

## We Can Work Together to Build Healthy School Environments and Support the Health Goals of the School Nutrition Program

### 1. The Challenge

The millions of school lunches and breakfasts provided through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are nutritious, balanced meals, provided in age-appropriate serving sizes that meet federal nutrition requirements, limiting calories from fat and saturated fat, while providing the fruits, vegetables, dairy, protein and grains that children need to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Too often, however, children do not take advantage of these low-cost, high-quality meals because other foods—often of low-nutritive value—increasingly are available in schools. In the last 15 years, food and beverage choices have proliferated in schools—and research shows they have become contributing factors in America's child obesity epidemic.

A recent federal law requires schools to establish teams to create wellness policies that address all foods available on campus, as well as nutrition education and physical activity. But the development, implementation and enforcement of such policies will rely on the leadership and dedication of administrators, school boards, parents and teachers working together with school nutrition directors and managers.

### 2. The Role of School Administrators

School administrators are uniquely positioned to influence and direct the growth of healthy school environments. Whether you work as a superintendent, school business official, principal or board of education member, you have the authority to make decisions that have a direct impact on student health today—and tomorrow.

It's a daunting responsibility—and one that is among a long list of priorities, not the least of which is the academic achievement and personal growth of the students in your care. The creation and maintenance of a healthy

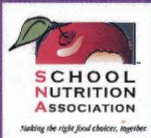
school environment shouldn't be seen as a separate charge, but one that is integral to your core mission and vision.

Establishing a healthy school environment can be as simple as personally dining in the cafeteria, modeling to students the value of nutritious (and delicious) balanced school meals. It can be as complicated as juggling schedules to accommodate more time for lunch periods, recess and physical education. This flyer features a variety of suggestions to help administrators support and encourage nutrition and health goals at school.

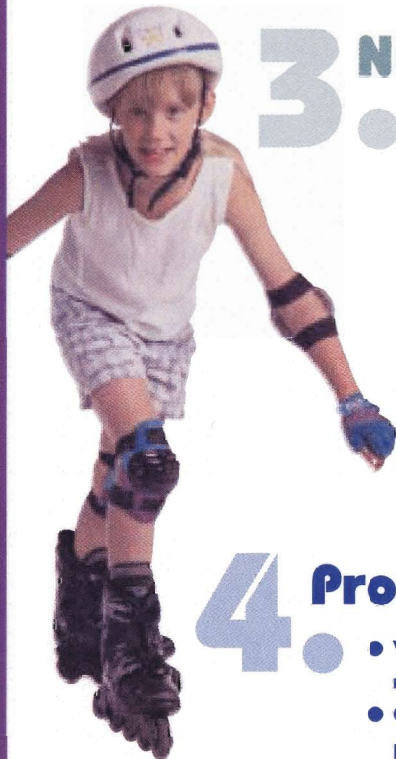


Growing Healthy Children in OUR School





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### 3. Nutrition Education

How does your local school wellness policy address nutrition education? Some states and districts have established specific, grade-level standards; others merely "encourage" that nutrition messages be communicated to students. Can your school or district do more?

- Make sure teachers know that you value nutrition education as highly as traditional core curricula. Encourage them to seek out lesson plans that combine nutrition and other subjects, such as math, science and social studies.
- Many school nutrition professionals are eager and willing to be the local experts and give presentations to students in class or work with teachers to tie together classroom lessons and cafeteria meals and activities. Show your support for such efforts.

### 4. Promotion

- Visit the cafeteria during lunch or breakfast periods; purchase a meal and eat with students.
- Give your approval for planned events designed to increase participation in the school meal program, including decorations, activities, giveaways, raffles and more. Go further and be an active participant! Take a turn as a guest server; pose for a milk mustache photo shoot; or wear a silly costume.
- Invite the school nutrition director or manager to attend or make a presentation at staff meetings or public board meetings. Encourage the PTA to do the same. Show colleagues and your community that you support the efforts of the school nutrition department.

### 5. Time & Money

- Scheduling is a tremendous challenge, but take a hard look at changes you can make to allow for school breakfast, longer lunch periods, recess and physical education. Research shows that all four can be critical elements in academics and overall achievement.
- Support efforts to establish and enforce a wellness policy that emphasizes healthy food and beverage alternatives throughout the school, including vending machines, concessions and school stores. Numerous case studies demonstrate that when such standards are applied consistently, revenues bounce back after an initial drop.
- Join the school nutrition team in advocating for increased funding for meal reimbursements, nutrition education and elimination of the reduced-price category to increase access to free meals. Many professional organizations (including ASBO, NSBA, NASBE and AASA) join with the School Nutrition Association to support these initiatives at the state and national levels. Ask your own chapter how you can learn and do more.

#### For More Information

- [www.schoolnutrition.org/Index.aspx?id=1075](http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Index.aspx?id=1075)
- [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org)
- [www.nasbe.org/HealthySchools](http://www.nasbe.org/HealthySchools)
- [www.teamnutrition.usda.gov](http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov)
- [www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org](http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org)
- [www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org)

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