



What's Right for Kids 2

.....
*Building a
Healthy School
Nutrition
Environment*



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What's Right for Kids II

Building Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity
Environments at School

Jill Camber Davidson, RD, CD
Nutrition Education Consultant
Team Nutrition Director
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

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Community Learning and Partnerships Team
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841
608-264-6700
or
800-441-4563

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Foreword



As part of our New Wisconsin Promise, we must support a comprehensive approach to improving student health and readiness to learn. Across Wisconsin, we are seeing excellent leadership and innovation at the local level as parents, educators, and communities create healthy nutrition and learning environments in schools.

This booklet describes best practices that school nutrition and wellness leaders have implemented to positively impact student achievement. School wellness teams have risen to the challenge to provide nutrition education and physical activity throughout the school day. School districts have embraced the team approach to wellness and have been strong advocates for nutritious foods, time to eat and be active, and nutrition and health education.

Thanks to funding from a Team Nutrition grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we are able to provide this booklet as a tool for schools, families, and communities who are ready to take the next step in school wellness. It outlines actions to support healthy, active, and well-nourished children by implementing, evaluating, and refining wellness policies and the school environment.

We cannot afford to leave the nutritional well-being of our children to chance. We cannot rely on a policy alone as a way to maintain a healthy environment. We must strive to fully develop the physical and cognitive potential of our children. The health of this generation of children will reflect our priorities as educators, parents, community members, and as a society.

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

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Meri Annin, Senior Graphic Designer

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Julie Allington, (former) Nutrition Education Consultant and Team Nutrition Director

Jon Hisgen, Health and Physical Education Consultant

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Photographs courtesy of the 2005-2007 Team Nutrition schools.

Introduction

The rocketing number of children who are overweight has raised public awareness about poor nutrition and inactivity. The number of overweight and obese children has tripled in the last twenty years – and childhood overweight/obesity is considered a national epidemic. Concerns about weight issues, eating disorders, and overall childhood health have driven parents, educators, and health professionals to look for solutions. The school environment plays a supportive role in the development of healthful eating and activity habits.

Overweight children are at greater risk for multiple health problems, including

- Bone and joint problems
- Sleep apnea
- Social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem
- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Stroke
- Several types of cancer
- Osteoarthritis

As a result of increasing public awareness and concern about overweight, Congress passed the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (PL 108-265) with a new provision, section 204, requiring all school districts (also called local education agencies or LEAs) participating in the federally reimbursable meal program to develop and implement a district wide school wellness policy. Section 204, also known as Local Wellness Policy legislation, recognizes the leadership roles schools can play in promoting good health. It required districts to establish by the start of the 2006-2007 school year wellness policies with three main objectives

- To improve the school nutrition environment
- To promote student health
- To reduce childhood overweight

Section 204 local wellness policies must include the following provisions:

1. Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness

2. Nutrition guidelines (set by the LEA) for all foods available on school campus during the school day, aimed at promoting student health and reducing childhood overweight
3. An assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
4. A plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy
5. The involvement of parents, students, school food authority representatives, school administrators, the school board, and the public in development of the policy



School nutrition environments have improved with the implementation of school wellness policies. The purpose of this publication is to provide school staff, parents, and community partners with practical tools to define and support an environment that promotes healthy eating and activity. This booklet will share ideas, tips, and real-life examples of ways schools can implement school wellness activities that build a healthy school environment.

Health Trends and Implications

Our lifestyles have changed dramatically in the past few decades. We live life at a frenzied pace, jam-packed with activities, meetings, and places to go. Consequently, we eat more meals out and buy take-out food to compensate for the limited time to cook. Every day, nearly one-third of U.S. children aged 4 to 19 eat fast food. Typically, fast foods are limited in fruits and vegetables, and have excessive fat, saturated fat, sodium, and calories.

We have become less active and more likely to use labor-saving devices of all types, from television remotes to power doors. Sedentary lifestyles have become the norm among children, with frequent use of computer and video games and excessive TV watching. Children no longer walk to school, due to hazardous roads and lack of sidewalks. In fact, 47% of children who travel a distance of one mile or less go to school by car. At school, children often don't go out for recess, staying in to complete work. Or, if they do go outside, they don't play actively, choosing instead to play hand held video games.

After school, children often don't play outside either, due to supervision and safety concerns.

It has become painfully obvious that our children are not meeting the healthy lifestyle recommendations for nutrition, activity, and limited screen time listed in Table 1. These recommendations are from the American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association for Sport and Physical Education, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Wisconsin, only 35.0 percent of high school students are physically active at least 60 minutes a day on five or more days per week (Youth-Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2005). Girls are less active than boys, with only 27.5 percent meeting the recommendation.

Television is proving to be a major culprit in the fight against childhood obesity. National surveys have shown a relationship between the number of hours children watch television and the prevalence of overweight. Many

Table 1: Recommendations for Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Daily Screen Time

Age	Physical Activity	Nutrition	Daily Screen Time
Young Children	Accumulate 30 – 60 minutes of structured or at least 60 minutes of unstructured activity daily. Limit inactivity to 60 minutes at one time.	Balance energy expenditure with intake. Eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods and beverages within and among the basic food groups.	Under two years of age: None. Two to Five years: No more than 1 – 2 hours.
Elementary School Age Children	Accumulate 30 – 60+ minutes of vigorous, active play per day. Limit inactivity to less than 2 hours at a time.	Choose foods to limit the intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars and salt.	No more than 1 – 2 hours.
Teens, Middle School, and High School	Daily active lifestyle, 20 or more minutes of vigorous intensity activity 3 or more times per week.		
Adults	30 to 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity most days of the week.		No Standard.

experts think that TV time has taken the place of exercise and active play. In addition, television exposes children to numerous advertisements for less nutritious foods and features cross-promotions between fast foods, snack foods, and popular television characters.

It is common for children to eat while watching television. This type of “mindless eating” typically includes fewer healthy foods and prevents children from paying attention to what and how much they are eating. Finally, television watching is thought to negatively impact weight even more, as children’s metabolic rates while watching TV have been observed to actually fall below the rates for sleeping!

The 2005 Wisconsin YRBS reported that on the average school day 52 percent of students watch two or more hours of television each day, and 26 percent of high school students watch three or more hours of television each day. The amount of TV viewing hours is significantly higher in Milwaukee, with 53 percent of youth reporting that they watch TV for three or more hours per day.

Healthy School Environment

A healthy school environment includes the culture and climate that exists within a school. A healthy environment supports the physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being of all its members. Vital to supporting a healthy lifestyle for its students and staff, a healthy school environment can positively influence parents and the community. It is essential that a school district has a clear vision and mission regarding children’s health to

shape a healthy environment. Examples include

- A vision or mission statement that recognizes the schools’ roles in supporting the health of children
- Clear district policies and practices that support the health of students and staff
- Policies and practices that are consistently enforced
- Teachers, staff, and administration that are role models of a healthy lifestyle

Survey of Media Use by Young People

A child’s typical daily activities, according to a recent survey of young people ages 8 to 18, by the Kaiser Family Foundation (2005) included

- Nearly four hours of watching television
- Over an hour of computer use
- 49 minutes of playing video games
- 43 minutes of reading

The survey also reported that the typical American child spends about 44.5 hours per week using media outside of school.

- Students and parents are encouraged to participate and are provided opportunities to get involved in the decisions that affect school life

The healthy school environment is uniquely interrelated and connected to an effective learning environment. Research shows that children and teens that eat smart and get exercise are able to focus better

and have fewer behavioral problems in school. Healthy, well-nourished children are better able to reach their full academic and physical potential, are absent less often, and have higher test scores.

A healthy school environment is not a program, but is the result of all the experiences that impact the school. The environment is built through the everyday actions of school life and goes beyond the classroom. Consider the school playground, hallways, school bus, school stores, parties, and fundraising. Consider everyone who interacts in this environment including students, teachers, administrators, coaches, school staff, parents, custodians, secretaries, teacher aides, bus drivers, school food services staff, school volunteers, and visitors. Consider district support for activities, intra-mural sports, and facility use policies.

Building a healthy school environment requires teamwork and collaborative efforts. The local wellness policy legislation requires the formation of a team in each school district to formulate wellness policies.



Successful Wellness Teams

Who Should be on a Wellness Team?

Strong leadership and active participation at many levels is necessary for a successful district wellness team — from school boards, district superintendents, and administrators to principals, parents, students, and community members. The school board, for example, adopts and monitors the implementation of policies and regulations.

School board members can link the wellness policy to other policies, increasing the likelihood of successful implementation. District administrators and principals oversee and carry out policy directives, and enforce policy when needed.



A successful wellness committee must have members with a passion for children’s nutritional health and fitness. Teachers, school staff, and parents who understand the value of addressing children’s health as part of the effort to improve academic performance are key supporters. Including other key stakeholders, including food service staff, PTO/PTA leaders, teachers, health professionals, and students, is necessary for the successful implementation of policies.

In addition, a wellness committee should represent the community and local contacts such as University Extension staff; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); public health nutritionists; public health nurses; city and county law enforcement; bus and transportation representatives; food manufacturers/distributors; local business and industry leaders; library staff; health club staff; child care professionals; and members of faith-based organizations and children’s advocacy groups.

Ask parents about their interests and expertise to build a connected, collaborative wellness group with local citizens invested in their children, their schools, and their community.

Gaining Support for Wellness Initiatives

A lack of support for and commitment to the school wellness team from principals and district administration has been identified as one of the biggest barriers to successful wellness policy implementation. (From *Cupcakes to Carrots: Local Wellness Policies One Year Later*, September 2007, School Nutrition Association; www.schoolnutrition.org/uploadedFiles/ASFSA/newsroom/pressreleases/From_Cupcakes_to_Carrots.pdf; accessed 12/1/2007)

Because wellness policies are established, implemented, and monitored on a local level, support from all levels is needed. The district wellness team should work to create a culture within each school that encourages healthful eating and active living. District administration can encourage participation in school wellness efforts and ensure that communication with all district schools, parents, and community stakeholders is two-way, regular, and meaningful.

The goal of the wellness team is to work within the schools and district to provide a school environment that models, supports, and encourages lifelong healthy nutrition and activity habits. The goal of the wellness policy is to create a healthy school environment. The first challenge many wellness groups face is defining what a healthy nutrition and physical activity environment will look like in their schools.



The school environment must nurture children’s minds and bodies. A healthy environment involves

- Healthy food and beverage choices available at meals, in vending machines, school stores, and at fundraisers

- School staff who reinforce and model healthy behaviors, and encourage children to make choices that will benefit their minds and bodies
- Developmentally appropriate sequential nutrition education that teaches skills as well as knowledge
- Consistent health messages throughout the school

The school environment, including lunch choices, time to eat and play, how food is used in the classroom, and what kinds of food are available at school activities and celebrations, influences eating behaviors and attitudes.

Naturally, the food served at school impacts a district's wellness environment. The district Child Nutrition and Food Service Director often serves as a leader on wellness teams, and in many wellness initiatives aimed at school food service.

How Child Nutrition and School Food Service Can Promote a Healthy School Environment

Child Nutrition and school food service staff contribute to a healthy environment by assuring that meals served through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs will

- Be age-appropriate, appealing, and attractive to children
- Be served in clean and pleasant settings
- Meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by the USDA, and other local, state, and federal statutes and regulations that may be in place
- Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Serve low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk and nutritionally-equivalent non-dairy alternatives (defined by USDA)
- Ensure that half of the served grains are whole grain

Other ways the school food services staff can help.

- Stay informed about food trends
- Effectively utilize commodities
- "Sneak" nutrition into meals
- Market healthy meals
- Support coordination between classroom and cafeteria activities
- Role model good nutrition and physical activity
- Support and participate in wellness activities
- Talk to the students about choices available

The food service manager at **DeLong Middle School in Eau Claire** has made many efforts to use reduced or low fat items such as salad dressings, cheese, and some meats in school lunches. Eau Claire Area School District added

salad bars at all secondary schools, and increased fiber/whole grains, fresh fruit and vegetables while eliminating fried foods. Only 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice and bottled water are offered in their a la carte line, and many low fat options and controlled portion sizes are sold on the a la carte line. One of the successes at DeLong School includes a "Grab N Go" breakfast, established in 2005 with a \$4,000 Breakfast grant and \$3,000 supplemental grant. This innovative program offers a healthy bag breakfast at one of DeLong's main entrances every morning in addition to breakfast served in the cafeteria. Further breakfast offerings are available from a breakfast cart.

The **Green Bay Area School District** is committed to making more nutritious offerings available to students, as reflected in their mission statement, "We value and believe in providing high quality, safe, and tasty food to all students." Initially, the district's a la carte revenues decreased by 18 percent when changes were made to offer healthier options and get rid of "junk food." But with a 15 percent increase in school meal participation, the revenue from additional school meals doubled the a la carte loss. Green Bay's secrets to success include:



- All of the food prepared for the schools is made by Food Service staff that have been trained through the National Restaurant Association ServSafe Course.
- Incorporating numerous stealth nutrition changes
 - Muffins are made with applesauce instead of oil, to lower the overall fat content.
 - Chili and taco meats have the oil drained and the meat rinsed to decrease fat content.
 - All purchased lunchmeats and hot dogs are turkey based to provide a low fat option.
 - Homemade cookies and bakery are made with a combination of whole wheat and white flour, making them a good source of fiber.
 - Fresh fruits and vegetables are provided each day to all students.

- 1% chocolate, 2%, and skim milks are offered each day to all students.
- More choices of whole grain cereals have been added to the breakfast menu.
- Low-fat and fat-free salad dressings are used in school lunches.
- Baked French fries are provided to the elementary and middle school students.
- Whole wheat bread for sub sandwiches and dinner rolls are available to help students meet their daily fiber needs.

Additional ways to maximize school meal appeal and increase participation in meal programs include

- Exploring all breakfast service options, such as “breakfast in the classroom,” “second chance” breakfast, breakfast carts/kiosks, “Grab and Go” and “mid-morning nutrition break”
- Engaging students and parents through taste-tests of new entrees and surveys, to identify and select new, healthful, and appealing choices sold through the school meal programs
- Sharing information about the nutrition content of meals with parents and students (such information could be made available on menus, a website, on cafeteria menu boards, placards, or other point-of-purchase materials)
- Publicizing the variety of meal times, meal options, and programs
- Eliminating the stigma for free and reduced-price (FRP) participants by installing automated point of sale (POS) systems and by avoiding any aspect of meal service that might differentiate between FRP students and full-paying students
- Encouraging all students eligible for FRP to utilize the program
- Working with contractors and suppliers that support the district wellness policy and provide foods and beverages that meet the district’s nutrition requirements

Milwaukee Public Schools incorporated an “Active Apple” logo to help designate healthy food choices at school meals, and increased school breakfast participation by almost two million meals in 2006-2007 with the implementation of a universal breakfast program in some schools. Universal breakfast is offered to all students, regardless of income level.

When it comes to healthy eating, the food served in the cafeteria needs to be connected to what students learn in the classroom. Many schools have reported that students are more likely to choose items from the cafeteria salad bar when they have learned about the principles of good nutrition in class. One step is collaboration between the school nutrition and food services department and the teachers and curriculum planning committees.



How Teachers and School Staff Can Promote a Healthy School Environment

Students spend most of their school day in classrooms with teachers. Schools seeking to improve opportunities for good nutrition and physical activity need to take advantage of the time that teachers spend with their students and the strong influence that they may have on their students. All teachers and school staff can help promote health among their students by modeling healthy eating. Here are some suggestions for staff that will support a healthy school environment.

- Eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Be a role model, show your students that you are committed to health.
- Eat school breakfast and/or lunch with your class.
- Bring healthy snacks for yourself and encourage kids to do the same.
- Send a list of “Smart Snacks” home with your students with snack ideas such as low sugar whole grain cereal, fruit, cheese, and whole grain crackers.
- Drink low-fat milk with meals and snacks for added calcium.

- Limit empty calorie, highly sweetened beverages.
- Drink more water, and allow students water breaks to refresh themselves, especially after active play and in hot weather.
- Start an activity club and encourage active recess.
- Go outside with your students to walk, or join them in an active game as a reward.
- Let parents know that they, too, can walk and play on school grounds after school hours for family activity.
- Take a stretch break to enhance muscle and brain power (5 to 10 minutes of physical activity in the classroom can improve academic performance and fitness).
- Teach students about healthy behaviors throughout the year.
- Apply health-related behaviors to classroom activities.
- Coordinate nutrition education with cafeteria staff and connect the curriculum to nutrition and fitness.
- Use service-learning with a nutrition topic as a method of teaching.
- Eliminate candy and junk foods in the classrooms, including reward jars, food coupons, teaching aids and story problems and other activities that use or refer to empty calorie, high sugar, and/or high fat foods.
- Create interactive homework assignments regarding health and fitness that involve parents in students' learning.
- Teach life skills—not just the facts.
- Use activity and wellness promoting rewards.
- Support your district's Wellness Policy and participate in wellness activities.
- Work with parents for healthy fundraising and school parties.

Staff wellness is another important piece of a healthy environment. Staff participation in wellness programs will have a “trickle down” effect to students and further energize a healthy school environment. Staff wellness programs may help strengthen the commitment to the district wellness policies, too.

Protecting Our Assets: A School Employee Wellness Guide is a resource developed by the Directors of Health Promotion and Education (DHPE) with CDC support. This publication is designed to help schools, districts, and states develop comprehensive school employee wellness programs. This resource provides guidance for obtaining program support, developing a school employee wellness team, using existing data to optimize a



new or existing program and implementing policies and practices to support employee wellness. Visit <http://www.dhpe.org/> for more information.

Sun Prairie Area School District focuses on staff wellness as part of their back-to-school events. A wellness walk is held to get teachers energized, and a nutritious meal, featuring healthy items that are part of the school lunch program, is served to staff members after an all district welcome message. The box lunch for teachers and staff includes messages on the nutritional benefits of school lunch. The district works to develop clear and consistent wellness messages that are continually reinforced, so that students and staff hear the same messages, and they are motivated to develop and maintain healthy habits and to make desired behavior changes. One message asked staff to encourage healthy snacks be brought into the classroom, and another message requested staff to role model healthy eating and physical activity messages.

DeLong Middle School Health Council in Eau Claire presents nutrition and activity information to the staff frequently, with topics including healthy snacks and treats for students and a suggestion to brainstorm more opportunities for students to be physically active during the school day. DeLong has had a staff wellness committee in place for more than ten years, and has established a School Health Council, which brings together staff from several areas including food and nutrition, health, FACE, physical education, and administration. The Council also includes the partnership coordinator, the school nurse, a Mayo Health System doctor, parents, and students.

For a school environment to be healthy, commitment is needed at all levels. Administration and district leaders set the stage for environmental changes through their words and actions.

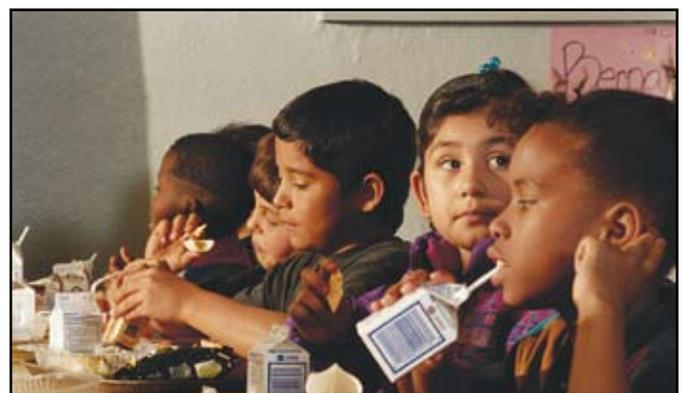


How School District Administration and School Boards Can Promote a Healthy School Environment

School district superintendents, administration, and school board members can build a healthy school environment through their support and enforcement of the wellness policies. Some ways to do this include

- Supporting a healthy eating environment everyday
- Telling others about your commitment to a healthy eating environment
- Making funds available to support healthy eating and wellness policy goals
- Establishing and consistently enforcing policy for foods available in schools, including school stores and fundraising
- Requiring comprehensive skill-based nutrition education for PreK-12
- Ensuring that nutrition education is provided by trained and well-supported staff
- Eating breakfast and lunch at school (supporting school meal programs)
- Getting involved in wellness policy implementation and evaluation
- Ensuring that physical education is provided by trained, certified, and well-supported staff
- Ensuring that physical education classes have a student to teacher ratio comparable to those in other curricular areas

- Coordinating the nutrition and physical education program with the other components of the overall school health program
- Assisting staff to integrate nutrition and physical education topics within other curricular areas
- Encouraging partnerships with other child-serving organizations such as park districts and YMCAs to provide students with a variety of opportunities to be active
- Providing student and community groups access to the school's physical activity facilities outside of the normal school day
- Ensuring that school physical activity facilities and play ground equipment are safe
- Working with the community to create a community environment that supports students walking or biking to school
- Establishing, promoting, and consistently enforcing fundraising guidelines for all activities
- Insisting that school planners include food preparation and service areas that accommodate all students.
- Including school food service administration in school district remodeling and construction planning and facility design
- Establishing a commercial-free environment regarding food and beverages campus wide (includes score boards and athletic fields)
- Arranging bus schedules to encourage school breakfast participation
- Closing campuses during meal times to encourage all students to eat healthy meals
- Maximizing the return of free and reduced-price lunch applications by assisting parents and caregivers with the applications



- Seeking additional funding and wellness grants when appropriate

How School Principals Can Promote a Healthy School Environment

School Principals and school staff can support a healthy environment by

- Providing students with at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 20 minutes after sitting down for lunch
- Scheduling meal periods at appropriate times to prevent students from being hungry, e.g., lunch between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.
- Minimizing the time students wait in line for meals
- Limiting activities that can be scheduled during lunch periods (tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities) unless students may eat during such activities
- Scheduling recess before lunch (in elementary schools)
- Discouraging staff from rushing children through meals to get them outside
- Providing students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks
- Taking reasonable steps to accommodate the tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs (e.g., orthodontia or high tooth decay risk)
- Encouraging nonfood incentives or rewards
- Prohibiting the withholding of food from students as punishment (includes using lunch time to make up work)
- Discouraging the use of physical activity as a punishment or withholding participation in recess or physical education class as a punishment
- Encouraging students, parents, school staff, and community members to provide healthful foods and beverages for snacks, school events, and parties
- Providing a list of recommended food and beverage options to parents and staff
- Promoting and consistently enforcing fundraising guidelines that enhance health, and limit the sale of less nutritious foods
- Allowing for student and community groups to access the school's physical activity facilities outside of the normal school day
- Ensuring that the school's physical activity facilities and playground equipment are safe
- Encouraging and supporting safe walking and biking to school
- Providing opportunities for staff to attend nutrition and activity continuing education
- Getting involved in wellness policy implementation and evaluation
- Allowing and encouraging staff to participate in wellness policy planning, implementation, and evaluation
- Assisting staff to coordinate classroom and cafeteria activities
- Modeling healthy eating and an active lifestyle



How Do Parents Fit In?

How Parents Can Promote a Healthy School Environment

The school environment cannot change without the involvement of parents. Children need to receive consistent healthy messages at school and at home, in order to understand and integrate them into healthy habits. Parents are the first and primary teachers of their children; so naturally, developing healthy lifestyles begins at home. Schools can do many things to support a healthy home environment when they

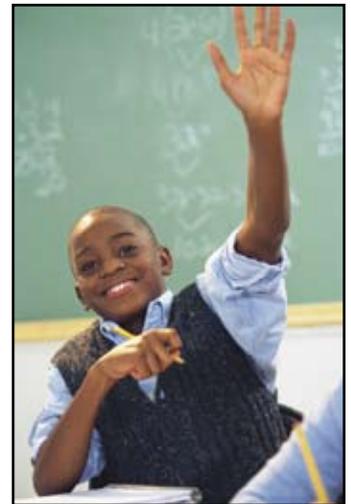
- Communicate wellness initiatives to parents
- Recognize that parents and guardians have a primary and fundamental role in promoting and protecting their children’s health and well-being
- Encourage parents to participate in school lunch and/or pack healthy lunches and snacks and refrain from including beverages and foods without nutritional value
- Provide information about ways to promote healthy lifestyles via newsletters, handouts, presentations and website
- Limit activities that occur during 5 – 7 pm (dinner time) and promote family meals
- Help parents understand the goals of the school and district
- Invite parents to work with school staff to plan and implement school wellness policies



A recent national survey of parents by the national Parent Teacher Association (PTA) indicates that only 1 in 5 parents are likely to be involved in developing and implementing their child’s school wellness policy; however, a strong majority of parents (65%) said a school nutrition/physical activity policy is important to them. Additional information on the survey can be found at www.pta.org/ne_press_release_detail_115515962_1109.html.

A significant gap exists between parents’ beliefs, their

desire for wellness practices, and what is actually occurring in school. Parents may not be aware of the federal mandate for Local Wellness Policies in schools or they may not feel connected to the efforts of the wellness committee to improve the school environment. Engaged parents will work to make sustainable changes to the home environment as well as the school environment, but they may need tools, resources, and knowledge to be an educated voice for change.



Some parents feel they need “permission” to suggest changes, and the school needs to encourage parents to share their opinions. Schools can help parents by making it easy to learn more about the wellness policy and implementation activities.

Parents have a right to know what their children are learning at school. They also have a right to know what their child is eating, and what the school is doing—or not doing—to promote healthy nutrition and exercise to students. When schools make this information readily available, parents, families, and caregivers can begin reinforcing healthy concepts at home.

The “Six Types” Parent Partnership Model

The Partnership Model describes a number of ways schools can involve families in children’s health and education. Dr. Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University, Co-Director of the Center of Families, Communities, Schools and Children’s Learning, and the Director of the National Network of Partnership Schools, has identified six types of involvement for family-school-community partnerships.

Type 1: Parenting

Schools provide families with the necessary information about establishing a home environment that supports children, by providing them with educational materi-

als about nutrition, and encouraging children to make healthy lifestyle choices. The school district can offer parent education on nutrition, can invite parents to join students for school meals, or host a new family dinner.

Type 2: Communication

Schools can design and promote effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress. It is important to let parents know how they can become involved in their child’s health and well-

ness. Notify parents of changes in food service menus, a la carte lines, and competitive food sources, such as vending machines and classroom snacks, to build support for a healthier environment. Involve parents in decisions to improve facilities and playgrounds or offer intramural

activities. The process of two-way communication works best when it is easy and effective for parents to comment on the nutrition and fitness environment at their child’s school. For example, design parent surveys that can be completed by mail, phone, or e-mail.

Keep in mind the “Rule of Seven.” Schools that offer families opportunities to learn about events, changes, or activities in seven different ways, or at seven different times, will reach most families at least once. This includes informing parents and community members about changes in the school’s nutrition and physical activity environments. Some ways to communicate to parents include

- Adding nutrition and physical activity information tidbits to school newsletters to help families incorporate health and wellness into their daily lives
- Using the district email list or the school website to provide information and a link to the district wellness policy
- Sending home a list of healthy snacks
- Incorporating wellness messages into morning announcements
- Airing wellness messages on local access television
- Including wellness messages with back-to-school and report card mailings

- Serving healthier foods at back-to-school events and school socials
- Including the district wellness policy in student and staff handbooks
- Inviting parents to eat lunch with their child and attend recognition events.

Type 3: Volunteering

Volunteering is a way to recruit and organize parent and community support of a healthy school environment.

Volunteering allows families to participate in school activities, whether as a classroom volunteer, chaperone, attendee at a school assembly, or as a school event/fundraiser coordinator. Offer a variety of volunteer opportunities, make it easy to sign up and invite parents to get involved. Schools can support the volunteers by training staff on how to work with family and community members and recognizing volunteers.

Opportunities to promote a healthy school environment through volunteering include inviting parents and other community members to volunteer in physical education classes and help plan school parties and other activities. Invite parents and community representatives to discuss ethnic foods, dances, and sports with the students. Invite parents and community members that work in health care, nutrition, recreation, and sports industries to talk with students about health and career opportunities.

Type 4: Learning at Home

Families provide educational enrichment to what is being taught in the classroom when they talk to and work with children at home.

Schools can provide concrete ideas to families about how to help their children and teens at home with academics and skill-building. Ideas for health-related activities at home include crafts and projects together, such as gardening, cooking a family



The 30-30 Rule

When designing written communications, keep in mind the 30-3-30 rule.

- 80% of people spend just 30 seconds skimming over what you sent home
- 19% will spend only 3 three minutes reading it
- 1% will spend 30 minutes on it.

Rule of Seven

Schools that offer families opportunities to learn about events, changes, or activities in **seven different ways**, or at **seven different times**, will reach most families at least once.

meal, meal planning, grocery shopping, and label reading. Schools can also provide nutrition and physical activity games to use at home and use interactive homework assignments that relate to nutrition and physical education curricula.



Family Fitness Nights and Family Dinners where parents and students can learn how to create and maintain a healthy home

environment while networking with other families will also strengthen the healthy home and school environments. Some classrooms ask students and their families to complete exercise and eating logs together to build awareness of eating and exercise habits. Schools can provide information about the lifelong benefits of family physical activity, such as walking, basketball, tennis, hiking, bicycling, and playing soccer together. Finally, school districts can provide a valuable service when they inform families about community resources for exercise, such as open gyms and use of school athletic fields, and serve as a conduit for information from community and non-profit organizations that provide physical activity opportunities for families.

Type 5: School Decision-making and Advocacy

District decision-making involves parents, community members, and school staff in shaping and designing school programs from the ground up. Schools can involve parents in decision making, not only by inviting them to serve on committees such as the district wellness team, but also when they encourage families' feedback through surveys, evaluation, and suggestion boxes. Encouraging parents to participate in decision-making can be accomplished through PTA/PTO meetings, citizen representatives on school and district committees and task forces, and involving parents on the district wellness team. Involve parents in school improvement decisions to promote walking and biking to school, such as parking lot safety and traffic flow, safe routes to school and playground renovation. Invite parents to participate in policy decisions related to food

service and vending machines, busing, and recess and lunch scheduling. Encourage parents to join the district wellness team, the Team Nutrition Project, or other nutrition or physical education committees. Create an avenue for parents to voice concerns about the school nutrition and fitness environments. Use parental concerns to guide decisions.

Type 6: Collaborating with the Community

Schools that connect to resources and services in the community can strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Collaborating with the community includes getting support from businesses or community members for school partnership projects, asking local organizations to provide family-centered activities, or working with businesses to encourage them to donate resources or employee time to the school. Some businesses also allow parents leave time to volunteer at their child's school or attend school meetings.

Districts and schools can promote community-wide health and wellness activities and events, such as health fairs and family activity nights. Partnering with local public health groups to provide health fairs and screening clinics is a perfect way to connect parents to health information and provide support for the school's wellness policy. Many schools connect with local physical activity venues such as the YMCA/YWCA, a local health club, or recreation department to provide free or reduced



fee neighborhood recreation programs or “School’s Out” programs, and allowing free access to school facilities for low cost health and recreational activities. Other examples of community collaboration include

- Working with the public library to make books and videos about nutrition, health, and fitness visible and available to families
- Planning collaborative programs that involve nutrition and fitness topics
- Inviting university students studying health and wellness topics to speak to students and staff
- Working with the local dairy association to purchase vending machines with milk products
- Conducting student-led service-learning projects, including activities such as inviting older students to teach younger students about proper nutrition or conducting food drives for local food pantries or working with senior citizens to increase their level of physical activity or shop for healthy foods

Source: National Network of Partnership Schools
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/sixtypes.htm>

Parents Encouraging Healthy Eating

Whether they like it or not, parents model eating and activity (or sedentary) behaviors for their children. Healthy eating involves many factors, from nutritional to emotional. Healthy eating includes

- Responding to hunger
- Eating until satiated
- Eating foods one likes
- Eating enough to meet nutritional needs
- Using constraint when choosing types and amounts of foods while including some pleasurable foods
- Eating regardless of emotions
- Consuming three to six meals a day
- Trusting the body to make up for mistakes in eating
- Giving adequate time and attention to eating habits and patterns

In addition to regular exercise, activity behaviors include

- The amount of time spent on the computer and television watching
- Climbing the stairs rather than the elevator
- Family activities

If parents model healthy eating behaviors and practice regular physical activity, they can set a positive example for their children.

Parents are usually responsible for when and what foods are served to their children. To fulfill this responsibility, parents should enjoy good, nutritious foods with their children. When young children see their parents enjoying the food they eat, the food will seem more appealing to them, and they will be more likely to eat healthy foods. Parents and caregivers influence food attitudes, preferences, and values that affect lifetime eating habits, so it is integral to their children’s health that they are modeling healthy eating habits and decisions.



Here are some tips for parents on modeling healthy eating habits.

- Be enthusiastic about eating a variety of foods.
- Introduce new foods gradually, and in several different times and ways.
- Buy fewer high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and more high-nutrient foods.
- Have a variety of nutritious foods available for snacks.
- Allow for refusal of a food item.
- Model healthy eating behaviors—“Talk the Talk” and “Walk the Walk.”
- Serve reasonable portions.
- Drink more water.
- Avoid using dessert as reward or punishment.
- Eat when hungry, and stop eating when satiated—not stuffed.

Parents Encouraging Physical Activity

In addition to modeling healthy eating habits, parents should exemplify healthy attitudes and behaviors towards physical activities and fitness. Just as children

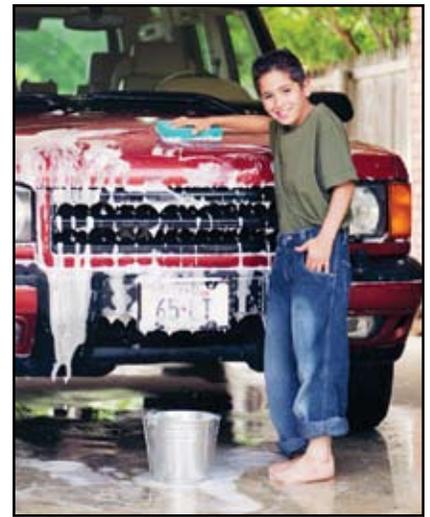
are strongly influenced by their parents' eating habits and their visible enjoyment of healthy foods, children are also significantly impacted by seeing their parents enjoy regular physical activities. Here are some ideas to be an "active-minded" parent.

- Walk or bike with your children to/from school.
- Park the car—walk or bike for nearby errands, instead of driving.
- Take a family walk or bike ride daily.
- Walk the dog or go to the dog park.
- Join or form an exercise group and enroll your children in community sports teams or lessons.
- Do yard work. Get your children to help plant, weed, rake leaves and shovel snow or help a neighbor shovel their driveway or sidewalk.
- Get off the bus a stop early and walk a few extra blocks to your destination.
- Work around the home; ask your children for help doing active chores.



- Use television commercials as an exercise break. Have a challenge to see who can do the most push-ups, jumping jacks, or leg lifts during commercial breaks.
- Check out an exercise video from your library, and give it a try.
- Turn on an exercise program or video instead of watching TV.
- Wash the car by hand.
- Walk around the field during kids' athletic practices; ask other parents to join you.
- Park farther from the store and walk a lap around the parking lot before shopping.

- Walk the perimeter and aisles of the grocery store before getting your cart to shop.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Go for a swim; check out the local pool or beach or run through the sprinkler with your kids.
- Go to the park and play with your kids.
- Dance to music. Play your favorite dance music for your children and have them play their favorites for you.
- Take a mall walk ; walk the halls before shopping.
- Have fun with activity. Choose things to do that you enjoy; your enthusiasm will show!
- Ask children what activities they want to do.
- Reward efforts with active, non-food related "treats," such as family time at the park, skating rink, pool, or zoo.



In addition to modeling healthy behaviors and attitudes towards fitness, parents should plan and encourage regular physical activities for their children and monitor the amounts of screen time for themselves and their children. Studies show that children who watch less TV are more likely to read and be physically fit. If parents set limits on the amount of time their children spend in sedentary activities such as watching television, using the computer, or playing video games, then children may be more inclined to exercise and engage in other, active, uses of free time.

Turn off the TV at meals and don't leave the TV on as background noise. Keep the TV and computer in a central location—not in bedrooms or isolated areas. Not only is it easier to monitor what your child is watching, your kids will watch less TV if it is not in their bedroom. Avoid using TV and computer games as a reward or punishment .

Homework for Schools and Parents

While the home is an excellent place to encourage healthy lifestyles for students, schools can partner with families to carry these behaviors over into the classroom, cafeteria, and the community at large.

Parents can contribute to a school's goal of improving student nutrition.

For example, parents can communicate with teachers about what their child has retained from lessons at school and what the family is doing at home to encourage healthy behaviors. Parents can ask questions and share concerns about the school's efforts, or offer feedback regarding current nutrition and fitness promotion efforts. Such communication between school staff and teachers can be done via a home-school journal, hotline, suggestion box, parent-teacher conference, e-mail, or a phone call. Parents can also promote healthy eating in the classrooms by preparing healthy snacks and treats for special classroom events.

Following are examples of how parents have successfully become involved in school efforts to improve nutrition and fitness environments.

Students in the **Crandon School District** received healthy messages via menu backs and monthly snack calendars that were then brought home and read with parents. Families were encouraged to visit apple orchards and pumpkin farms and to contribute to the children's healthy cookbook created by one school in the district.

Families of elementary school students in **Wausau** participated in a Fitness Fun Walk and Health Fair. The intent of the walk and the fair was to help families find fun physical activities they could participate in together as well as to try healthier snacks. While at these events, parents were informed about choosing the right shoe for various physical activities, preparing healthy snacks, and physical activities that are available for families to participate in throughout the community. Blood pressure monitoring was available to the event participants.



At **St. Croix Central Elementary School**, families contributed to students' nutrition educational materials. Students worked with their parents to create a menu for a week, shop for the food, and prepare the meals. Families shared healthy recipes for a cookbook, and students sold the books as a school fundraiser.

At **Peshtigo Elementary School**, families received a physical activity calendar with ideas and programs to stay active, such as family bike rides, walking, baseball, and swimming. The calendar also lists family fun nights at the school and offers ideas for at-home family nights.

The **School District of Beloit** educated students and parents on the importance of physical activity and improved nutrition in their daily lives through a 4th and 5th grade district wide track meet. They communicated with families about changes in school policy with regards to wellness and offered a health fair that many parents attended. Health pamphlets, nutritional snacks, and blood pressure checks were available for parents. Parents helped serve healthy snacks.

Gale-Etrick-Trempealeau (GET) School District wellness team wanted parents to take ownership in their wellness policy, and they added more parents to the wellness policy team. The wellness team created informational flyers on non-food rewards and snack lists to share with families.

Janesville School District used the "Nutrition Nuggets" newsletter subscription to add nutrition and activity tips to their school newsletter. They also developed nutritional criteria for competitive foods from requested feedback from parents, administrators and staff. These criteria will be implemented in the 2007-08 school year.

The **Business and Economic Academy of Milwaukee (BEAM)** focused on family through a nutrition and wellness fair. The school provided each participating family with a packet of healthy recipes and gave coloring and activity sheets to the students. The Health fair helped



create a warm, community spirit, and parents said it was beneficial, informative, and definitely changed their child's view on healthy eating. BEAM students and their significant adults, as well as staff, were provided with nutrition, physical activity, and wellness education, and these educational sessions helped BEAM look at supporting nutrition at home.

TEAM nutrition, MyPyramid, and UW Extension nutrition education resources were used. This prompted discussions on ways to implement healthy school snacks and improve fruit and vegetable access to inner city families. As a result, BEAM became a site for a "Growing Power" program, which is a market basket of farm fresh produce for each participating family at a reasonable cost. In addition, the program accepts WIC farmer's market vouchers.

Parental input from PTA leaders at **Northside Elementary School in Middleton** helped the school establish a school wellness group before local wellness policies were mandated. The parent wellness group focused on ways to increase nutrition education and physical education opportunities. The wellness group designed a highly visible bulletin board and offered nutrition and wellness education for school families, provided by a parent who was a registered dietitian. Parent volunteers worked with school foodservice to coordinate student taste-testing of a variety of foods and held "fear factor" tastings to add to the excitement. The students loved the tastings, and they tried several foods, including hummus and a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Input from Northside parents helped the school define healthy classroom snacks and share information on healthy classroom treats with other parents. A snack or treat is considered to be healthy if sugar is not listed in the first two ingredients. In addition, the parents were successful champions to assist the school to apply for a Governor's School Health Award and advocated successfully for the implementation of a school breakfast program in spring 2007. Parent and child fitness classes at the school and participation in the Shape Up Wisconsin Fit Kids Challenge were other parent group activities. Three Northside parent leaders shared information about their efforts at the 2007 Parent Leadership Conference.

St. Ann School in Somerset reached out to parents by formulating guidelines for foods and beverages sold for fundraising and served in the classroom as snacks, and served at all-school functions. Parents and staff took a quiz to become informed on the new guidelines. Nutri-

tion advocates emphasized the importance of enforcing guidelines for all school sponsored events, and frequently reminded families on nutritious snack choices. The school featured hands-on "Family, Fitness & Fun" activities from January through March and asked a local registered dietitian to present nutrition education for parents and staff.

Royal Oaks Elementary in Sun Prairie included parents in a school-wide exercise challenge, and provided information on healthy snacks and quick meals to parents during parent-teacher conferences. The district wellness policy and "Nutrition Nuggets" information were sent home in school newsletters, and the school nurse worked with parents to bring healthy snack choices for testing day and class parties. Nutrition games can be checked out from the school library for families to enjoy at home.

The **Spooner School District** hosted two "Dad and Me Tortilla Night" sessions with capacity crowds in the High School Family and Consumer Education classroom. A UW Extension Nutritionist presented both nights, and families were taught how to make whole grain tortillas from scratch. Participants also learned a new physical activity game, and discussed their families' favorite vegetables. In addition, the district offered two "Gardening Nights" for families, and these sessions quickly filled. The high school agriculture teacher taught families the basics of container gardening, and then the participants selected garden seeds, decorated planters and planted their seeds. Participants were treated to tastes of salads before taking their planters home. Lakeland Family resource helped fund and coordinate both events, making a valuable connection to families with preschool children.

As noted by many of the examples, parental involvement in children's wellness education and activities occurs from preschool through high school. Parents are important to their child's education at every level. At



the same time, schools need family participation to make and sustain improvements in the nutrition, wellness and physical activity behaviors of their children at home and at school.

Student Participation

How Students Can Promote a Healthy School Environment

Students are wonderful advocates for healthy behaviors among their peers and other children. By making healthy choices in their own lives, students serve as models for healthy behaviors to those around them, including other family members, peers, and teachers, and also to younger students.

A common theme for student health education is “making better choices.” Indeed, any student can choose to be healthy by selecting more nutritious foods and adopting a diet that includes variety, balance, and moderation, if those choices are available. Students need to have healthy choices available at home and at school. Students with a positive attitude about being healthy will influence their peers through words and actions, promoting a healthy environment.

The school cafeteria is a great place for students to practice healthy behaviors and choices. In the hot lunch or a la carte lines, students can choose meals based on their daily nutrition requirements as directed by MyPyramid. (See www.MyPyramid.gov for more information.) When choosing more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy products, and protein rather than fatty and sugary foods like candy, chips, cookies, fried foods, and soda, students will not only be treating their own bodies better, but they will also be demonstrating the importance of healthy behaviors to others.

Students Want Healthier Options

Many teachers and schools assume that students would not choose healthier options if they were available in vending machines, lunch lines, and as classroom rewards. Often, teachers concluded that it was not worth the effort to offer students these options. The **Madison Metropolitan School District** (MMSD) decided to probe this assumption by finding out how students really feel about the nutrition environment at their school.

MMSD and the **Madison Department of Health** teamed up to perform an extensive assessment of the nutrition environments at Madison area middle schools. They examined a la carte food service sales and the competitive foods offered in vending machines, in classrooms, as fundraisers, and at social events.

While 72 percent of staff thought that students pre-

ferred high fat and high sugar foods as rewards, only five out of 940 students surveyed said that rewards of high fat and high sugar foods would motivate them in the classroom. Instead, students suggested healthy snacks, outdoor activities, free time, or classroom game time as rewards to motivate them.

When asked what would encourage them to choose healthier foods and beverages, eat more fruits and vegetables, and try new foods at school, the students provided many suggestions. Half of the students surveyed suggested selling only healthy foods, 43 percent suggested offering more fruits and vegetables and 42 percent suggested that having samples of new foods available might motivate them to buy those foods. Fully one-third of students requested having healthy snacks in the mornings and afternoons rather than just “junk foods.” Nearly a quarter of those surveyed wanted nutritional information available to them about the foods that are served in the school cafeteria.

When it came to fruits and vegetables, students reported that they would buy more produce if it looked fresher and if the school offered more choices they liked. They also suggested serving fruits and vegetables with the main course in the hot lunch line, and making fruits and vegetables less expensive. Another suggestion the students made was to give them the opportunity to try new fruits and vegetables in class. It is apparent from these data that students are willing, and often times truly



want, to eat healthfully. It is also important to note that students are willing to offer suggestions on how to help their peers make healthy food choices, offering hope that with a bit of time and effort, healthy choices for all students can become a reality.

Dane County Public Health expanded on this survey, looking at county suburban and rural middle school students, and their opinions on the school nutrition environment. The suburban and rural students gave similar responses—they wanted healthy food to be fresh, convenient, readily available, and reasonably priced. It cannot be overlooked that students may choose less nutritious choices because that is the only choice or the cheaper choice. More girls than boys surveyed also reported that labeling healthy foods would be helpful to them. Surprisingly, peer influence was not ranked as high as the other above factors as an influence on food selections.

Other Means of Student Involvement

There are other ways that students can help promote a healthy school environment at their school. Student councils and student representative to school board committees represent the views and desires of the student body and bring unique, new perspectives that extend beyond those of adult team members. Students want to be asked to get involved, and sharing their thoughts and opinions can increase their connectedness to their school and school policies. It is important for teachers, administrators, and parents to empower students to take active roles in school wellness.

Examples of Student Participation

Following are examples of how students in Wisconsin have helped to improve their overall school nutrition and physical activity environments.

The students in the **St. Killian School** in **Hartford** wanted more fruits and vegetables offered at lunch, so they convinced the food service staff to create a raw vegetable tray three days a week.

Monona Grove School District put up student designed marketing posters about milk in the cafeteria and had a milk giveaway to promote drinking milk.

Students at **John Muir Middle School** in **Wausau** talked to their friends about lunch and eating healthy foods. They encouraged each other to make better food choices.

Students at **Middleton High School** organized the Cardinal Biathlon. They helped promote and organize the event, collected prizes for participants, acted as timers and directors, wrote an article about the event that was put in the community newspaper and the school paper, took photographs of the race, prepared healthy refreshments for participants, and presented awards to the finishers.



Green Bay School District sponsored Opera of Health assemblies that included student participation as part of the educational health and wellness messages.

The Best Friends Program at **Milwaukee Public Schools** was created to encourage students to talk to those in lower grades about the importance of exercise and proper nutrition.

Waupaca Elementary School started a “5-2-1-almost none” program to encourage a healthy school environment. The students made posters and wrote public service announcements about healthy eating and activity, and PSAs were aired on the local access cable channel. Students participated in “Movin’ and Munchin’ schools” and were involved in polling other students about trying new foods.

Pembine School District worked to change their fundraising products. They report this has been one of the toughest areas to change, and it took three years to completely eliminate candy from fundraisers. The wellness committee came up with ideas that were creative, fun, and profitable. For Valentine’s day, the music department sold “MusicGrams” sung to individuals by student chorus members for \$5. Another Valentine fundraiser

was having student council members selling small packets of nuts with a note saying “I’m nuts over you.” This replaced selling candy that said “I’m sweet on you.” Ideas for future fundraisers include selling flower and vegetable seeds or gift certificates for bedding plants for Valentines or Mothers Day. The student music grams have been very successful, and have been expanded for other events, including birthdays.

Shorewood School students promoted fresh fruits and vegetables through a kiosk with nutrition information. High school students worked the kiosk to prepare and sell healthy foods for meals and snacks.

The student council at **Messmer Preparatory School** in **Milwaukee** sold healthy snacks and fruit in the school store, and got involved in starting a Fitness Club. Messmer students put on a MyPyramid Play to share the message of nutrition with the community.

“Be Vibrant!” was the theme for **Prairie View Middle School, Sun Prairie**, Health Awareness Program (HAP)

students. These students were role models at school, and promoted health awareness to their peers, teachers and staff. The students wore bright “Be Vibrant – Eat Healthy, Live Well” T-shirts, and used the slogan “Catch the Vibe” in their messages. The students wrote and produced a short infomercial video with staff and students as a peer-to-peer marketing tool, and they hosted a Nutrition Smarts Game to encourage healthy eating.

Milwaukee Public Schools held a poster contest that culminated with the posters on display at the Milwaukee Art Museum during a wellness rally. Over 800 participants from 27 schools gathered to participate in the 1.5 mile wellness walk and share the message of health. The students were treated to marching band music from **Fritsche Middle School** Band and a healthy box lunch. A visit from Active Apple wrapped up the event, and students were provided with goody bags of nutrition and health information.



Healthy Eating and Good Nutrition

Good nutrition is basic to good health. For children and adolescents, good nutrition is crucial for healthy growth and development, specifically physical, cognitive, and social development. Good nutrition means consuming calories, energy and nutrients needed for proper growth.

The American food supply and food accessibility has changed. We are surrounded by an abundance of cheap, nutritionally devoid foods. Eating patterns have also shifted, as we eat more meals on the run and snack often. Increased portion sizes, especially in restaurants, increased availability of convenience foods and sweetened beverages and more meals eaten away from home has increased the likelihood of energy imbalance and weight gain. Eating healthy can be challenging in a fast paced world.

One tool for good nutrition is the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). These guidelines are developed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services and revised every five years. They are backed by scientific research and provide a reliable and comprehensive framework for individuals to use as a guide for making healthy dietary choices. Healthy eating involves following the appropriate dietary guidelines for each age group. The 2005 DGAs encourage most Americans to eat fewer calories, be more active, and make wiser food choices.

The MyPyramid food guide is a tool to mesh dietary guidelines with food choices. MyPyramid illustrates healthy eating through the integration of three elements: variety, balance, and moderation.

Variety, balance, and moderation are keys to good nutrition. When young children are given a balanced variety of healthy foods, with moderate amounts of fat, sugar, and salt, they are learning good nutrition habits that can help lower the risk of overweight, heart disease, and diabetes. When older children and adolescents are offered a variety of foods in appropriate portions, they practice good nutrition.

Variety focuses on making sure you are eating food from all areas of MyPyramid. No one food supplies all of the nutrients you need to stay healthy. Variety is also about eating different foods within each food group on a regular basis. Variety is important in providing your body with the array of nutrients that are essential for growth and healthy development.

Balance looks at the food we eat. Foods consist of protein, carbohydrate, and fat. The key is to eat in a way that these nutrients, which provide calories, are balanced – not too much of one or too little of another. Balanced meals provide energy for 3 to 5 hours, and snacks may be needed if meals are far apart. By using a balanced eating plan, we get just the right amount of the vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates, water, and fat that our bodies need. This also helps us get the calories needed for day-to-day activities, not excessive calories beyond our bodies' needs. Balanced meals help prevent cravings, increase metabolism, increase satisfaction, allow for weight management, and assure good nutrition.

Moderation looks at the amounts of food you eat and makes sure you meet, and do not exceed caloric needs. Looking at portion sizes and having a sense of moderation when eating will help improve overall nutrition. A moderate diet will help you to maintain a healthy weight and may help protect you from health problems such as



heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer later in life. In addition, when you eat in moderation, you are often able to enjoy a larger variety of foods.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends consumption of adequate calories within nutrient needs. Some areas of focus include fruit and vegetables, whole-grains, low-fat dairy, energy density, and portion size. Refer to www.MyPyramid.gov for more information. The standard recommendation for daily intake of fruits and vegetables is now 3 ½ to 6 ½ cups per day depending on age, gender, and physical activity levels.

Available data, based on the older recommendation of five servings per day, from the 2005 BRFSS show that

only 22 percent of Wisconsin adults met this recommendation. From the 2005 YRBS, 28 percent of 9th – 12th graders eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.



The 2005 YRBS also included questions related to breakfast, dairy, and soda consumption. When asked how many times in the past seven days the student had eaten breakfast, 14 percent responded that they had not eaten breakfast in the past week, and 34 percent reported that they ate breakfast everyday. When asked about dairy consumption, 54 percent indicated that they had consumed two or fewer servings per day. The recommendation for dairy is three servings per day. Students were also asked how many 12-ounce cans or bottles of non-diet soda were consumed yesterday, and 47 percent of students reported that they drank at least one soda and 11 percent had three or more sodas.

Nutrition Education

Nutrition is an integral component of pre-kindergarten through grade 12 (preK–12) education. Ideally, nutrition education should be part of a sequential program that is coordinated within a comprehensive health education curriculum. Providing students with the information and skills to assess and influence their own eating and exercise habits and adopt healthy eating behaviors is a skill that impacts many health outcomes. Education that values and encourages experiential learning, such as menu planning, food preparation, and gardening, will build the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to promote healthy food choices.



Starting young with nutrition education is warranted, as eating habits are established in the preschool through elementary school years. It is beneficial to integrate nutrition education into the standards-based lesson plans of other school subjects like math, science, language arts, physical education, health, family and consumer science and social sciences to maximize classroom time and to achieve positive changes in students' eating behaviors. When teachers and schools incorporate the concepts of nutrition and physical activity into other curricular areas, the concepts become more familiar and more applicable to students. Food and exercise can be excellent examples to teach many life skills and concepts. Conversely, other subjects can impact the nutrition and physical activity environment by the message they send. For example, estimating candy in a jar, using concession stand purchasing for a math story problem, or measuring body fat in biology can send negative messages.



Nutrition education lends itself to exceptional experiential learning. Experiential learning offers multi-sensory learning to increase retention. Utilizing food items in the classroom allows students to become actively engaged in learning through touch, smell, sight, and taste. While experiential learning programs engage students in hands-on nutrition education, integrating nutrition concepts into multiple subjects can reinforce messages about healthy eating habits. According to the American Dietetic Association, the most effective school-based strategies to change eating habits include offering a clear message, using multiple strategies to reinforce that message, involving families, increasing the intensity and time of contact, and using curricula supported by a theoretical framework (“Nutrition Services” 2003).

Finally, nutrition education needs to be geared towards media and health literacy. Teaching students to be savvy consumers will further support a healthy environment. The school cafeteria, the community farmers' mar-

ket and the local grocery store all dictate the food choices available, and this accessibility to healthy foods further impacts the food and nutrition environment. Exposure to new foods through nutrition education can promote a wider variety of foods in these venues and provide positive reinforcement of the nutrition environment.



Incorporating Nutrition and Wellness into Academic Standards

The Wisconsin Model Academic Standards lists objectives for major subject areas and grade levels that students must meet in school. Below, some of these standards are listed as well as examples on how the concepts of nutrition and physically activity may be incorporated into the standards.

Family and Consumer Education

- **Practical Reasoning:** apply reasoning to current family-related issues or concerns described in the media, such as what should be done to ensure food safety or to resolve conflicts regarding the issue.
- **Family Action:** develop, implement, and assess an individual, family, or community action plan designed to reach specific goals, such as preparing or serving meals to the elderly that meet dietary restrictions.
- **Understand and Use Reflection in Everyday Life:** identify and evaluate personal attitudes, beliefs, and patterns of thinking or acting; identify cultural assumptions in various media, such as notions of beauty and weight.

Health Education

- **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention:** explain the relationship between positive health behaviors and prevention of injury, illness, disease, and premature death.

- **Healthy Behaviors:** identify personal health needs and demonstrate strategies to improve or maintain present health.
- **Goal-setting and Decision-making:** set personal health goals and track achievement.
- **Advocacy:** identify community organizations that advocate for healthy individuals, families, schools, and communities.

Physical Education

- **Leading an Active Lifestyle:** explore personal interests in a variety of new physical activities, both in and out of class, establish personal physical activity goals, and describe the relationship between a healthy lifestyle and feeling good.
- **Health Enhancing Fitness:** participate in a wide variety of health-related activities and maintain a record of moderate to vigorous physical activities; begin to design personal health-related fitness program based on the individual student's accurately assessed fitness profile.

Science

- **Science Connections:** show how conflicting assumptions about science themes lead to differing opinions and ultimately decisions regarding health and how such decisions have diverse effects on individuals, communities, and the country, currently and ultimately, in the future.
- **Science Applications:** illustrate the impact of science and technology (both negative and positive), on careers, systems, societies, and life goals.
- **Science in Society and Personal Perspectives:** show how science has contributed to meeting personal needs including hygiene, nutrition, exercise, safety, and health care.

Social Studies

- **Behavioral Sciences:** Give examples and explain how the media may influence opinions, choices, and decisions and use scientific methods to assess the influence of media on people's behavior and decisions.
- **Economics:** Describe Wisconsin's role in national and global economies and give examples of local economic activity in national and global markets.
- **Economics:** Describe how personal decisions can have a global impact on issues such as trade agreements, recycling, and conserving the environment, such as considering vegetarian or low carbohydrate diets and local farmer-grown produce and factory farms.

English and Language Arts

- Conduct research and inquiry on self-selected or assigned topics, issues, or problems and use an appropriate form to communicate their findings. A variety of nutrition and physical activity topics can be found to discuss.

Marketing

- Explain their family's origin and culture and its affect on the products they buy/use, the foods they eat and recreational activities.
- Identify food products produced inside and outside of the United States.
- Describe ways that cultures influence food choices.
- Compare distribution systems and how they function in different types of economies (farming and food distribution systems).

Information Technology

- Assess, evaluate, and apply information efficiently and effectively from a variety of sources in print, nonprint, and electronic formats to meet personal and academic needs, such as evaluating fad diets or analyzing a food log. *MyPyramid.gov* is an excellent website for personal nutrition evaluation.
- Be media literate (understanding the message behind the ads) and health literate (having the knowledge, skills, and motivation to make healthy choices). The internet is full of nutrition information and misinformation for discussion, and many online tools and advertisements pertain to diet and health.

What Works in Wisconsin Schools

Wisconsin schools are integrating nutrition and physical activity across the curriculum. Here are some examples of what is working in the classroom to help provide a healthy learning environment.

Shorewood School District surveyed teachers about nutrition education and found that nutrition fits well into the science curriculum. The district is developing short



activities that can be easily added into the school day to reinforce the wellness message.

The Active Apple mascot visits schools in the **Milwaukee Public**

Schools system. The mascot shares messages on nutrition and activity, and gets moving with the students.

At **Mondovi High School**, the Spanish I class incorporated nutrition into the Spanish curriculum. Students translated the food guide pyramid into Spanish and posted food pyramids in English and Spanish in the cafeteria. They also analyzed how a sample school lunch would fit into the pyramid. The students were then told to evaluate their family's



eating habits at home and chart them on the food pyramid. Lastly, students collected donations of healthy foods for making balanced meals and donated them to the local food pantry.

A class at **Stoughton Elementary School** studied the diverse cultures in America; the lesson was called "Tapestry of America." The interdisciplinary curriculum incorporated geography, foreign language, physical activity, and ethnic foods. The students identified the ethnic background of foods served in the cafeteria. Working with their parents, each child brought in a dish representing his/her ethnic background and shared it with the rest of the class. The teacher invited a guest speaker from the community who had knowledge of ethnic foods to visit with the students and share information with them about these foods.

A class at **Lodi Middle School** participated in a school lunch activity where they surveyed other students and staff about school lunch. The computer applications class conducted the survey and created graphs for students in the family consumer sciences class to analyze. The students rewrote school lunch menus based on principles of meal planning, not using items currently in the menu, and presented them to the food service staff. Seventy-five percent of the student ideas were incorporated into the next month's lunch menus.

Denmark Empowerment Charter School students will be teaching fourth grade students at the Denmark Elementary School about making healthy food choices. The high school students developed a PowerPoint presenta-

tion to share with the elementary school students.

The third graders at **Viroqua Elementary School** identified the need for physical activity and good nutrition for older adults as their community project. After learning about how good nutrition and physical activity affects the body, minds, and spirits of individuals, students developed ways to be “everyday heroes” at the local nursing home by teaching residents about physical activity techniques and by making healthy snacks for them.

Lac du Flambeau Middle School students developed a nutrition and physical activity website to promote healthy eating through student-tested recipes. Their website provides links to nutrition and activity information for students and the community. The website is the location for the Lac de Flambeau Healthy Lifestyles Action Team to publicize upcoming events, and highlight community partnership activities.



The Food for Life class at **West Junior High in Wisconsin Rapids** identified poor eating behaviors of many younger children in the district as the focus of their class project. They developed fun, age-appropriate nutrition education materials, such as placemats, that they used to teach students about healthy eating at the elementary school.

The 4K-12 students at **Princeton Public School** fostered awareness regarding healthy lifestyles among students, parents, and community members through the promotion of the “Turn off the TV—Turn on Life—Get Moving” initiative. This initiative involved tracking



physical activities, disseminating information on the Food Guide Pyramid, and creating a fitness video on the proper use of the weight room equipment.

A public service announcement on the benefits of healthy eating was developed by the Health Awareness Program (HAP) club at **Prairie View**

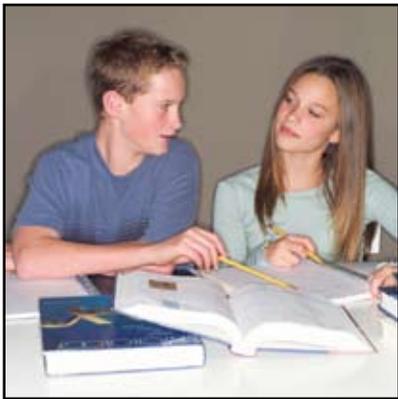
Middle School in SunPrairie. This video was completely researched, written and produced by students, and featured student interviews. The video was run on the schools closed circuit television during lunch periods.

The eighth grade Teen Living students in the **James Williams Middle School in the Rhineland School District** created songs and jump rope verses to promote physical activity and healthy eating. They developed posters and charts to help others learn about wise food choices and used PowerPoint presentations for peer education and teaching younger children. The eighth graders promoted fruit and vegetable consumption through food guide based activities such as the “Rainbow Plate Design Activity” and the “Rainbow Buffet.”

Abbotsford School District held a Health/Wellness Week in March. All teachers in the district had to include some aspect of Health/Wellness into their lesson that week. One activity that got the students excited was a class walk that was followed by calculating calories burned in the activity.

Evaluating Implementation of Local Wellness Policies

Developing and adopting a sound policy is only the beginning. The adoption of a policy does not automatically mean that it will be successfully implemented nor does it mean the school environment will change. Implementation requires coordination and planning, good management skills, the necessary resources and consistent oversight. Implementation is individualized, and may occur in phases or happen rapidly. It is important to communicate implementation changes to staff, students, and parents to prevent surprises and negative reactions. A positive attitude toward new foods, new physical activity options, or other changes from everyone in the school community can make a huge difference in the acceptance of the policy and the school nutrition environment.



Once implementation of a wellness policy has started, it is time to look at how to improve it. Is the wellness policy fostering a healthy food and activity environment? Evaluating district wellness policy implementation and the impact on the school

wellness environment may seem like a daunting task. Evaluation is not the final, but rather is the connecting step in a successful policy. Evaluating what happened, and what didn't happen, will provide the feedback to set new goals and continue to strive for a better school wellness environment. The local wellness policy legislation requires designating a person or persons as responsible for the evaluation, but there is not a requirement on what to evaluate or how to use the results.

Local control of school districts keeps wellness policies individualized to district needs. The district superintendent is a key person in wellness policy evaluation, and has the operational responsibility for ensuring that each school meets the local wellness policy requirements. The superintendent can designate the school principal as responsible for implementation of the local wellness

policy in each building. This will give policies new life with a school specific focus. The principal has the ability to appoint a school-based evaluation team to develop and implement objectives to meet the wellness policy goals. This school based-team can assess the environment and programs related to wellness, and evaluate implementation progress at the school. The school-based team will then report back to the district wellness committee.

Evaluation helps to target technical assistance, and provides accountability to the local wellness policy. The only real way to make sure your programs are on course is to evaluate what you did, and what happened. In order to evaluate properly, you need to have good goals and objectives. The goal is the overarching result you wish to obtain, the vision, or the purpose. Objectives are your target points to get you there.

One way to set objectives is to use S.M.A.R.T. objectives. S.M.A.R.T. stands for:

Specific—Specify what you want to achieve. Ask what, why, who, when, and how to help clarify and make objectives specific.

Measurable—You should be able to measure your result, and see if you are meeting the objectives. How will you know the objective has been reached?

Achievable—Will you be able to complete the objectives in the time allotted? Taking smaller steps can keep you motivated. You increase your likelihood of success if your objectives are achievable and attainable.

Realistic—This is the reality check. Can you achieve the objectives with the resources you have?

Time-bound—Set a deadline for completing the objective. When do you want to achieve the set objectives? Are there some objectives that depend on the completion of other objectives?

Once you have your objectives set, use them to prioritize activities and gauge outcomes. Did you do what you set out to do? In addition, it is useful to look at any unintended consequences or setbacks? Looking at these surprises can lead to a stronger program in the future. Use these objectives as benchmarks to your goal, and revise as needed.

Your objectives may focus on participation in school meals. It is also important to look at the financial health of the school food service program and revenue changes from fundraising, school stores, or vending machines. You may also look at participation in after-school activities, nutrition education programs, and equipment use.



Parent, teacher, and student surveys are a way to assess the satisfaction levels with the policy and determine other areas of focus. Local, state, and national award and grant programs can provide evaluation feedback and will provide recognition and support to build a healthy school environment.

Be sure to share evaluation results with the wellness team, administration, school board, parents, and school community. Celebrate success!

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES

USDA Team Nutrition Resources, United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services
www.teamnutrition.usda.gov

Wisconsin DPI Nutrition Education
<http://dpi.wi.gov/ne/index.html>

Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide at National Association of State Boards of Education. www.nasbe.org

Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating at Division of Adolescent and School Health Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth

School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide (Available in an elementary school version and a middle school/high school version) at Division of Adolescent and School Health Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash

Keys to Excellence: Standards of Practice for Nutrition Integrity at School Nutrition Association www.schoolnutrition.org

National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity
www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org

Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)
<http://cspinet.org/schoolfood/index.html>

Action for Healthy Kids
www.actionforhealthykids.org

National Food Service Management Institute
www.nfsmi.org

Nutrition Explorations
www.nutritionexplorations.org

Eat Right Montana
www.eatrightmontana.org

Wisconsin Nutrition and Physical Activity Program
<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/>

Healthy Snack Options

Foods

- Dried fruits
- Canned fruits
- Trail mix *
- Whole-grain cereal bars
- Pretzels
- Baked chips or crackers
- Animal crackers
- Graham crackers
- Baked cereal mix *
- Baked fish-shaped crackers
- Granola bars *
- Whole-grain chips
- String cheese
- Cheese slices/ whole grain crackers
- Fresh fruits
- Raw vegetables
- Popcorn
- Lowfat yogurt
- Lowfat baked goods
- Lowfat crackers
- Pudding
- Bagels

- Multigrain bars
- Fruit snacks
- Low-fat muffins or quick breads *
- Low-sugar dry cereal

*May contain peanuts or tree nuts—check with your school nurse about any student allergies

BEVERAGES (NON-CARBONATED)

- Bottled water
- 100 percent fruit juice
- Tea (unsweetened or diet)
- Skim milk
- 1 percent milk (flavored or unflavored)
- Electrolyte replacement drink
- Fruit-based (no less than 50 percent fruit juice and no added sweeteners)

TIPS

- Plan snacks as part of the day's food plan
- Give children some choice in snacks; allow them to select fruits and vegetables for snacks
- Offer snacks at regular times
- Snacks are a great way to introduce new foods
- Don't offer snacks as a reward or withhold as punishment

What Works in . . . Schools

healthy eating • physical activity • healthy weight



Schools provide a unique setting to improve physical activity and nutrition habits. School activities should be integrated with other community groups to have an even greater impact. As school time gets tight with competing priorities, schools need to protect the often overlooked value that physical activity and nutrition play in the overall success of students.

Where to Start:

1. Make the connection with community activities to strengthen buy-in. Examples include:
 - Join or form a local coalition to address nutrition & physical activity in a coordinated manner.
 - Integrate school activities with community, business and healthcare initiatives. Form partnerships with community organizations to support or develop programs. Tie into existing promotions, media campaigns and special events (i.e. walk-to-school day, Governor's Challenge, etc).
 - Set-up a school plan that ties into summer programs & other initiatives for year round activity.
2. Complete the School Health Index assessment. <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/SHI/Default.aspx> 
3. Apply for the Governor's School Health Award. <http://www.schoolhealthaward.wi.gov/> 
(Some components to win the award are proven strategies)
4. Use the local school wellness policy (Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act 2004) to guide physical activity and nutrition policy changes, including establishing nutrition standards for foods and beverages offered in school vending machines, school stores, a la carte lines and on campus.
5. Join or help form a School Wellness Council to ensure a comprehensive school health program.
6. Provide a staff wellness program & train teachers on healthy eating & physical activity concepts.
7. Integrate nutrition and physical activity instruction into lesson plans for multiple school subjects; link curriculum to school food service, teacher, and family involvement.
8. Ensure that all school meals meet USDA guidelines and are appealing to students.
9. Provide student health services including health information, screening, and referrals.
10. Begin working with pre-adolescent children; interventions targeted towards this age group are more likely to have a lasting impact.

Suggested Intervention/Program Strategies:

Experts agree that the causes of childhood overweight are multidimensional. To address this, the following page outlines strategies representing the existing evidence for change at the individual, environmental, and policy levels based on six focus areas that CDC has outlined for overweight and obesity prevention. Effective interventions are intense, longer-term and employ both nutrition and physical activity strategies. Use these to help design interventions or programs in a school environment.

Evidence Level for Each Strategy:	CDC Evidence-Based Focus Areas:
Items with white backgrounds are proven strategies.	 Increase fruit & vegetable consumption
Items with light gray backgrounds are promising strategies.	 Decrease sweetened beverage consumption
Items with dark gray backgrounds are expert opinion strategies.	 Decrease food portion size (portion control)
	 Increase physical activity
	 Decrease TV and other "screen" time
	 Increase Breastfeeding

for more information: Department of Health and Family Services • Division of Public Health
 Wisconsin Nutrition and Physical Activity Program • PO Box 2659 • Madison WI 53701-2659
<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/index.htm> • 608.267.3694

PPH 40132 (5/2006)

Nutrition Strategies

Fruit & Vegetable Consumption

1. Increase healthy food options in lunchrooms, a la carte, vending and school stores; make options appealing
2. Reduce or eliminate foods of minimal or low nutritional value that are sold on campus; limit access, portions, or hours of sale
3. Use peer-to-peer marketing strategies to promote healthier food choices
4. Use point of decision prompts to highlight fruits and vegetables
5. Provide taste testing opportunities to introduce new fruits & vegetables
6. Teach food preparation skills
7. Use competitive pricing; price non-nutritious foods at a higher cost
8. Increase availability of fruits and vegetables; incorporate student preferences (i.e. salad bar)
9. Start a school fruit and vegetable garden
10. Use farm-to-school initiatives to incorporate fresh, locally grown produce into meals

Sweetened Beverage Consumption

1. Increase healthy food options in lunchrooms, a la carte, vending and school stores; make options appealing
2. Reduce or eliminate foods of minimal or low nutritional value that are sold on campus; limit access, portions, or hours of sale
3. Use peer-to-peer marketing strategies to promote healthier food choices
4. Use of point of decision prompts to highlight healthier alternatives
5. Make water available; promote consumption
6. Modify vending contracts to increase healthy choices; identify alternative revenue sources needed to replace existing incentives schools receive from current sales.
7. Use competitive pricing; price non-nutritious foods at a higher cost
8. Reduce or eliminate food advertising of non-nutritious foods.

Portion Control

1. Set age-appropriate serving sizes for foods and beverages available in the school.
2. Incorporate portion-size estimation into age-appropriate curriculum (i.e. math)
3. Label food to show serving size and calories.

Breastfeeding

1. Provide an appropriate place for breastfeeding
2. Adopt policies that support breastfeeding
3. Provide age appropriate education on breastfeeding integrated into academic curriculum (i.e. biology, psychology, etc.)

TV & Food Advertising

1. Reduce or eliminate food advertising of low nutrient foods in the school and in school-based TV Programs (i.e. Channel One)
2. Limit TV viewing during school meals/snacks
3. Use school-based curricula to teach adolescents media literacy

Other Nutrition Strategies

1. Provide age-appropriate, comprehensive nutrition education at each grade level  
2. Provide sufficient time for students to eat during meal times
3. Ensure school fundraising supports student health; encourage sale of non-food items or healthier foods

Physical Activity Strategies

Physical Activity

1. Make sure that school physical education (PE) meet, at a minimum, the State requirements and standards
2. Institute school policies that increase activity. Examples include:
 - PE Curriculum emphasizes active time (track actual time students are active)
 - PE Curriculum emphasizes lifetime activities (e.g. Physical Best)
 - PE Curriculum has proven benefits (i.e. CATCH, Planet Health)
 - Fitnessgram or standards-based evaluation
 - Active recess
 - PE Homework and extra credit are used to supplement PE time
 - Walking or biking vs. school busing
 - Safe Routes to School Program
3. Allow maximum access to recreation facilities.
 - Offer and encourage participation in after school sports or intramurals
 - Allow after school and evening access to school recreational facilities
4. Institute environmental changes to increase activity. Examples include:
 - Walking school bus
 - Physical activity integrated into other classes
5. Set up programs that have strong support systems and incentives. Examples include:
 - Buddy or "team" physical activity goals
 - Programs that involve child & family
6. Provide established programs that increase activity such as Movin' and Munchin' Schools

