



Local School Wellness Policies: The Role of School Nutrition

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Objectives of Session

1. Communicate foodservice operations' role in student, staff and community wellness
2. Identify school/community partners and research-based strategies to collaborate effectively to improve school health environment
3. Identify and commit to modifying at least one menu item/ingredient(s) to meet 2005 DGA
4. Identify and develop a minimum of one front-of-house action step to improve marketability of healthy foods

Research has found clear links between diet, health and academic success

School meal programs are **more likely to** serve meals that **meet nutritional requirements** and **offer healthy menu and a la carte items** when child nutrition professionals are trained in nutrition, physical activity and health-related issues as well as food safety, sanitation and food preparation.

The continuing professional development of food service staff is an **essential component** to provide a **healthy school environment**.

Partial listing of research

- **U. S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**- "Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating"
- **American School Health Association** – 1995 Recommendation
- **National Food Service Management Institute** – Established by Congress to do Research and Development of Training Materials, 1993, "*Preparing Child Nutrition Professionals for the 21st Century.*"
- **School Nutrition Association (SNA)** – Nationally Recognized by CDC for the *Best Practice Award for Professional Certification Program* that Supports Healthy School Environment
- **Thornton, J. 2007 – Dissertation from ISU CNP – *School Foodservice Programs' Effectiveness: Influence of Directors' Educational Background and Time Spent on Foodservice Tasks***

Food Consumption at School

- Significant influence as a large proportion of needed daily calories are consumed at school
(Fox et al., 2004)
- Some studies suggest that 50% or more of students' calories are consumed at school
(Mathematica Policy Research, 2001)
- In 2005, one study found that 19% of calories came from NSLP *(Templeton et al., 2005)*

Conclusion?

The majority of calories consumed by students at school are from sources outside school meal program.

Role of School Environment

- Opportunities for nutrition education
- School meal program requirements
- Confluence of childhood obesity and school led to mandate for school wellness policy as part of Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004.
- Each school district established framework for wellness policy.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization

Section 204 of P.L. 108-265

June 30, 2004



Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act 2004

- Required to be in effect first day of class after June 30, 2006.
- Reached beyond USDA-funded meal programs to influence childhood health
- Put responsibility at the local level
- Recognized the critical role of schools in curbing the epidemic of childhood overweight
- Provided an opportunity for school districts to create an environment conducive to healthy lifestyle choices

Required Elements of Wellness Policies

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities.
- Nutrition guidelines selected by the local educational agency for all food available on each school campus.
- Wellness policy development was to include multiple stakeholders - parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public.
- Plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy.

Yet, has the policy been integrated into the school health environment?

School Health Environment Impacts Not just Wellness Policy or School Meals

- District/building policies about
 - off-campus privileges for students
 - food deliveries (pizza brought to building)
- Vending machines
 - content
 - hours of operation
- Food from home
- Fundraising activities (candy and bake sales)
- Classroom incentives and treats
- Concession stands
- Role modeling by staff and parents

Characteristics of Wellness Policy Committees

- Longley, 2007 (*ANC 07 Poster Session*) found in a national survey (N=363 responses) that:
 - 25% of responding districts' wellness committees were co-chaired, such as foodservice directors and curriculum coordinator (10%)
 - Student, community member, school board member and medical expertise were identified as frequently missing on wellness committees in responding districts (N=312 or 86%).
 - Foodservice directors responding assessed level of involvement for *nurses as fairly high (5.1 on 7.0 scale)* yet involvement *of industry as fairly low (3.1 on 7.0 scale)*

Characteristics of Wellness Policies

Longley also found that of the 363 districts responding:

- 70% of districts encouraged staff to serve as role models as part of wellness programs
- 70% provided nutrition guidelines for food and beverages at classroom parties
- 68% provided nutritional guidelines for fundraisers and use of food/beverages as reward

What is the personality of your district's nutrition program?

- How would it be described by:
 - Students
 - Staff
 - Administrators
 - Board members
 - Parents
 - Community patrons
 - State Agency
 - SNA membership
- What do they know about it?
- What are sources of their information?
- What can be changed?

Telling your story - beyond the walls of the cafeteria

- You know what you do, but do others?
- Is the link between school meal program and school health environment clear?
- Is there a face to the foodservice?
- What are some ways you communicate?
 - Menu in newsletters, newspapers, web site
 - Visits with parent groups
 - Reports to school board
 - Classroom instruction
 - Community interactions

What information is communicated?

1. Menu
2. Director name, background and contact information
3. Allergen information (theme for Food Safety Month in 08)
4. HACCP plans
5. Wellness policy
6. Staff development (attending ANC)
7. Healthy options
8. Pricing and payment

What's on your website?

Example

Menus may be listed in your newspaper or announced on radio

A typical menu:

- chicken nuggets
- applesauce
- corn
- milk

Chicken nuggets may be breaded with whole grains, but that is not communicated on menu

So, perception becomes school meals are not healthy – and *Perception becomes Reality.*

Beyond stainless steel and hairnets - Merchandising healthy choices

What is it kids want?

- To be cool (liked and accepted)
- One example of effective merchandising is what the dairy industry has done with new milk packaging – so milk options are cool

Other action steps?

- Environment for service
- Service equipment
- Traffic flow
- Service staff attire and attitudes

Considerations in Merchandising

- How is food presented?
- What do your customers see?
- Some small things can lead to big transformations
- How can we go beyond stainless steel?
- Attention to physical safety and sanitation
- Customer service issues

Service Environment

slide from Lee Wolf, RD,LD,SFNS presentation ANC 07



Service Equipment

Does it sell good choices?

Does it look appealing and attractive?

Are safety and sanitation considered?

Layout and Flow of Meal Program Area

- Are there options?
 - *Dedicated lines milk or à la carte only*
- Efficient?
 - *Most kids don't have long for lunch or don't want to wait*
- Analyze - where are hold-ups? (if any)
 - *Service line (may be due to menu)*
 - *Dishroom*
 - *Cashier*
- Straight line or scramble system?

Foodservice Staff

The Child Nutrition Program's Secret Weapon is caring and dedicated staff

- Students like lunch
- Students like to be recognized
- Students like food

What is the self-image?

What is worn?

Are you all alone? Hopefully Not!

- Share your wellness policy with **all** district employees, students, parents and community.
- Share your story with other staff in district, parent groups, board members, and community patrons
- Use multiple methods (web site, classroom notes, presentations, emails, etc) –*write a chapter at a time*
- Liaison with teachers – offer to provide assistance classroom education (for example, provide nutritious bars for kids to cut to learn fractions)
- Serve as resource or conduit to resources – many are available

Nutrition Education Resources

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
School Health Education Resources - offers curriculum materials and fact sheets grouped by grade levels
www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/SHER
Nutrition Education Standards and Benchmarks
www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/HECAT/pdf/HECAT_Module-HE.pdf
2. National Beef Cattlemen's Association
www.teachfree.com
3. National Dairy Council
www.nationaldairycouncil.org
4. Team Nutrition Resource Library
<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/library.html>

More Nutrition Education Resources

ISU Growing in the Garden

www.extension.iastate.edu

Iowa State University Extension

www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition

Action for Healthy Kids

www.actionforhealthykids.org

Headline – True Story

- **The Incident:** Eight grade honors student suspended for 3 days and stripped of his office as class vice-president.
- **The Crime:** Buying a bag of Skittles from a classmate.
- **The Defense:** Student said he didn't know it was against school policy.
- **Reviewed Judgment:** After a few days (and many headlines) principal expunged the suspension and said the policy should have been reinforced in writing.

Bottom Line? Communicate the policy!

Some merchandising tips to create a culture where school meals are cool

- Vending machines and à la carte with bottles of flavored milk and other nutritious options.
- Soften stainless steel institutional look of the environment – use color, wall art, baskets, etc to better display food and create ambiance in cafeteria.
- Consider uniform changes for staff – polo shirts in school colors, aprons with school logos, beanies or skull caps rather than hairnets.
- Instill attitude change – answer phone with “child nutrition program” rather than “kitchen”. Think of Survivor contestant in Fall 07 – Denise
- Put a face on foodservice – go outside of the kitchen.

Other ideas

- Create a special cookie, bar or snack that includes whole grains and lower sodium and market as the school snack – put a brand on it, such as Gilbert Tiger Bar.
- Create some entrée salads – increase use of local produce if possible and market that doing so. Substitute legumes rather than meat items or cheeses to reduce fat. Perhaps work with Science or Ag teachers to develop a school garden.
- Create a district calendar – partner with a student group or relevant class. This can include school menus and school meal policies (allergens, pricing, wellness, etc).

Take Aways

- Small actions can have a big impact
- Get to know others in district
- Tell your story – What you do and why you are there
- Role model
- Merchandise
- Handouts from ISU Extension
 - School Meal Program Updates for District Decision Makers
 - Non-food Alternatives for School Rewards and Fundraising
 - What Schools Can Do to Promote Healthy Eating

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Questions or Comments?

Thank You