

## FACT SHEET

# CLASSROOM MESSAGES

### What are Classroom Messages?

A healthy school nutrition and physical activity environment is one where nutrition and physical activity (PA) are taught and supported in the classroom, the cafeteria, and throughout the school. Classroom education and classroom activities must provide consistent messages that help students develop healthy eating and PA habits. Important pieces of the classroom message include:

- ❖ Nutrition education.
- ❖ Physical Education (PE) and PA opportunities.
- ❖ Healthy classroom celebrations.
- ❖ Appropriate rewards for behavior and performance.
- ❖ Teachers being models for physically active lifestyles and nutritionally sound behaviors.

### What are the Challenges around Classroom Messages?

- ❖ Students may not receive effective, standards-based nutrition education.
- ❖ Teachers may not be educated in nutrition and health.
- ❖ Foods served during classroom parties are frequently high in fat and sugar.
- ❖ Unhealthy food is often used as a reward for good behavior.
- ❖ Recess may be withheld as punishment for student misbehavior.
- ❖ Students may not receive recess or any break during the day (outside of lunch) for PA.
- ❖ Staff wellness may not be a high priority for schools.

### What is the Ideal Situation?

- ❖ Food is not used as a reward.
- ❖ PA and/or PE are not withheld as punishment for bad behavior.
- ❖ Teachers receive specific training to develop skills to teach nutrition, PE, and health education.
- ❖ Schools have standards-based curricula for nutrition education and PE.



### Additional Resources

*Changing the Scene, Improving the School Nutrition Environment,*  
United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Food and Nutrition Service

A toolkit that addresses the entire school nutrition environment from a commitment to nutrition and physical activity, pleasant eating experiences, quality school meals, other healthy food options, nutrition education and marketing.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/TN/Resources/changing.html>

*Healthy Classroom Celebrations,*  
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Links to resources on healthy classroom celebrations.  
[www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy\\_options\\_](http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options_)



## CLASSROOM MESSAGES *continued*

- ❖ Nutrition education and skill-building activities are taught regularly in the classroom and are integrated with other subjects rather than taught as isolated activities.
- ❖ After school PA and nutrition is coordinated with the regular school day.
- ❖ Cafeteria and classroom education are coordinated and connected.
- ❖ Students have opportunities to practice healthy behaviors in the classroom, cafeteria, and playground.
- ❖ Foods/beverages served at classroom celebrations are consistent with the nutrition education that students receive in class and meet the State's nutrition standards (if your state has these).
- ❖ Teachers serve as role models by valuing healthy foods and physical activity.
- ❖ Students are given PA breaks during class time.

### What Can Parents Do?

- ❖ Ask your child what foods are served in their classroom for celebrations; voice concerns about any foods being used as a reward.
- ❖ Ask your child's teacher what the policy/practice is for foods served during classroom celebrations.
- ❖ Work with your local school wellness committee, teachers, and other parents to set guidelines for foods/beverages served at parties, celebrations, and meetings during the school day.
- ❖ Work with your local school wellness committee, teachers, and other parents to set guidelines for PA during the school day.
- ❖ Ask if nutrition education is integrated into the health education curriculum; advocate for use of the Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools (or for your state's health education standards).
- ❖ Working with the food service staff, mobilize parents to participate in cooking demonstrations or taste-testing with students that allow them to practice what they are learning about nutrition.
- ❖ Educate school administrators and other parents about the impact of classroom messages and behaviors on student behavior and health.
- ❖ Advocate for staff wellness programs.
- ❖ Play a supportive role; work with schools and other parents to make improvements.

### *Health Education Content*

#### *Standards for California Public Schools, 2008, California*

*Department of Education*

The content standards provide grade-specific goals for instruction that a school may offer in the curriculum area of health education.

[www.cde.ca.gov/cil/he/hel/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/cil/he/hel/)

### *Take Action!*

*California Department of Public Health*

A free, flexible, 10-week employee wellness program that encourages fruit and vegetable consumption and regular physical activity among employees while fostering teamwork and boosting morale.

[www.takeactionca.com](http://www.takeactionca.com)

### *A Child's Garden of Standards: Linking School Gardens to California Education Standards, 2002,*

*California Department of Education*

A tool that shows how garden-based education supports the State's academic content standards.

[www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fdl/documents/childsgarden.pdf](http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fdl/documents/childsgarden.pdf)

**What does your LSWP say about classroom messages?**