the students understood what the nutrition facts label was, but did not utilize it as a resource. Therefore, we cut out the information we felt was unnecessary and revised portions to make it a lower reading level. We found that documents with fewer words, bulleted text, and simplified wording allowed for the IEP students to better understand the material presented to them.

SMOG Test	Original Document	Revised Document	Flesch-Kincaid Test	Original Document	Revised Document
Sentences	27	23	Word Count	293	169
Polysyllables	42	12	Reading Ease	66.4%	83.4%
Grade-Level	10	7	Grade-Level	6.8	3.5

Method of Revision

Our revised document focused more on how to effectively use the nutrition facts label to discover the types of food and how much an individual should eat for a balanced and healthy diet. We decreased the reading level of our document by using simpler words and shorter sentences. We included more pictures to show the kinds of foods one should eat as part of a healthy diet. Our revised document also utilized less color and less information overall to better organize and prioritize the information. The revisions we made to our document will help the IEP students better understand, follow directions, and take positive action. The students will actually take an interest in the information since it is focused on their interests. This will allow for better comprehension. The information is also presented at a reading level that they can understand. As a result, our revised document may encourage the students to use the nutrition facts label because they will no longer feel intimidated by it.

Problem

The original document was written at a 6.8 grade level (Flesch-Kincaid) or 10 (SMOG) grade level. Because the IEP students read at a 3-4th grade level, this document was written at too high of a grade level for the students to understand. In addition, the original document used an array of distracting colors and graphics that were not organized properly. The IEP students may find this design difficult to follow, and thus the information difficult to comprehend or utilize.

Conclusion

Through our discussion, IEP students were more comfortable with the information we presented to them in our revised document. This indicated that our revisions were a success in that they helped the IEP students better understand material that they had an interest in. The students showed interest in learning more about related topics. Their enthusiasm for knowledge was a joy to be a part of.