

FACT SHEET

THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

How can the local school wellness policy (LSWP) help create a healthier school environment?

There are a variety of ways that the schools can promote and support proper nutrition and physical activity. Strong LSWPs address each of the components below.

Time and Space for Eating

- ❖ Students have adequate time to eat meals, have pleasant surroundings, and time to relax and socialize at meals.
- ❖ Students have access to facilities for hand washing.

Classroom Activities

- ❖ Food is not used for individual rewards or for incentives for academic performance/good behavior.
- ❖ Foods used for celebrations support the school's health messages.

Staff Qualifications

- ❖ Staff teaching nutrition education and physical education are appropriately trained and regularly participate in professional development.
- ❖ Food service or child nutrition directors have specific training in areas related to complying with nutrient standards, menu planning, food purchasing and storage, food sanitation, and general nutrition.

Nutrition Education

- ❖ Nutrition education is integrated within the health education program.
- ❖ Curricula is evaluated for accuracy and completeness and is free of commercial messages.



The Nutrition and Physical Activity Environment in Schools

The school nutrition and physical activity environment impacts student food choices and levels of physical activity, thereby impacting the students' health and academic achievement. Youth spend half of their waking hours in school, and schools have a responsibility to create an environment that increases student access to nutritious foods and physical activity options.

Coordination of Programs

- ❖ The food service program coordinates with classroom nutrition instruction.

Staff as Role Models

- ❖ School staff are encouraged to model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.
- ❖ Staff lounge vending machines sell the same foods and beverages as those accessible by students.

Marketing/Advertising on Campus

- ❖ Partnerships between schools and businesses should be encouraged but the integrity of the educational activities and materials should not be compromised for these relationships.
- ❖ Advertising messages are consistent with and reinforce the objectives of the educational and nutritional goals of the school.

Nutritious Food Choices

- ❖ Foods of good nutritional content, including fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grains, and lean protein foods are available wherever and whenever food is sold or served during the school day.
- ❖ Foods sold/served during the school day meet the federal, state, and local nutrition standards.
- ❖ Foods sold/served on school grounds or at school-sponsored events are consistent with school nutrition messages and standards.

Food Sales/Fundraising

- ❖ Foods sold outside of the school meal program, from vending machines, school stores, the cafeteria, or by student and parent organizations meet the state's nutrition standards. All other fundraisers should promote physical activity or be non-food items (see **Parent Handouts** section for resources on alternative fundraising ideas).

Physical Activity (PA)

- ❖ Schools provide daily recess before lunch and at a different time than lunch (in elementary schools).
- ❖ There are PA breaks during the day.
- ❖ Schools provide PA opportunities in afterschool programs.
- ❖ Schools promote and coordinate PA opportunities before and after school (such as walk/bike to school programs) and in partnership with community agencies.
- ❖ PA/recess is not withheld or used as punishment for bad behavior.

Physical Education (PE)

- ❖ PE is taught by certified PE teachers and/or those teachers who are teaching PE receive adequate and regular training.
- ❖ Students meet the minimum amount of PE minutes as required by law.
- ❖ Students are moderately-to-vigorously physically active (e.g., are breaking a sweat) for at least 50 percent of their PE class.
- ❖ Teacher to student ratios for PE classes are similar to those of other classes.