

HealthierUS School Challenge

Obesity is a growing concern for school children in the United States. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) believes that schools should be taking a leadership role in helping students learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices. Many schools have already made changes to their school nutrition environments, improved the quality of the foods served, and now provide students with more nutritious, healthy choices. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) wants to encourage schools to achieve such results, and has established the *HealthierUS* School Challenge to encourage schools to go further and to recognize those who chose to do so.

HealthierUS Schools

HealthierUS Schools can be certified as either Silver or Gold Schools, according to standards established by FNS. The objective is to recognize schools that take specific steps to improve their programs and address obesity and to encourage other schools to follow their lead. The first year of the challenge focuses on elementary schools. FNS would like to see all elementary schools take the challenge: Go for the Silver! Go for the Gold!

How Does It Work?

Schools must meet a basic set of criteria. To be certified, a school must:

- ✎ be an elementary school
- ✎ be enrolled as a Team Nutrition School
- ✎ offer reimbursable lunches that demonstrate healthy menu planning practices and principles of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and that meet USDA nutrition standards
- ✎ provide nutrition education to students
- ✎ provide students the opportunity for physical activity
- ✎ maintain an Average Daily Participation of 70 percent or higher of school enrollment for reimbursable lunches
- ✎ adhere to guidelines established by FNS for foods served/sold in schools outside the National School Lunch Program.

Assessment

FNS has developed a Self Assessment Tool which details the standards that must be met for "Silver" and "Gold" level designations. The tool requests specific information to verify a school's adherence to the standards. The school's completed Assessment Tool must be evaluated by a local review panel, and endorsed by the school's leadership, including its principal. Completed Assessment Tools will be forwarded to FNS through the State Child Nutrition Office.

Recognition

FNS will review all completed Assessment Tools and award schools that successfully meet the Challenge with an appropriate recognition plaque. In addition, the recognized schools will be listed on the Team Nutrition Web site, may be chosen to be a part of special FNS media events and may receive other awards that promote and support the principles of the Challenge.



Details

Check the Team Nutrition Web site for all the details. The Assessment Tool and all back up material are available on the Web site for review and download. The Team Nutrition Web site address is www.fns.usda.gov/tn.



Team Nutrition is the nutrition education initiative of the Child Nutrition Programs. All Team

Nutrition materials and support are available free of charge to schools participating in the school meals programs.

Take the Challenge!

- Visit the Team Nutrition Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/tn
- Review the standards/criteria
- Download the Self Assessment form
- Convene a review panel
- Complete the review
- Obtain the required approvals and signatures
- Submit the completed form to the State agency

Certification as a *HealthierUS* School is for two years, the year of approval and the subsequent year.

HealthierUS

The *HealthierUS* initiative is based on the premise that increasing personal fitness and becoming healthier is critical to achieving a better and longer life. *HealthierUS* promotes four keys for a healthier America:

- Be physically active each day.
- Eat a nutritious diet.
- Get preventive screenings.
- Make healthy choices.

To learn more about *HealthierUS*, visit www.healthierus.gov.



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Recognizing Nutrition Excellence in Schools

