

School Support

Schools can play a key role in reversing the trend of childhood obesity, physical inactivity, food insecurity and poor food choices by adopting quality school nutrition policies; that ensure coordination of comprehensive nutrition education programs, child nutrition programs, a healthy school environment and community partners.²

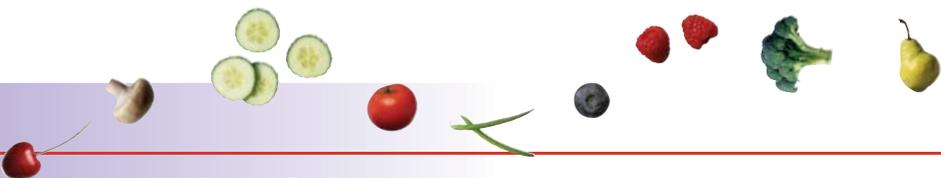


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Role Modeling

Contacts





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The most systematic and efficient means available to improve children's health is to establish healthful eating and physical activity behaviors in childhood by promoting positive lifestyles and developing effective decision-making skills.¹

Guidelines developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that school-based nutrition education programs are most likely to be effective when they:¹

- ▶ Help young people learn skills, not just facts.
- ▶ Give students repeated chances to practice healthy eating.
- ▶ Make nutrition education activities fun and participatory.
- ▶ Involve teachers, administrators, families, community leaders and students in delivering strong, consistent messages about healthy eating as part of a coordinated school health program.
- ▶ Are part of a coordinated nutrition policy.

The guidelines include seven recommendations for ensuring a quality school program to promote lifelong healthy eating.¹

- 1. Policy** – develop a coordinated school nutrition policy that promotes healthy eating through classroom lessons and a supportive school environment.
- 2. Curriculum** – as part of a sequential, comprehensive health education curriculum that begins in preschool and continues through secondary school, implement nutrition education designed to help students adopt healthy eating behaviors.
- 3. Instruction** – provide nutrition education through activities that are fun, participatory, developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant.
- 4. Program coordination** – coordinate food service with nutrition education and other components of the school health program to reinforce messages about healthy eating.
- 5. Staff training** – provide staff involved in nutrition education with adequate pre-service and ongoing in-service training.
- 6. Involve** family members and the community in supporting and reinforcing nutrition education.
- 7. Regularly evaluate** program effectiveness and make changes as appropriate.

It is also the position of the American Dietetic Association (ADA), Society for Nutrition Education (SNE), and the American School Food Service Association (ASFS) that comprehensive nutrition services must be provided to all the nation's preschool through grade 12 students. **Nutrition Services** are an essential component of a **Coordinated School Health Program**. Nutrition education should be linked with physical education and health education in schools and are strong components of psychological and social services programs. Families can reinforce and strengthen nutrition education by modeling nutritious, appealing meals in an environment that encourages a pleasant, social family time.²

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/nutrition/pdf/summary.pdf>. US Dept. of Health and Human Services. May 2006

²Position of the American Dietetic Association, Society for Nutrition Education, and American School Food Service Association: Nutrition Services: An Essential Component of Comprehensive School Health Programs. JADA 2003;103:505-514
This position is in effect until December 2008