



Best Practices Guidelines and Evaluations

GUIDELINE 1

Schools provide an environment that offers and promotes healthy and appealing food and drink choices.

BEST PRACTICES

- ★ Beaver Creek City Schools, Beaver Creek, Ohio
- ★ Kettering City Schools, Kettering, Ohio
- ★ Healthy school nutrition environment, Whitefish, Montana
- ★ Healthy eating across the curriculum, Bristol, Rhode Island
- ★ Connecticut's Team Nutrition program, Stratford, Connecticut
- ★ Project Nutrition, Great Falls, Montana
- ★ Improving the nutrition environment, South Windsor, Connecticut
- ★ Healthy Snackers UltraMarathon, Tolland, Connecticut
- ★ Healthy Kids, Opelika, Alabama
- ★ Urban Nutrition Initiative, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- ★ CATCH, Texas State Schools
- ★ Nutrition Network, Hawthorne, California

*"I believe that if healthier alternatives were provided,
students would make better choices."*

Kate Horning, Copley High School senior, Summit County



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Schools provide an environment that offers and promotes healthy and appealing food and drink choices.

During the Wellness Advisory Council’s focus group sessions, high school students consistently reported that if healthier foods were made readily available, they would eat them at school. The availability of nutritious foods and drinks can significantly contribute to students’ desire and motivation to select healthier options. Moreover, the appearance, placement, display and packaging can either promote or detract from food and drink selections. Simple adjustments to the way the food is presented can help students make the best decisions when selecting what to eat.

OBJECTIVE

Schools, families and communities, including business partners, will cooperate to implement a healthier and more nutritional environment.

It could be said that “it takes a village” to fuel a healthy child. Schools have a great responsibility to ensure that every student succeeds. Through a partnership with families and community stakeholders, schools can strengthen their abilities to provide a healthy school nutrition environment. This goal requires a commitment from the school food service, food service vendors, vending companies, school administrators, faculty, parents and students to set common goals for nutritional offerings. With community support, schools can offer a greater variety of foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, and promote student consumption of healthy foods.

BEST PRACTICES

★ **1. Beavercreek City Schools, Beavercreek, Ohio**

Background: Beavercreek City Schools has earned awards for its work in implementing healthy breakfast and lunch choices. Vegetarian options are served for both breakfast and lunch, and vending machines sell milk, cereal, fresh fruit and baked chips. Much of the Beavercreek school district’s food preparation staff has received 10 hours of safe food handling training, and many educational staff members have taken 10 hours of nutrition training. In its high school government classes, the district educates students on the importance of government legislation for the school meal program.

Success: Beavercreek City Schools has seen increased consumption of fresh fruits and low-fat milk.

★ **2. Kettering City Schools, Kettering, Ohio**

Background: Kettering City Schools is now in its third year of offering healthy snack choices to its elementary and middle school students. Healthy snacks include those that are:

- Offered in single-serving sizes;
- Contain seven grams of fat or less;
- Include either 100 percent juice in beverages, 12-ounce bottled water or 1 percent milk.



Kettering also has limited the availability of vending machines to after school use, implemented National School Breakfast Week and encouraged parental involvement during National School Lunch Week. The district regularly hires dietetic interns to teach nutrition lessons, and nutritional education is mailed to students' homes.

Duration: The program is in its third year at the elementary school level and in its second year at the middle school level.

Success: An average of 71 percent of students participate in programs in more than nine elementary schools. At the middle school level, participation is 69 percent in one school and 64 percent in another.

✦ 3. Healthy School Nutrition Environment, Central Middle School, Whitefish, Montana

Background: The Central Middle School adapted the healthy school nutrition environment concept after recognizing an association between nutrition and school behavior. While picking up trash covering the school grounds, the school realized students were consuming great amounts of soda, chips, candy and other snack foods instead of eating nutritious meals served in the cafeteria. Further, many discipline issues affecting the overall learning environment needed to be addressed.

All soft drinks were removed from vending machines and replaced with bottled water, milk, sports drinks and juices. Candy was removed from all machines and is not sold during school hours. The vending machines were stocked daily with yogurt, string cheese, pudding, beef jerky, baked chips and fruit. A la carte offerings in the lunch room included homemade pretzels, bagels, salads, sandwiches, baked chips and fresh fruit. In addition to changes in the nutritional quality of the food offered, lunchtime recess was rescheduled to take place before lunch rather than after lunch. Because students got moderate exercise during the pre-lunch recess, teachers reported that students were more relaxed and less likely to cause disciplinary problems.

Duration: The program began in the 2002-2003 school year. All changes took effect within the first week of the school year in 2002.

Success: Improvements in afternoon academics have been noted at the middle school. Teachers reported that student behavior and attentiveness had improved during the class period that immediately followed lunch. They said that students now were "...rested, relaxed and ready to learn." One math teacher reported that she has "... gained 10 minutes in instruction time" per period, which adds up to 30 hours per year.

Lunchroom discipline problems decreased from 183 incidents during 2001-2002 to 36 incidents within the first eight months of the 2002-2003 school year. More specifically, after-lunch referrals to the principal's office also decreased from 96 in 2001-2002 to 22 in the first eight months of the 2002-2003 year.



Lastly, earnings from vending and a la carte sales each month stayed the same or slightly increased. Although total sales decreased, greater profits from sales of the higher-priced healthier items, as compared to the profits from lower-priced unhealthy items, meant that the earnings for the school’s food service were higher than before the changes.

For more information:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/>

★ 4. **Healthy eating across the curriculum, Byfield Elementary School (K-3), Bristol, Rhode Island**

Background: The school established a committee of parents, teachers, administrators and community members to review current student nutritional habits and suggest necessary changes. This committee determined which key groups to reach out to, including students, parents and school staff members.

Meetings and programs were presented on the nutritional merits of fruits and vegetables. (Some events featured a chef.) Parents attended programs on preparing nutrient-rich snacks for children to take to school. The school promoted these snacks with stickers and rewards. The school held health fairs and “sample days” throughout the school year to encourage students to try new, healthy foods. For example, ice cream was replaced with frozen yogurt and high-fat snacks were replaced with bagel chips and air-popped popcorn. In addition, the after-school program began serving fruit juice and fresh fruit instead of high-calorie and high-fat snacks.

Duration: Menu changes and student and parent education programs were put into place starting in 2003.

Success: Refreshments for classroom parties now include choices such as 100 percent juice, cheese and cracker trays, vegetables with dip and multi-grain crackers. According to the food service director, the students simply cannot get enough of snacks such as rice cakes and yogurt. Physical education and nutrition activities are now an integral part of all grade levels, due to the program. A nutrition program called “Snack Attack” is now part of the regular curriculum, as well as Hispanic foods, a nutrition unit and jazzercise classes.

Through continued education programs and meetings with parents and staff, the successful healthy snacking program continues to grow. Plans are in the works for an incentive program called “Dairy Dollars,” linking mathematics and nutrition. This program would allow students to redeem earned coupons for milk and yogurt. A new program entitled “Caught Healthy Eating” rewards students for choosing healthy snacks in the classroom.

For more information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/>



✦ 5. Connecticut's Team Nutrition program, Stratford Public Schools, Stratford, Connecticut

Background: A comprehensive school health committee was formed to limit student access to low-nutrient foods and to help students make better nutritional choices. The school district brought a chef into each school and exposed the students to healthier meals, such as salads, fruit, granola, yogurt parfait and vegetable pizza. Along with menu changes, portion sizes were reduced.

At the elementary schools, teachers kept a tally of fruits and vegetables consumed during lunchtime for competitions held several times a year.

Duration: The program began in the fall of 2002 and continues.

Success: All the healthier foods offered a la carte are being sold just as fast as they are stocked. Some schools have offered “salad creation,” allowing students to create their own salads by choosing their own toppings and dressings.

In the elementary schools with the fruit and vegetable competitions, the food service director maintains that, “The enthusiasm among the kids was more than I could have ever imagined. On some days, we sold eight times the usual numbers of apples! This program was the most successful that I have ever seen.”

For more information:

<http://www.team.uconn.edu/index.htm>

✦ 6. Project Nutrition, East Middle School, Great Falls, Montana

Background: Students at East Middle School teamed up with teachers to develop a nutrition education program and to market highly nutritious foods in a student store. The store formerly sold school supplies and low-nutrition snacks.

Students developed daily nutrition announcements and other advertising for the snacks. For example, students announced store selections over the school's public address system. They also contacted the school's vending service about changing the snacks offered in school vending machines.

Duration: Project Nutrition began at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, with educators hoping that the program would continue the following year at the new middle school.

Success: Due to the success of the student store and marketing by the students, the a la carte line in the cafeteria now offers healthier food choices. After discovering that some of the healthier food choices were selling as well as the other snacks, the vending company replaced a candy vending machine with one selling healthier snacks. By the end of the year, the remaining four vending machines, previously full of unhealthy choices, were shut down during the school day.



For more information:

<http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/teamNutritionNEW.html>
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/>

★ 7. Improving the nutritional environment, South Windsor Schools, South Windsor, Connecticut

Background: The South Windsor school system made gradual changes within the schools to surround students in a positive nutritional environment. Vending machines selling flavored milk, bottled water, 100 percent fruit juices, and bottled smoothies were introduced into the middle and high school cafeterias. Milk served in 10-ounce bottles was introduced at the middle schools during lunch time. Snack items sold in the schools were reviewed and priced according to their nutritional value. High-priced items with low nutritional value either were eliminated or priced to discourage sales. For example, the price of a doughnut was set at 90 cents, while small bagels were sold for 60 cents and larger bagels for 75 cents. The sale of cookies was only allowed during specific days of the week, and all fried snacks were replaced with baked snacks. To reduce the overall fat content of the menu, the number of times high-fat menu items could be served during the school year was limited.

Giant, multicolored menus were developed at the elementary schools, so students could see what was being served in the cafeteria. These menus were also sent home to families, instead of being published the traditional school calendar manner. The nutrition services department offered employee workshops on wellness and on the links between obesity and disease. These classes were focused on developing healthy lifestyles and on becoming positive role models within the school system.

Duration: The new vending machines and price changes in the a la carte serving line started in September 2002. Breakfast programs were implemented in schools in December 2002, with all elementary schools participating by September 2003.

Success: According to the company responsible for filling the milk machines, “we can hardly keep them filled.” In the middle schools, the 10-ounce milk bottle purchases increased by 2,000 bottles, which in turn decreased total meal calories to satisfactory levels, increased calcium consumption and resulted in less waste of milk in the disposed bottles.

The sales of healthier a la carte menu items were very strong. For example, while doughnut sales dwindled, bagel sales were “very hot.” These gradual changes increased participation in the school lunch program from 32 percent in the 1980s to almost 60 percent currently. Almost 100 percent of the students participate in some aspect of the food service offerings.

For more information:

<http://www.team.uconn.edu/index.htm>
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/>



✦ 8. Healthy Snackers UltraMarathon, Birch Grove Primary School, Tolland, Connecticut

Background: Carol Goodrow, an elementary teacher, developed the Healthy Snackers UltraMarathon program. The program allows the class or a group of students to vote on their favorite time of day to snack and to choose from a list of their 50 favorite nutritious snacks. The first student to bring in a snack from the list gets his or her name posted on the chart next to the food, and the item is then checked off. If a student brings in any healthy snack, he or she is rewarded with stickers or some other way of recognition. The students bring in 40 snacks and the teacher brings the last 10 snacks to help provide a positive example.

This program was designed to encourage teamwork, healthier eating and to teach the value of different snacks from each of the food groups.

Duration: This program began in the fall of 2003 and still continues.

Success: Once all the snacks had been successfully checked off the list, each child gets to pick a reward or prize, as determined by the teacher or leader of the program. Throughout the entire program, students became eager to try new foods, bring in additional healthy snacks that were not included on the list and learn information that would be passed on to their parents at home. According to Carol Goodrow, “Children will take the nutritional message home, and this way teachers can educate parents through the children.”

For more information:

<http://www.kidsrunning.com/columns/whatkidsneed2.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/>

✦ 9. Healthy Kids, Opelika City School System, Alabama

Background: For the past decade, Opelika City Schools in Alabama has been encouraging its schools to improve their cafeterias and focus on nutrition. Their progressive policies included banning all vending machines, eliminating fried foods from menus and providing nutritional analysis on all menu items, to ensure children receive proper nutrition and meet the nutritional recommendations for their age group. The district also has made an effort to include locally grown produce on its menus. In addition, schools made it a policy that students remain on campus during lunchtimes. All a la carte items are analyzed for nutritional content and are only offered as extra side items.

Duration: The Opelika schools have been working toward improving their school lunches since the early 1990s, when vending machines were banned.

For more information:

<http://www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/HealthySchools.pdf>



★ 10. Urban Nutrition Initiative, Drew Elementary School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Background: The University of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia City Schools have collaborated to provide elementary school students access to nutritious foods and to teach healthy eating habits. The program members include teachers, university faculty and staff members employed by the Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI). A majority of Drew Elementary students are African-American and are from lower income levels. The program focuses on urban agriculture and nutrition education using fun activities and projects. Nearby University City High School students, who help run the school’s garden and greenhouse, mentor the younger students. Together, they have class salad parties, learn how to cook the vegetables they grow and keep “garden diaries.” Every day after school, the elementary students sell apples, pears, kiwis, baby carrots, bell peppers and other produce for 25 cents to parents and other students.

Success: Both the University City High School and Drew Elementary School are model UNI schools. Two hundred students from the high school and 350 elementary students participate in the program. Students run a Saturday Farmer’s Market and Winter Buying Club with the produce, retail milk and eggs. Profits last year were \$12,000-\$14,000 from this program. The subsidized vegetable stand run by the elementary students successfully competes with vending machine items. Program coordinators have noticed more students choosing healthy snacks. They hired an evaluator to assess the effectiveness of the program. Next, UNI is working with schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and in South Africa to develop similar programs.

For more information:

<http://www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/HealthySchools.pdf>

<http://www.upenn.edu/ccp/index.shtml>

★ 11. CATCH, Texas State Schools

Background: Coordinated Approach to Childhood Health (CATCH) is a program based in Texas, aimed at teaching elementary school children the importance of nutrition and physical activity. Teachers, volunteer parents, food service managers, counselors and administrators use fun activities and mascots to educate students in grades three through five. Hearty Heart, Flash Fitness, Salt Sleuth and Dynamite Diet are the names of characters created to teach children about choosing a diet filled with fruits and vegetables, watching out for high sodium foods and keeping active. Children are also taught to classify foods into “go,” “slow,” and “whoa” foods. “Go” foods are those that are OK to eat at any time, such as fruits and vegetables. “Slow” foods are OK to eat in moderation, and “whoa” foods should only be eaten occasionally or on special occasions. The cafeteria posts signs labeling the foods on the school lunch menu. Schools have also eliminated fried foods from their menu, stopped using butter, switched to low-fat ice cream and low-fat milk, and introduced a salad bar and fruits for dessert.

Duration: This program started in 1997 and continues today.

Success: The CATCH program is used in more than 1,000 Texas schools and is expanding to 30 other states and Canada. Studies and research on the pilot program indicate that it was able to



improve the nutritional value of school lunches and the eating habits of children. Furthermore, a three-year follow up study showed how the lessons learned during elementary school and the subsequent behavioral changes in the children's eating habits continued into adolescence.

For more information:

<http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/chppr/catch>

★ **12. Nutrition Network, Hawthorne School District, Hawthorne, California**

Background: The goal of Hawthorne Schools is to provide students with high-quality, nutritious foods and life-long healthy habits. All the school's cafeterias have a "Garden Bar" and a monthly "Harvest of the Month," which promote a new food in season. In addition, teachers receive a monthly newsletter with tips on incorporating nutrition education in their classrooms, along with easy recipes. Two schools are testing a new "Breakfast Buffet," highlighting healthy foods to start the day. Several cafeteria staffers, called nutrition education activity assistants, interact with children during lunch times to encourage them to sample the month's featured food. Parents are encouraged to reinforce the lessons at home through public service announcements aired on a local cable channel.

Duration: Ongoing.

Success: Observers claim students are eating more fruits and vegetables. Breakfast participation has increased in several of the pilot schools.

For more information:

http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources_profile.php?id=209





RESOURCES

Beverage choices for each grade level.

The American Beverage Association documents its specific objectives with parents, community leaders and school officials to provide improved beverage choices within schools.

http://www.ameribev.org/schools/vending_policy.asp

The Ohio Soft Drink Association adopts new ABA school vending policy.

The Ohio Soft Drink Association documents a new policy aimed at reducing childhood obesity. The policy has its foundation with the American Beverage Association and encourages offering more nutritious and lower-calorie beverages in school vending machines.

<http://ohiosoftdrink.com/index.php?p=8&id=11>

Summary of national research findings for the American Beverage Association.

This document provides surveyed facts and statistics addressing the adopted proposal by the American Beverage Association for vending machines in schools. The data shows support for the policy change and an individual grade analysis referencing varying terms of support.

<http://www.ameribev.org/pressroom/sept2005overwhelmingsupport.asp>

Ohio Department of Education, Neighborhood Network of Trainers.

The Neighborhood Network of Trainers (NNT) is an education and training service provided through the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Safety, Health and Nutrition. Qualified instructors use specialized programs and materials to assist local school food service programs in staff development. The American Food Service Association has approved all NNT training sessions for specialized training and continuing education credit.

http://www.ode.state.oh.us/food_service/CNS_Calendar/cns_calendar_NNT.asp

Symons, Cynthia, et. al. "Bridging Student Health Risks and Academic Achievement Through Comprehensive School Health Programs," *Journal of School Health*, 67.6 (1997), California School Boards Association, "Linkages Between Student Health and Academic Achievement," West Sacramento, CA, 2004

United States Dept. of Agriculture, Foods Sold in Competition with USDA *School Meals Programs: A Report to Congress* January 12, 2001. Washington, DC: USDA, 2001



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