

Nutrition Education & Promotion

Nutrition education is the process of teaching students how to choose and enjoy healthy foods along with the benefits that healthy foods have for one's body and mind. Nutrition education and promotion can take place across the school, formally and informally, inside and outside of the classroom – in the cafeteria, all around the school and at school events.



How Can Advocates Support Nutrition Education and Promotion at School?

- Put up signs that promote healthy eating.
- Plan food tastings that give students the opportunity to try healthy foods – particularly when your school food service is willing to incorporate popular choices into the school menu. Offering taste tests of healthy school menu items helps to promote those items in the lunch line.
- Plan a fun and interactive family event around nutrition education. Take advantage of events like parent-teacher conferences, when you have a built-in audience, to provide healthy snacks and nutrition tips.
- Seek out nutrition experts in your community to provide lessons for students and families – registered dietitians and USDA or university extension staff are good resources.
- Plan a health fair. Bring in community partners to provide resources and different perspectives.
- Lead a student group dedicated to healthy eating and nutrition promotion.
- Write healthy-eating tips for the school newsletter or have the wellness team create its own newsletter or website that provides updates on team activities along with information on healthy living. Or distribute an existing newsletter, such as “Nibbles for Health” developed by USDA’s Team Nutrition (available at <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/resources/nibbles.html>).
- Find out what organizations in your community offer in terms of nutrition workshops, assemblies or events that they can bring to your school. Museums, health-care providers and gardening organizations are a great place to start.
- Search for free nutrition education curriculum online (there are plenty of options!) and share your favorite links with teachers. To start, try *Fuel Up to Play 60’s* “Little D’s Nutrition Expedition” (<http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/tools/nutrition-education/lessons.php>) and Kids’ Health (<http://kidshealth.org/classroom/>).

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

Many school districts require nutrition education to be taught in the classroom. The 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act adds an additional requirement that all local wellness policies include goals for nutrition promotion. If your district wellness policy or school improvement plan does not meet these requirements, find out what it would take to address this topic.



“Right there, in the middle of every school day, lies time and energy already devoted to the feeding of children. We have the power to turn that daily school lunch from an afterthought into a joyous education, a way of caring for our health, our environment and our community.”



– Alice Waters, *Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea*¹





Nutrition Education: School Gardens

Start a school garden

It's very valuable for children (and adults) to gain hands-on experience learning about real, healthy food. Plus, kids are often more willing to try new foods when they grow the foods themselves. Garden to Cafeteria programs and Youth Farmers' Markets make school gardening even more educational and sustainable.

- Find out about local resources in your area, such as a Slow Food chapter, an urban gardening or farming association, or a university cooperative extension service.
- Grants for school gardens are available from many sources. The National Gardening Association offers grant programs through different partners as do many other businesses, foundations and organizations like Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK). Visit the AFHK website to learn about current grant opportunities.

A 2010 study of 238 middle school students showed that kids in schools offering cooking and gardening classes integrated with classroom curriculum scored higher on nutrition knowledge and showed stronger preferences for green, leafy vegetables. Younger students increased fruit and vegetable intake by nearly one and a half servings per day.²

"One student claimed she didn't like spinach, but after trying what we had grown in the garden claimed she could eat that spinach and it was very good...!"

– Amatist McChesney, AFHK school garden volunteer, Lamar Middle School, Austin, Texas



Farm to School Programs

Farm to School programs connect K-12 schools and local farms with the objectives of improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers. Visit the National Farm to School Network to learn more at <http://www.farmtoschool.org>.

Resources for school gardens:

The Edible Schoolyard Project | National Gardening Association
<http://edibleschoolyard.org/> | <http://www.kidsgardening.org/>

How to Start a School Garden – A Toolkit
(Alliance for a Healthier Generation)
https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/asset/kmwdmt/10-2272_GardenToolkit.pdf

Slow Food USA
[http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/programs/children and food detail/resources1/](http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/programs/children%20and%20food%20detail/resources1/)

Action for Healthy Kids® partners with teachers, students, parents, school wellness experts and more to fight childhood obesity, undernourishment and physical inactivity by helping schools become healthier places so kids can live healthier lives. Our programs, tools and resources make it possible for everyone to play their part in ending the nation's childhood obesity epidemic.

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org

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¹<http://edibleschoolyard.org/our-story>

² Rauzon, S., Wang, M., Studer, N. and Crawford, P. Changing Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behavior in Relation to Food: An Evaluation of the School Lunch Initiative. Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health, University of California, Berkeley. 2010.



Healthy Fundraisers

Healthy food or non-food fundraisers enable schools to send consistent, positive health messages, reinforce classroom education and contribute to student health. Active fundraisers go even further, providing students and families with opportunities and positive reinforcement for increasing physical activity.



Show me the money! Are healthy fundraisers profitable?

Many non-food and healthy food fundraisers generate profits for schools equal to or greater than profits from fundraisers selling low-nutrition foods.

Active Fundraisers are a Blast!

At Hoffman Trails Elementary in Hillard, Ohio, it was a tradition for the PTO to plan an academically-based "a-thon" of some sort as an annual fundraiser, such as a math-a-thon or history-a-thon. But parent Kelly Schulze wasn't thrilled with the types of prizes that were offered, like buffet lunches at a local restaurant. So Kelly took matters into her own hands and organized a "Hippity-Hop-A-Thon."

Students were encouraged to collect pledges for their participation, and they earned prizes like extra recess and the right to attend a dance at the school with local radio talent serving as DJ. If they raised \$50, they could take home their very own hippity-hop ball on the day of the event. The fundraiser turned out to be a huge success. Every single student, including those with special needs, participated and had a blast.

Sample Profits from Healthier Fundraisers¹

\$1,000

A school sells 1,440 water bottles with the names/logos of 5 local business sponsors

\$5,000

A walk-a-thon with 100 student, parent, and family member walkers each raising \$50 in sponsorships

\$9,000

110 families buy scratch cards with discounts at local businesses (look for coupon books or cards that promote health-conscious businesses and services)

\$30,000/year

100 school families belong to a grocery store Scrip program

Traditional Fundraisers often focus on selling low-nutrition foods and beverages, serving as prime marketing opportunities for big business and putting students' health in jeopardy. One study found that every separate food-related practice (e.g., fundraiser) that promotes low-nutrition foods in a school is associated with a 10% increase in students' body mass indexes (BMI).^{1,2}

Healthy Food Fundraisers

- Fruit
- Smoothies
- Spices
- 100% juice
- Fruit and yogurt parfaits
- Trail mix, nuts, seeds, 100% fruit leather
- Healthy vending machines
- Cookbook of families' healthy recipes
- Herb starts or kits
- Farmers' markets



Active Fundraisers

- Fun walks or runs
- Walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, jump-rope-a-thons, bowl-a-thons, skate-a-thons, hula-hoop-a-thons
- School dances
- Family obstacle course
- Golf or tennis tournaments
- Teacher-student competitions (volleyball, softball, Frisbee...)





Healthy Fundraising Ideas

Review the USDA's national nutrition standards for fundraising foods sold on campus established to comply with the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Check your school's wellness policy or school improvement plan to see if they contain any guidelines or goals about fundraisers. If they don't, find out what it would take to add some.

Non-Food Fundraisers   		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gift wrap ■ Water bottles ■ Craft fairs ■ Garage sales ■ Car washes ■ Book fairs ■ Scratch cards* ■ Scrip programs* ■ Store reward programs* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Game night, bingo night ■ Auctions (live, silent, or online)* ■ Candles, lotions, soaps ■ Greeting cards, stationary ■ Plants, flowers, bulbs, seeds ■ Discount cards/coupon books* ■ Magazine subscriptions ■ Recycling (cell phones, printer cartridges) ■ School spirit apparel and merchandise ■ Rent a special parking spot 	<p>Holiday themed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fall holidays: pumpkins, table centerpieces ■ Winter holidays: Christmas trees, wreaths, garlands, poinsettias, mistletoe, ornaments ■ Valentine's Day/Mother's Day: flowers, plants, cards, stuffed animals

**look for programs and auction items that promote health-conscious businesses and services*

Resources

"Healthy Fundraising: Promoting a Healthy School Environment." Connecticut State Department of Education
http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/Connecticut/Healthy_Fundraising.pdf

Alliance for a Healthier Generation – Healthy Fundraisers
https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/r588vm/08-459_AlternativeFundraisingIdeas.pdf

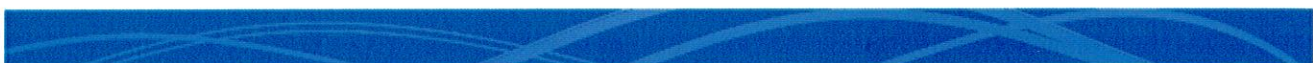
Information on the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 and USDA regulations:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/CNR_2010.htm



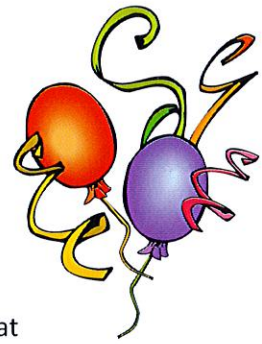
<p>Action for Healthy Kids® partners with teachers, students, parents, school wellness experts and more to fight childhood obesity, undernourishment and physical inactivity by helping schools become healthier places so kids can live healthier lives. Our programs, tools and resources make it possible for everyone to play their part in ending the nation's childhood obesity epidemic.</p> <p>www.ActionforHealthyKids.org</p>	<p>The websites listed in this document are provided as a service only to identify potentially useful ideas and resources for creating healthier school cultures. Action for Healthy Kids is not responsible for maintaining these external websites, nor does the listing of these sites constitute or imply endorsement of their content.</p>
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¹National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity. "Sweet Deals: School Fundraisers can be Healthy and Profitable."

² Kubik M., Lytle L., Story M. "Schoolwide Food Practices Are Associated with Body Mass Index in Middle School Students." Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2005, vol. 159, pp. 1111-1114.



Healthy Birthdays, Celebrations & Family Events¹



Birthdays, celebrations, and family events are great opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle, provide consistent messages and create excitement around nutritious choices at school. Plan events that emphasize healthy foods and align with classroom lessons or shift the focus and plan non-food events centered on physical activity, music, art and games. Host events that make it easy for children to practice making healthy choices.

Birthdays – *the birthday child can:*

- Be the teacher's helper.
- Wear a special crown, sash, button or badge all day.
- Donate and/or read a favorite book to the class.
- Choose the class music for writing or independent study time.
- Receive a personalized birthday card from the teacher via email or snail mail.
- Choose a game or activity the class does for the last few minutes of the school day.
- Have special time (for a walk, game or other activity) with the teacher, principal or another adult.
- Receive a "Celebrate Me" book from classmates with written stories, poems or drawings about the birthday child.



*Children like
adventure – don't
be afraid to try
something new!*

Promote Healthy Living

Plan family events that get parents engaged and on board with healthy living, as this will create more buy-in and support for a healthy school food culture. It also makes it more likely that healthy habits will be reinforced at home.



*For a list of healthy
school food ideas for
snacks, celebrations
and family events visit:*

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org/ParentToolkit-FoodIdeas

Family Events

- Health fairs
- School garden work days
- Cooking lessons or "Iron Chef" competitions
- Physical activity events with healthy snacks or prizes (dance contests, fun runs, obstacle courses, bike-a-thons, sock hops)
- Screenings of movies that promote healthy living
- Nutrition classes for the family from community partners like your cooperative university extension service
- Fall festival with active fall-themed games and a farmers' market
- Walk-to-school month with parent participation
- Creation of school teams for local runs or walks
- Parents and teachers vs. kids sports competition
- 30-day challenges – pick a healthy habit and organize a competition around it, starting with a kick-off event and ending with a celebration





Healthy Celebrations

Celebrations

- Give children extra recess time instead of a party.
- Have a dance party. Let students select the music. Invite the principal and other school staff!
- Get students involved in planning and preparing for celebrations – let them make decorations and favors and let them choose the games.
- Create a book honoring what is being celebrated that day. Have students draw pictures showing what the day means to them.
- Organize a special community service project instead of a party. Invite senior citizens in for lunch, collect goods and make cards for sheltered families, organize a project outside for Earth Day.
- Have students vote on a special class art project or craft. Invite a local artist to come in and do a demonstration.
- Arrange a treasure hunt around the classroom. Provide a special non-food treat at the end. Use a theme that ties into what the kids are learning in class.
- Ask students to come up with healthy party ideas, and ask parents to send in healthy recipes and ideas for activities, games and crafts. Create a “healthy classroom party guide” to distribute to parents.
- Plan around holiday themes. Students can make cards for winter holidays, decorate the classroom with hearts for Valentine’s Day, and learn an Irish step-dance for St. Patrick’s Day. Search education websites for ideas.



When food is offered

- Make good nutrition the expectation and the easy choice – offer fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat/fat-free dairy products and water.
- Check your school’s wellness policy or school improvement plan to see if they contain any guidelines or goals about foods for birthdays, celebrations, and family events. If they don’t, find out what it would take to address this issue.



Resources

Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity (CanDo) & Healthy Kids Club
Guide to Healthy School Celebrations:
www.ActionforHealthyKids.org/HealthyPartyGuide-CanDo

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¹ Adapted from “Healthy Celebrations,” Connecticut State Department of Education, May 2005 & “Healthy Celebrations at School,” Ohio Action for Healthy Kids, 2012



Healthy Non-Food Rewards¹

Rewards happen at many levels across a school. Teachers, administrators and parent groups offer rewards to recognize and celebrate student accomplishments. The goal of rewarding students is to help them internalize desirable behaviors and create motivation for learning that comes from inside. The most effective rewards fit naturally into the context and mission of the school community and should promote healthy living as a desired value of the community. Non-material rewards involving recognition, privileges and opportunities for physical activity or other types of enrichment are powerful ways to help meet these goals. Material rewards such as school supplies, trinkets, toys, and gift certificates can be donated by parents or provided by parent-teacher organizations for use on a more limited basis.

Brave teachers have even been known to offer rewards like kissing a frog or letting students cut their hair!

Elementary School Students

- Make deliveries to office
- Fun movie
- Teach class
- Be a helper in another classroom
- Read morning announcements
- Sit with friends
- Have lunch or breakfast in the classroom
- Play a favorite game or do puzzles
- Extra recess time
- Show and tell
- Free time at the end of class
- Dance to music in the classroom
- Gift certificate to school store (non-food items)
- Walk with the principal or teacher
- Fun physical activity break
- Teacher or volunteer reads special book to class
- Certificate, trophy, ribbon, plaque
- Listen to music or a book on audiotape
- Read outdoors or have class outdoors
- Extra art, music or reading time
- Teacher performs special skill, e.g., singing, guitar playing, juggling
- Earn points or play money to spend on privileges or non-food items
- Commendation certificate or letter sent home to parents by teacher or principal
- Trip to treasure box filled with nonfood items, e.g., stickers, pencils, erasers, bookmarks, school supplies
- Access to items that can only be used on special occasions, e.g., special art supplies, games, or toys

Recognition in itself is a huge reward.

Consider recognizing students during morning announcements, at a school assembly, on a photo recognition board, or on the school's website. Most kids enjoy hearing their successes acknowledged in front of their peers. Don't underestimate the power of small, personalized efforts such as a phone call or email to the students' parents, a hand-written note commending the achievement, or a certificate of recognition.

Middle School Students

- Sit with friends
- Choose partners for activities
- Listen to music while working at desk
- Reduced homework or "no homework" pass
- Extra credit
- Fun movie
- Brainteaser puzzles, group activities and games
- Earn points or play money for privileges or non-food items
- Computer time
- Free choice time or chat break at end of class
- Assemblies
- Field trips
- Eat lunch outside or have class outside





Healthy Non-Food Rewards

High School Students

- Extra credit
- Fun movie
- Reduced homework
- Late homework pass
- Donated coupons for music, movies or books
- Drawings for donated prizes
- Pep rally
- Recognition on morning announcements
- Tickets to school events, e.g., dances, sporting events

PTO/PTA Rewards

- Water bottles
- School-branded apparel
- Movie passes
- Special time with a teacher
- Dance Dance Revolution, Wii or video game party
- Pool party, hike, or group trip to a kids' fun place
- Raffle for bigger prizes, such as a bike, an iPod or a ride in a limo



“Rewarding children with unhealthy foods in school undermines our efforts to teach them about good nutrition. It’s like teaching children a lesson on the importance of not smoking, and then handing out ashtrays and lighters to the kids who did the best job listening.”³

— Marlene Schwartz, PhD, Co-Director
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Yale University

Food Rewards

Food Rewards contradict classroom lessons on nutrition, add empty calories to kids’ diets and teach kids to eat when they’re not hungry – setting the stage for unhealthy habits that can last a lifetime and contributing to the childhood obesity epidemic sweeping the country. One study found that every separate food-related practice (e.g., a food incentive or reward) that promotes low-nutrition foods in a school is associated with a 10% increase in students’ body mass indexes (BMI).²

Check your school’s wellness policy or school improvement plan to see if they contain any guidelines or goals about healthy, non-food rewards. If they don’t, find out what it would take to address this topic.

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¹Adapted from “Effective and Healthy Rewards for Kids,” Coalition on Children and Weight San Diego and “Alternatives to Food Rewards,” Connecticut State Department of Education, May 2005 (Revised November 2011).

²Kubik M., Lytle L., Story M. “Schoolwide Food Practices Are Associated with Body Mass Index in Middle School Students.” Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2005, vol. 159, pp. 1111-1114.

³“Alternatives to Food Rewards,” Connecticut State Department of Education, May 2005 (Revised November 2011).

