

VIII. ADDRESSING MARKETING OF UNHEALTHY FOODS THROUGH A SCHOOL POLICY

The new requirement under Section 204 of the Federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 that school boards establish local wellness policies by the beginning of 2006-07 school year has heightened the urgency of adopting a policy to improve student health.

The legislation places the responsibility of developing a wellness policy at the local level, so that the individual needs of each district can be addressed. According to the requirements for the local wellness policy, school districts must set goals for nutrition education, physical activity, campus food, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness. Districts are to have a plan for monitoring policy implementation and to update the policy as needed.

California Project LEAN recommends that districts include guidelines for school-based food and beverage marketing and advertising within their local wellness policy. District-wide policies have the potential to influence the health of all the children in the school district by restricting the marketing of non-nutritious foods and beverages on school property by outside advertisers. It is well documented that advertising influences food choices. If your district has already drafted and/or adopted a local wellness policy, but it does not address marketing of unhealthy foods, then talk with the district local wellness policy committee to determine the

best way to add this component to your policy. One option would be to bring up the issue when the district is reviewing and evaluating policy implementation.

Key Steps to Policy Development

As the ultimate decision-making body within a school district, the school board has the opportunity to impact children's health. School boards adopt policies to ensure that actions taken by district staff support the district vision for student learning. The role and responsibilities of the school board are to ensure the school district is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the community. School boards fulfill this role by performing five major responsibilities: setting direction; establishing an effective and efficient structure; providing support; ensuring accountability; and providing community leadership as advocates for children. School boards examine problems or opportunities within a district, request information to understand possible solutions, debate potential solutions, adopt policies, and monitor the effectiveness of policy implementation.

With regards to marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages, school boards must determine whether the promotion of a product is inconsistent with the district's educational mission and nutrition education program.

.....
 : Strategies for addressing
 : food and beverage
 : marketing on school
 : campuses are increasingly
 : gaining support. A national
 : poll found that public
 : opinion has increased by
 : 16% from 2001 to 2004,
 : with 73 percent in favor of
 : restricting children's food
 : advertising, up from 57
 : percent in 2001.²⁴
 :
 : The majority (80 percent)
 : of California school board
 : members responding to
 : a survey support limiting
 : and monitoring food and
 : soda advertisements in
 : schools while 57 percent
 : of respondents support
 : an outright ban of such
 : advertisements.²⁵
 :
 :



See Sample Policies and Tools:
 Commercial Activities: School-Based Marketing of Unhealthy Food and Beverages and Policy Implications for Schools.

As a parent, community leader, school staff or administrator, you can help your school board fulfill its roles and responsibilities by working together on the district's local wellness policy. The process for developing and updating a school wellness policy varies from one district to another. The following are key steps to help school districts include guidelines within their wellness policy that address marketing to students on campus:

1 Coordinate with the District Local Wellness Policy Committee

Contact your school district superintendent's office to determine whether a local wellness policy committee has been established. At least one person will be designated to oversee the activities and ensure that schools meet the policy. Anyone can initiate a process to adopt a policy. Districts are required to involve parents, students, school food service staff, school administrators, board representative(s), and members of the public in the development of the policy so your interest should be well received. School board members particularly look to health experts, superintendents, administrators, food service staff, parents and students for advice and information.

2 Educate Committee Members and Partners

The concerns of marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages in schools and its impact on student health are not well understood by most parents, school staff and decision makers. As an advocate for student health, you can help key decision-makers learn about the issue. Offer to make a presentation to the Committee.

 **For help with this process, See Sample Presentation:** "*The Perils of Marketing Unhealthy Foods in Schools.*" Check out the PowerPoint presentation on CPL's website at www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org. 

Paint a clear picture of the extent and types of advertising occurring on campus. Use the fact sheets in this tool kit to help educate the work group on the implications of in-school marketing and particularly its impact on student health and achievement. The California School Boards Association and California Project LEAN's guide, *Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide* contain fact sheets on Nutrition and Learning.

3 Conduct an Assessment to Determine Priorities

Work with the local wellness policy committee to complete an assessment of the current marketing on your school campuses.

 **See Policies and Tools:** Marketing Assessment Tool. After you paint a vivid picture of the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages on campus, the committee can establish key policy priorities to include in the policy.

4 Draft a Policy

Based on your needs assessment, work with the local wellness policy committee to draft your initial policy statements addressing marketing to students. The Institute of Medicine recommends that schools adopt policies and practices that promote the availability and marketing of healthy foods and beverages that support healthful diets. Others recommend that all food and beverage advertising be eliminated because schools should not be in the business of helping commercial marketers reap profits from students. California Project LEAN recommends the following policies for consideration:

1. Eliminate the marketing and advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages at school.

- Assure that all school-based marketing is consistent with or more stringent than state and district level policies eliminating the sale of sweetened beverages and unhealthy foods on school campuses.

- New local wellness policies should include promotional activities that encourage students to consume fruits and vegetables, low-fat and non-fat milk, and water.

2. Eliminate commercial influences that promote unhealthy foods and beverages in district curriculum, classroom materials and on campus.

- Review resources provided by outside sources, including curriculum and Channel One broadcasts used in the classroom, to ensure they do not promote unhealthy foods and beverages.
- Prohibit any district curriculum from including identifiable brand names in the content of the curriculum. Require sponsored programs and materials to undergo the same review procedures and meet the same standards as other curriculum materials.
- Restrict teachers from using identifiable brand names in their instruction unless absolutely necessary to teaching the lesson.

3. Include consumer education as part of the curriculum.

- Adopt school-based curricula that teach youth media literacy skills which teach them to be an informed consumer of the media.

 Some resources and a sample presentation can be found in the **Resource Section** of this tool kit.

4. Set guidelines for business partnerships that restrict marketing and advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages.

- Encourage partnerships with business that do not include product advertising to students. For example, the Milwaukee Conference of Corporate Involvement in Schools developed ethical guidelines on school/business relationships.

 **See Policies and Tools:** Milwaukee Conference on Corporate Involvement Guidelines.

- For school staff with the responsibility of entering into business partnerships, conduct trainings on the perils of marketing unhealthy foods on campus.

 **See the Sample Presentation:** “*The Perils of Marketing Unhealthy Foods and Beverages in Schools*” in this tool kit. Also downloadable from CPL’s website at www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org

Writing a policy is not easy. To save time, you may consider adapting another district’s policy to meet the needs of your school district. To assist school districts in developing a policy, the California School Boards Association has developed a Sample Student Wellness Policy. See sample wellness policy at www.csba.org.

The goals you set must be developed with direction from the board. The local school board or superintendent will probably want to know ideas for promoting healthy foods and other ways to raise revenue than by the promotion and fundraising of unhealthy foods.

 **See Fact Sheet:** “*Creative Financing & Fund Fundraising*” in this tool kit.

For examples of success stories about schools that improved the nutritional quality of foods offered, marketed these foods, and maintained revenue, see CPL’s **Bright Ideas**



at www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org, and the United State Department of Agriculture and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s joint publication *Making it Happen*, at www.fns.usda.gov.

5 Build Awareness and Support

It is important to obtain support from schools and your community in order for a policy to be smoothly adopted and widely implemented. Student involvement is also an important component of building awareness and support. Use the Fact Sheets and Resources in this tool kit to help educate various audiences about your policy initiative addressing marketing to students.

Enlist local media to spread awareness of the district's needs and community leaders to speak out in favor of the proposed solutions. Be prepared for challenges that may arise and ensure all spokespeople for the policy are providing a consistent message. When dealing with the education community, it is helpful to identify the potential benefits the policy can have on student learning and academic achievement. Write a letter to the editor in your local newspaper about why marketing of unhealthy foods in schools needs to be stopped or why you are in support of your district's policy addressing this issue.

For examples of success stories of school districts garnering support of health policy goals, see the case studies in this tool kit, CPL's **Bright Ideas** at www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org, and **Making it Happen**, at www.fns.usda.gov

6 Adopt the Policy

The school board must approve the wellness policy before it can be implemented. A public hearing or presentation might be necessary. Try to become a part of the team that educates the board on the problems with marketing unhealthy foods and beverages. The district superintendent's office or local wellness policy committee lead can describe the usual process and advise you on how matters are brought before the board. School board members appreciate short research-based handouts. Use the Fact Sheets in this tool kit to help present a persuasive and concise case in

support of mitigating commercial influences on students in the district. Share your assessment and planning results. Team members will have a better understanding of board procedures if they have attended board meetings prior to presenting the policy proposal. It is wise to invite and involve others that support the issue to attend the board meeting to voice their support and/or make a presentation on behalf of the proposed policy.

 **See the Sample Presentation** "*The Perils of Marketing Unhealthy Foods and Beverages in Schools*" in this tool kit. Also downloadable from CPL's website at www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org



7 Implement the Policy

Developing and adopting a sound policy is only the beginning. The adoption of a policy does not automatically mean that it will be implemented. Implementation requires good planning and management skills, the necessary resources, consistent oversight, and widespread buy-in by school staff and the local community. Leadership, commitment, communication and support are the keys to your success.

Implementation can occur all at once or may be phased-in over time. Your team is in the best position to determine which approach is likely to be most effective in your district. The attitude of all school personnel, especially those staff working with food companies to promote food products, including student athletic groups, parent-teacher organizations or booster clubs, can have a significant effect on policy implementation. A positive attitude toward the changes, by everyone in the school community can make a huge difference.

8 Maintain, Measure and Evaluate the Effort

As required by law, each school district must establish a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy. A sustained effort by each district is necessary to assure that new policies are faithfully implemented. Periodically assess how well the policy is being managed and enforced. Reinforce the policy goals with school staff, if necessary. Be prepared to update or amend the policy as the process moves on. Evaluation and feedback are very important in maintaining a wellness policy. It is also important to assess student, parent, teacher, and administration satisfaction with the new policies.

Partially adapted from the United States Department of Agriculture, *The Local Process: How to Create and Implement a Local Wellness Policy*. For further information on developing a local wellness policy, visit www.fns.usda.gov.

