

Healthy School Nutrition Environments: Promoting Healthy Eating Behaviors

The American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) call on schools and communities to recognize the health and educational benefits of healthy eating and the importance of making it a priority in every school. At the same time, the

associations are encouraging their members to provide leadership in helping schools promote healthy eating for our Nation's children. Establishment of local policies that create a supportive nutrition environment in schools will provide students with the skills, opportunities, and encouragement they need to adopt healthy eating patterns.

Prescription for Change: Ten Keys to Promote Healthy Eating in Schools

Ten keys have been developed to assist each school community in writing its own prescription for change.

- Students, parents, educators and community leaders will be involved in assessing the school's eating environment, developing a shared vision and an action plan to achieve it.
- Adequate funds will be provided by local, state and federal sources to ensure that the total school environment supports the development of healthy eating patterns.
- Behavior-focused nutrition education will be integrated into the curriculum from pre-K through grade 12. Staff who provide nutrition education will have appropriate training.
- School meals will meet the USDA nutrition standards as well as provide sufficient choices, including new foods and foods prepared in new ways, to meet the taste preferences of diverse student populations.
- All students will have designated lunch periods of sufficient length to enjoy eating healthy foods with friends. These lunch periods will be scheduled as near the middle of the school day as possible.
- Schools will provide enough serving areas to ensure student access to school meals with a minimum of wait time.
- Space that is adequate to accommodate all students and pleasant surroundings that reflect the value of social aspects of eating will be provided.
- Students, teachers and community volunteers who practice healthy eating will be encouraged to serve as role models in the school dining areas.
- If foods are sold in addition to National School Lunch Program meals, they will be from the five major food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid. This practice will foster healthy eating patterns.
- Decisions regarding the sale of foods in addition to the National School Lunch Program meals will be based on nutrition goals, not on profit making.