

Friend, Role Model, Teacher: Learning & Cooking Together

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By Ivette Paulino

There was the shy one that didn't make any eye contact with me, a stranger. There was a class clown making funny faces to make everybody laugh, and a sophisticated one that had a fancy posture while sitting and eating.

It was my first day at the Chelsea Recreation Center, the day I first met the after-school kids I would be teaching last summer as part of my [CookShop for Teens \(EATWISE\)](#) internship. As I entered the classroom, I was immediately able to recognize some of the kids' personalities.

The first lesson of the Food Bank's [CookShop Classroom for After-School](#) nutrition education program is "Meet MyPyramid MyPlate and the Food Groups ." The kids were busy eating a snack, so to get their attention I asked a question: "What are some examples of fruits?" The kids stopped eating, and hands shot into the air.

One little boy surprised me, raising both of his hands high. "What's your name?" I asked. "Luke!" I felt Luke's energy and enthusiasm, so I had to choose him. He answered, "Banana!" He had confidence written on his face – and on both of his hands.

Seeing how excited the kids were to answer my question, I felt so proud of myself for overcoming my fear of talking in front of a crowd and suddenly couldn't wait to keep on doing so for the next six weeks.

When I started CookShop, I expected to learn a lot about food and nutrition. But I never expect to learn how to express myself with confidence, so that my voice can be heard. From that day on I was able to step up and talk to the kids as a friend, a role model and a teacher. And I hope I helped the kids see how fun and easy it can be to lead healthy lives.

Ivette is a senior at the Community Health Academy of the Heights, participating in our EATWISE internship for teens. EATWISE gives young people the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about what they eat and drink, and trains them to become peer nutrition educators.