

INFLUENCES ON NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES AND WELLNESS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Psychological, Cultural and Social Influences on Food Choices

Grade Levels: 9-12

Concept: Legislation and regulations

Comprehensive Standard: 6.1 Analyze the factors that influence nutritional practices and wellness across the lifespan

Technical Standard: 6.1.4 Examine legislation and regulations related to nutrition and wellness issues

LESSON COMPETENCIES:

- Explore legislation and regulation related to nutrition and wellness issues
- Discuss the role of school in providing healthy food choices

ANTICIPATED BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES:

- Students assist in nutrition education of other students related to school lunches and school vending machines
- Students promote a healthy school nutrition environment

Resources Needed:

- Copies of handouts for all students
- Copies of the most recent Dietary Guidelines (or posters)
- Possible Internet access to access the *MyPyramid* materials

References for teachers and students:

Team Nutrition, a program developed by the USDA to promote healthy eating and physical activity has several resources appropriate for middle school students. These include a Student Activity Guide and Teacher's Guide with several activities called *yourSELF*. In addition, information about *Team Nutrition* and research statistics on the status of child nutrition in the United States is available. Several items can be downloaded for free at their website or ordered at the site. You can access these websites at: <http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/library.html> or <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>. The South Dakota Team Nutrition initiative can be accessed at the following web address: <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/nutrition/index.asp>.

Information about federal Child Nutrition Programs including the *National School Lunch Program* can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Default.htm. For specific information about school lunch, click on "*National School Lunch Program*"; click on "Program Fact Sheet". Information about other federal programs and links to other government sites are available. There is also information about government policies governing the sale of competitive foods (i.e. vending machines) in schools. Click on "FAQs"; click on "Competitive Foods". For information on meal planning guidelines at this site, click on *National School Lunch Program*; click on "meal planning".

Lots of information can be accessed at the South Dakota site for *Child and Adult Nutrition Services* including information related to each of the nutrition programs it is responsible for. It also includes links to sites related to teen nutrition and for teachers (<http://doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/index.asp>).

A list of foods available for schools through the USDA *Food Distribution Programs* is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/sy07-schfoods.pdf#xml=http://65.216.150.153/texis/search/pdfhi.txt?query=Foods+Available+to+Schools&pr=FNS&prox=&sufs=&order=r&mode=&opts=&cq=&sr=&id=4592c31619>. The list is an estimate for commodities expected to be available for schools and institutions during the school/fiscal year. This could be used for meal planning activities.

NOTE TO TEACHER – A lesson plan on food labeling is included later in the curriculum.

Background Information:

Policies and regulations that directly or indirectly affect the supply or prices of food products, their safety and nutritional composition, or the information consumers receive about food all influence the food choices consumers make and ultimately, the quality of their diets. Ralston, K. (1999) *How Government Policies and Regulations Can Affect Dietary Choices*, in *America's Eating Habits: Changes and Consequences*; the entire publication is available to download at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aib750/aib750q.PDF>.

The federal government is responsible for a multitude of programs including food safety regulations – including inspections of processing plant and food products, approval of food additives, and restrictions on pesticide use and animal drugs. These regulations can impact food prices or availability, and their implied assurance of safety is information that can also affect the demand for food.

The government is also responsible for information regulations – including labeling requirements and advertising restrictions, standards of identity and product grades. These directly influence the kind of information consumers receive about foods, and therefore, the demand for foods.

In addition, other government programs are responsible for food assistance programs and school lunch programs. Every school day, more than 25 million children in 93,000 schools across the country eat a lunch provided through the *National School Lunch Program* (NLSP). More than half of these children receive the meal free or at a reduced price. The US *Department of Agriculture* (USDA) recognizes the program's national health responsibility to provide school meals that meet nutrition objectives. USDA updated the policy in the 1997 school year so that school meals would comply with the Dietary Guidelines. (*National School Lunch Program* information is at <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/index.asp>.)

In South Dakota, *Child and Adult Nutrition Services* (CANS) (doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/index.asp) is responsible for administering the USDA's *Food and Nutrition Services* (FNS) and Food Distribution programs. These programs furnish resources to eligible local agencies that provide food in meals or commodities to participants including National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, Summer Food Service, Child and Adult Care Food, Nutrition Education and Training and

Commodity Distribution for child nutrition programs, charitable institutions, emergency feeding programs, soup kitchens and food banks. (CANS web site, see reference list).

The *National School Lunch Act* mandates that school meals “safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children.” Participating schools must serve lunches that are consistent with the applicable recommendations of the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The regulations apply only to meals for which the school is requesting reimbursement. These meals are called “reimbursable” meals and they qualify for free or reduced price status. Other foods may be served and called a la carte foods.

The current *Team Nutrition* (www.fns.usda.gov/tn) project is an initiative of the USDA *Food and Nutrition Service* to support the Child Nutrition Programs through training and technical assistance for foodservice, nutrition education for children and their caregivers, and school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity. The *South Dakota Team Nutrition* (doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/nutrition.asp) program provides resources for South Dakota schools.

Team Nutrition's Goal is to improve children's lifelong eating and physical activity habits by using the principles of the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) and [MyPyramid](#). USDA has launched the effort to foster healthy school nutrition environments that support healthy eating and physical activity. Nutrition education is a vital component of the program.

Learning Activities:

High School Level

- Ask students to consider the question - How is the government involved in the food industry? Ask them to brainstorm all of the ways that the government is involved (i.e. food labeling, inspection of packing plants, etc.)
- Brainstorm the benefits to the consumer of government regulations and policies (safe food supply, guidelines for healthy eating--Dietary Guidelines, etc.)
- Use the transparency master, [What Happens Now?](#), to start a discussion related to the impact of policies and regulations on consumers and their food choices.
- Ask students to plan school lunch menus considering the Dietary Guidelines, likes and dislikes of students, commodities provided to the schools and the regulations of the school lunch program (see reference list). Use the [Team Nutrition](#) and [Child and Adult Nutrition Program](#) websites as resources. Recipes can be found at these sites as well.
- Hold a debate on the contents of vending machines in schools. Should vending machines be banned? Should the contents of vending machines be restricted to food choices that are healthier choices for students? **NEW** – Several websites have articles and information on the topic but students can search for current information on the topic as well:

- *Newsweek*, April 6, 2006 – “[No More Junk](#)” – article about federal efforts to ban unhealthy foods in school cafeterias and vending machines <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12359367/site/newsweek/>
- *New York Times*, May 30, 2006 – “[Food Wars: Debating the Merits of School Restrictions on Food and Drink](#)” – a lesson plan and article on this issue <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/20060530tuesday.html>
- [Schools Embracing Healthy Vending Programs](#) – a May 24, 2006 posting from the *National School Nutrition Association* - <http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Index.aspx?id=1978>
- **NEW** Links to several articles on the topic are available at the *Center for Science in the Public Interest* website http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options.html#ImproveSchoolFoods. They have a new report entitled “[Sweet Deals: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy and Profitable](#)” that is also a good source of information.
- The latest policy on vending machines from the beverage industry (Spring, 2006) is available at the *American Beverage Association* website http://www.ameribev.org/pressroom/2005_vending.asp
- The 2006 *American Dietetic Association* position paper on this topic is available at http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/advocacy_adap0100_ENU_HTML.htm.
- The *New York Times* also has a lesson plan on this topic: “Food Wars”, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/20060530tuesday.html>. Debating the Merits of School Restrictions on Food and Drink.

In this lesson, students explore the concepts and content necessary to debate whether or not schools should regulate the quantity or type of food and beverages students consume, and develop position papers. (May 30, 2006)

- As an alternative to the debate, ask students to create a display on the issue of school vending machines – use the display at school events: parent-teacher conferences, athletic events, etc. and/or display in the public library in the community

Extended Learning Activities:

- **Team Nutrition** – Become a *Team Nutrition* School and develop activities to teach younger children about nutrition and healthy food choices.
- **After School Fitness** – Start a program with after school fitness activities in your school. Plan activities for a variety of age groups. The goal is to increase physical activity in your school.
- **FCCLA Snack Store** – As part of an entrepreneurial project or fund raiser, open a Snack Attack Shop that features healthy snack choices from *MyPyramid* (<http://www.MyPyramid.gov/>) such as skim or 1% milk, string cheese, whole grain crackers, whole grain pretzels, rice cakes, lean jerky, dry roasted or raw almonds, dry roasted soy nuts, whole dill pickles, fresh fruits or cut up veggies such as carrot and celery sticks, single-serve fruit or yogurt. FCCLA members should research to include foods that meet their school’s

wellness policy.

- **Cafeteria Collaboration** – Work with your school food service staff as a team to develop menu plans that meet the guidelines for healthy meals required by government regulations and *Team Nutrition*. Post attractive menus and posters with nutrition information around the school to promote school lunch in your school.

Academic Connections – **NEW**

- ✓ **Social Studies** – Research the history of the school lunch program and create a timeline of events related to the program by visiting the following websites <http://www.foodmuseum.com/exhibitschoollunch.html> and http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/AboutLunch/ProgramHistory_1.htm
- ✓ **Language Arts** – Research school lunch programs in other countries at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4298245.stm>
- ✓ **Speech/Communications** – Work with the FCS teacher on the debate on school vending machines.
- ✓ **Government** - Ask students to draft a “Healthy Snack Policy” for your school. Discuss: How do policy makers go about determining policy? What resources can you use to assist you in the draft? What rationale/scientifically based research will you provide to support the policy? What is the procedure for establishing a school policy? Who are the decision makers in terms of adopting a policy? For a brief overview, see this website: http://www.dole5aday.com/Teachers/ClassroomResources/Instructional/T_HealthySnack.jsp.

What Happens Now?

1. The government recalls thousands of pounds of ground beef suspected to be contaminated with E. coli bacteria. The hamburger had been sold to the local grocery store chain in your town.
2. The FDA declares that red dye number 2 must be discontinued because it has been linked to cancer in research experiments.
3. The local pizza restaurant in your community receives a low rating on their health inspection. They were cited for several food safety violations.
4. The FDA approves the use of Olestra, a fat substitute as safe for human consumption.
5. Your family has decided to use no pesticides in your garden.