

Creating Healthy Schools

4.2 Healthy Vending & À La Carte



What is the current policy?

As of 2010, the Federal Government put in place guidelines for school wellness policies outlined in the Healthy Hunger Free Act, which includes regulations on vending and snacks sold in schools. All foods and beverages sold individually outside the reimbursable school meal programs (including those sold through à la carte [snack] lines, vending machines, student

stores, or fundraising activities) during the school day, or through programs for students after the school day, will meet nutrition and portion size standards as defined by the USDA. These foods are often referred to as competitive foods, as they compete with foods offered as part of the school lunch and breakfast programs.

Ideas!

How can your school get more involved?

Staff have the opportunity to ensure healthy vending and à la carte options in school. There are several ways you can become active in engaging your students in the healthy vending and à la carte wellness policy. Below are a few examples:

Food Options

- Replace sugar-sweetened beverages in vending machines with water, milk, 100% fruit juice, no calorie flavored water, and/or vegetable juice.
- Replace regular chips with baked chips, pretzels, whole grain low-fat crackers, or low fat popcorn.
- Replace candy with dried or fresh fruit or trail mix.
- Replace baked goods with nuts, seeds, or applesauce.

Why is healthy vending important?

Competitive foods are often of little nutritional value and high in sugar and fat. Many times these foods take the place of more nutritional foods and meals offered by school meals programs. Research consistently shows that children who eat healthier perform better in school. Making healthy food choices can lead to other better choices throughout the day, as well as prevent overweight and obesity.

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Resources:

- Healthy Alternatives for School Celebrations, Rewards, Fundraisers and Snacks is a handbook put together by Blue Cross Blue Shield and KC Healthy Kids. Pages 42 – 43 outline healthy vending snack suggestions. This can be found at: <https://1.cdn.edl.io/jeTtkv5kCOX2IU4fryJAsnR2wVbpueryAdoMn5MFUwiytHhW.pdf>
- USDA has developed Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines that our schools must meet. The guide to smart snacks in schools can be found here: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/guide-smart-snacks-schools>
- The Alliance for a Healthier Generation has made a Healthy Schools Program, Snacks and Beverages resource guide for families and school staff. Information can be found at: https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/focus_areas/snacks_and_beverages/smart_snacks/
- The Rhode Island Action for Healthy Kids program has made a guided called Nutrition Guidelines for School Vending & A La Carte Foods. This resource provides information on healthy food guidelines as well as a glossary of terms: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/2/Uploads/Documents/RINutrition-GuidelinesVending-AlaCarte.pdf>
- Nemours Health & Prevention Services produced a Healthy Concessions Guide that is based on the “Go, Slow, and Whoa” model. This resource also provides examples of healthy alternatives to unhealthy options. Information can be found at: <http://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www2/filebox/service/healthy-living/growuphealthy/healthyconcession.pdf>

Two other versions of this policy item are available for both administration and family to assist with implementation.



Advertising

- Reinforce healthy messages in posters near vending machines.
- Use machine toppers to call attention to healthy food items.
- Help identify healthy food choices with signs or flyers next to or inside machines to help identify healthier food items.
- Post a section in the school newspaper on healthy choices.

Classroom Activities

- Involve students in the process wherever you can and consider their opinions and feedback – they are the ultimate customer. When they are part of the decision making process, they are much more likely to embrace the changes.
- Hold taste testing events and focus groups to get students' feedback.