



What does it mean to make more healthful foods and beverages available?

Making more healthful foods and beverages available is all about making nutritious choices easy for students. Schools can add more nutrient-rich items to à la carte lines, vending machines, snack bars, and student stores. Or they can reduce the number of high-fat/high-sugar items, and replace them with more nutritious choices.

All 32 success stories made more healthful foods and beverages available. There are many options that schools are offering:

- Low-fat milk
- Bottled water and water from drinking fountains
- 100% fruit juices
- Soy products such as soy milk
- Low-fat yogurt
- Fresh fruits, such as apples, strawberries, and bananas
- Dried fruit such as apricots and apples
- Raw vegetables such as carrots, celery, and cucumbers
- Salads and salad bars, with a variety of vegetables and legumes such as chick peas

- Animal crackers or graham crackers
- Whole grain breads and deli sandwiches
- Trail mix
- Low-fat popcorn

Why offer more healthful food and beverage choices?

Obviously students cannot make healthful choices if nutritious foods and beverages are not available. Students will make healthful choices when nutritious products are appealing and attractively packaged and priced.^{58,59} Increasing the variety of nutritious choices makes it more likely that students will make nutrient-rich choices—more items are available to satisfy a wider range of taste preferences.

Food choices can be influenced by what is seen as “the norm.”⁶⁰ Students who see a vending machine stocked with nutrient-rich items might be more likely to see healthful choices as normal choices.



What is the current situation?

Studies have found that most of the items sold outside school meals are high in fat and sugar.³⁴ However, many schools now offer at least some healthful options in à la carte settings, vending machines, stores, and snack bars. CDC's 2000 School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS)³⁶ found that the healthful items most commonly offered à la carte were:

- Fruits or vegetables (73 percent of schools)
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice (63 percent)
- Lettuce, vegetable, or bean salads (53 percent)
- Low-fat baked goods (40 percent)
- Low-fat salty snacks (38 percent)
- Low-fat or non-fat yogurt (36 percent)

The better choices most commonly offered in vending machines, stores, and snack bars were:³⁶

- 100% fruit or vegetable juice (56 percent of schools)
- Low-fat salty snacks (53 percent)
- Bottled water (49 percent)
- Low-fat baked goods (36 percent)
- 1% or non-fat milk (24 percent)
- Fruits or vegetables (18 percent)
- Low-fat or non-fat yogurt (15 percent)



How can schools increase the availability of healthful foods and beverages?

Work with food and beverage companies and suppliers to increase the availability of more nutritious choices. It is much easier today to offer nutritious choices than it was in the past. The food industry recognizes and is striving to meet the increasing demand for products that are convenient, appealing, AND nutritious. Many examples have been developed in recent years:

- The dairy industry has redesigned its products and packaging, and has increased its efforts to sell milk, yogurt, and cheese in schools⁶¹ (see the Quad Cities success story, page 119).
- Bottled water has become a top-selling product for beverage companies.⁶²
- Companies are offering "healthy vending machines" that sell only products that meet specified nutrition standards.⁶³
- Companies are offering more snack items that are baked rather than fried.

Increase the availability of fruits and vegetables in schools.

There are many ways to encourage students to eat more fruits and vegetables:

- Have students grow vegetables in a school garden.
- Offer vegetables and dip on à la carte lines.
- Work with local farmers' markets and with the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Purchasing Program (www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/produce/school.htm) to maximize the freshness and quality of produce offered at school.

- Implement innovative nutrition education programs that promote fruit and vegetable consumption.

The National Cancer Institute's website (www.5aday.gov) and the Produce for Better Health Foundation's websites (www.5aday.org and www.aboutproduce.com) provide creative ideas for serving and promoting fruits and vegetables. Strategies for promoting fruit and vegetable consumption in schools are also highlighted in USDA's *Fruits and Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More* (www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/fv_galore.html).

Modify à la carte recipes to make popular food choices more nutritious. Foodservice programs can make many changes (often without students noticing the difference) such as:

- Slip an extra vegetable into an à la carte dish.
- Decrease the amount of fat and sodium added in food preparation.
- Bake sliced potatoes instead of frying them.
- Use vegetable oil instead of shortening, butter, or margarine.
- Use seasonings other than salt.
- Use low-fat or non-fat yogurt, mayonnaise, or sour cream instead of regular mayonnaise, sour cream, or creamy salad dressings.

More information on these types of techniques is available from the USDA's Team Nutrition Healthy School Meals Resource System (<http://schoolmeals.nal.usda.gov>).

Identify nutritious versions of food and beverage items. With so many choices on the market, it can be a challenge to offer the most nutritious versions of products.

Attention to product specifications, such as the amount of fat, added sugar, and sodium can help, as can the assistance of a dietitian. This consideration is especially important with foods that vary widely in their nutritional value, such as pizza, muffins, flavored milks, and smoothies.

Educate schools about the importance of having working water fountains available to students. Well-placed, functional, and sanitary fountains help students meet their daily water needs.

How are schools making it happen by increasing the availability of healthful foods and beverages?

As shown in Table 7 below, the schools profiled in *Making It Happen!* have taken bold steps to reduce the number of high-fat/high-sugar items available to students and replace them with more nutritious foods and beverages.



Table 7. Changes to food and beverage offerings

School	Foods/beverages added	Foods/beverages removed
Aptos Middle School, San Francisco, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water ● Milk ● 100% juice ● Pasta ● Soup ● Submarine sandwiches ● Sushi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Soft drinks
Byfield Elementary School, Bristol, RI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water ● 100% juice ● Air-popped popcorn ● Animal and graham crackers ● Cheese/cracker trays ● Fresh fruit ● Pretzels ● Vegetables with dip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sweetened drinks ● Chips ● Water ices ● Ice cream
Central Middle School, Whitefish, MT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Milk ● Bagels ● Baked chips ● Beef jerky ● Fruit ● Homemade pretzels ● Pudding ● Salads ● Sandwiches ● String cheese ● Yogurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Soft drinks ● Candy

School	Foods/beverages added	Foods/beverages removed
Ennis Public Schools, Ennis, MT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water ● 100% juice ● Deli bar ● Fruit bar ● Salad bar ● Specialty bar (taco bar, soup bar, pasta bar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Soft drinks ● Fried foods
Green Bay Public Schools, Green Bay, WI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bagels ● Baked chips ● Fresh fruit and vegetable trays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deep-fried food (deep-fat fryers were removed)
Hampden Academy, Hampden, ME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bottled water ● 100% fruit juice ● Sport drinks ● Baked chips ● Canned fruit ● Fresh fruit ● Multigrain bars ● Raisins/dried fruit ● Yogurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Candy ● Fried snacks ● Soft drinks
Ronan School District, Ronan, MT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 100% juice ● Low-fat milk ● Apple wedges with cheese sticks ● Carrot sticks with ranch dressing ● Fresh fruit bar ● Homemade banana bread ● Pretzels ● Salad bar 	

School	Foods/beverages added	Foods/beverages removed
Southington School Lunch Program, Southington, CT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baked chips ● Fresh fruit ● Low-fat yogurt ● Sunflower seeds ● Trail mix ● Vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Snack cakes
Stratford Public Schools, Stratford, CT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baked chips ● Carrot and celery sticks ● Granola/yogurt parfaits ● Vegetable pizzas ● Whole grain breads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beverage portions greater than 12 ounces

