

Frequently Asked Questions

Making It Happen! School Nutrition Success Stories

Q.1. What is *Making It Happen*?

Making It Happen! School Nutrition Success Stories is a booklet that describes innovative approaches to improving student nutrition in the United States. It features stories from 32 schools and school districts that improved the nutritional quality of foods and beverages offered or sold on school campuses outside of federal meal programs. These foods and beverages are often called “competitive foods” because they compete with federal meal programs.

Making It Happen was published in 2005 by Team Nutrition, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service, and the Division of Adolescent and School Health in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It also was part of President Bush’s *HealthierUS* initiative and was supported by the U.S. Department of Education.

Q.2. What is it designed to do?

Making It Happen is a resource to help people make positive changes in school nutrition environments and food and beverage options in schools. It provides an overview of issues related to the provision or sale of competitive foods and beverages in schools. *Making It Happen* also provides examples of actions schools and school districts can take, information on how to make changes, and examples of who can be involved in these efforts.

Q.3. What are *Making It Happen* school nutrition success stories?

The success stories are a sampling of actions schools and school districts across the country are taking to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages offered or sold in schools. They include information about the school or school district, the type of approach used, key results, a description of the changes made, factors that helped the changes succeed, future plans, and contact information.

Each story is unique, just as each school is unique. Together, these stories provide inspiration—and a wealth of practical ideas—for anyone who wants to make healthy nutrition environments happen for students and schools everywhere.



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Q.4. What approaches did the schools and school districts profiled in *Making It Happen* use?

Making It Happen describes the following six approaches that schools and school districts used to promote a healthier school nutrition environment:

- Establish nutrition standards for competitive foods.
- Influence food and beverage contracts.
- Make more healthful foods and beverages available.
- Adopt marketing techniques to promote healthful choices.
- Limit student access to competitive foods.
- Use fund-raising activities and rewards that support student health.

Q.5. What are the key themes from *Making It Happen*?

- *Students will select and consume healthful foods and beverages, and schools can make money from healthful options.* Many students will choose healthier options when they are available. Schools across the country have proved they can make money by selling more nutritious foods and beverages. Of the 17 schools and school districts in *Making It Happen* that reported sales data, 12 increased their revenue as a result of the changes, and four reported no change.
- *One champion—such as a parent, food service manager, or school principal—is usually the driving force behind change.* Champions for change vary from school to school and district to district. They include parents, students, food service managers, teachers, principals, and superintendents. The reasons for change also vary; they include concerns about food waste at lunchtime, childhood obesity statistics, and the types of foods available in school.
- *Teams are essential for creating healthy school nutrition environments.* Every success story involved a group of people who worked together, often with support from principals and superintendents. Although the idea for change might have originated with one person, a group of people with diverse skills and backgrounds was needed to make it happen.
- *Assessing the current environment is the first step to changing school nutrition.* A common first step was for schools and school districts to assess their current situation, and then use the results to create awareness and a plan of action. Some schools also conducted surveys or focus groups with students, parents, and staff.
- *Change is a process, not a destination.* Adopting a nutrition policy does not guarantee that it will be implemented. A successful marketing campaign one year does not guarantee the same level of sales in subsequent years. Ongoing attention to school nutrition is needed to achieve and sustain change.
- *Data are needed to document the impact of change.* Most of the changes reported in the success stories were recent. Before-and-after data collected over the long-term are needed to document the effect of change on eating behaviors, revenues from food and beverage sales, and the overall impact on children's health.
- *Change is occurring at all levels—school, district, state, and national.* Although the *Making It Happen* stories focus on the school and district level, an increasing number of states are working to improve the nutrition environments of schools, and several federal programs support change. These stories can guide nutrition initiatives at all levels.

Q.6. What is the best success story?

All of the stories are successes! Any group that is helping to improve the health of children and taking steps that will help reduce the prevalence of overweight by changing school nutrition environments qualifies as a success story. Each *Making It Happen* story addresses changes made in a specific school setting and offers valuable information to the reader.

Q.7. How can *Making It Happen* benefit schools?

Making It Happen is a valuable resource for schools and school districts looking for ways to improve the health and eating behaviors of young people.

Schools across the country already are using Team Nutrition's *Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment* and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide*. A need was identified for success stories that could be used to show that students will select and eat more healthful foods and beverages if they are available. *Making It Happen* meets this need. It is also timely for local education agencies that are developing and implementing wellness policies as required by law under the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. Nine schools or school districts in this booklet had developed school nutrition policies.

Q.8. How does *Making It Happen* fit into the effort to improve the school nutrition environment?

Making It Happen is a practical "how-to" guide that focuses on nutrition environments outside of school meals. It complements ongoing efforts to improve the quality of school meals, to enhance nutrition education in the classroom, and to implement a coordinated approach to school health. *Making It Happen* contains support materials from numerous schools and school districts, including examples of actual policies, regulations, letters to parents, nutrition standards, and nutrition resources.

Q.9. How many schools and school districts are included in *Making It Happen*?

Thirty-two schools and school districts from across the country are featured. They represent just a small portion of the schools that are taking action to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages in schools.

Q.10. How were the schools and school districts chosen?

The schools and school districts in *Making It Happen* were identified through personal contacts, electronic mailing lists, and media coverage. They were chosen to be geographically representative, to reflect the diversity of U.S. schools and school districts, and to illustrate big and small changes that schools and school districts can make. The information included is self-reported and based on interviews with the key contact(s) for each story.

Q.11. How can I share my school nutrition success story?

We would love to hear about the successes of other schools and school districts. You can send your school nutrition success story to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/share/index.htm>.

Q.12. Who is the audience for *Making it Happen*?

Making It Happen is designed for anyone who wants to improve the nutrition environment in his or her school. This person could be a superintendent, principal, or teacher. It also could be a student, parent, school food service professional, school nurse, community leader, or local health professional.

Q.13. Why is vending machine revenue important to schools?

Public schools with budget shortfalls often seek to use money from vending machines to fill the gaps. *Making It Happen* shows that schools and school districts can make money selling healthful items if they make them available, market them well, and make the changes with a positive attitude. Of the 17 schools and school districts that reported sales data, 12 increased their revenue as a result of the changes, and four reported no change.

Q.14. What are foods of minimal nutritional value?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has many regulations on the foods and beverages that are part of school meals. However, the only federal rule for foods and beverages sold à la carte or in vending machines is that schools cannot sell “foods of minimal nutritional value” in food service areas during meal periods. Such foods can be sold during the entire school day, including during meal periods, anywhere else on campus, including right outside the cafeteria doors.

Foods of minimal nutritional value are defined as items that provide less than 5% of the U.S. recommended daily allowance per serving for eight essential nutrients. They include carbonated beverages, water ices, chewing gum, and certain candies made largely from sweeteners, such as hard candy and jelly beans.

This food category does not include potato chips, chocolate bars, or doughnuts, which can be sold in the cafeteria or elsewhere in the school at any time. States, school districts, and schools can impose additional nutrition standards. Many state and local governments, as well as some local school districts, have adopted additional and more restrictive regulations. Twenty-eight states had done so as of July 2006.

Q.15. Is the federal government requiring all schools to make changes like those described by the schools and school districts in *Making It Happen*? Is it endorsing the standards set by these schools?

No. *Making It Happen* simply reports what some schools are doing to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages on campus. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and U.S. Department of Education do not endorse any products, services, or organizations in this publication.

Q.16. What federal agencies offer resources that address school nutrition and the health of young people?

The following are links to federal agencies that provide programs, materials, and education resources about school nutrition and the health of young people:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition>.
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools:
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html#health>.

Q.17. What is the new federal requirement for local education agencies to adopt wellness policies. How is this requirement related to *Making it Happen*?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is working with the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to implement a new requirement for school districts, passed as part of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. This section of the law requires all local educational agencies participating in a program authorized by the National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to establish a local wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. These local wellness policies should address nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that can promote student wellness. Of the 32 stories in the *Making it Happen* booklet, nine provide examples of how to develop and implement local wellness policies.

Q.18. How do I get more copies of *Making it Happen*?

The *Making it Happen!* School Nutrition Success Stories booklet is free to schools and people working with schools. It is being distributed by Team Nutrition, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services. It also can be downloaded from the Team Nutrition Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/makingithappen.html> and from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth>.