



# Playing the Policy Game

Did you know healthy eating and physical activity play a big part in how you look and feel right now? For example, healthy eating and physical activity can:

- Help you feel more energetic
- Lessen stress
- Keep you at a healthy weight
- Build strong bone and muscle

This booklet will help you develop leadership skills, eat healthier, and be more physically active as you learn to play the policy game.

## Taking Action on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

### What Is Policy?

A policy is a written rule that has the power to influence how you and others think and act. As you know, schools have a lot of rules. They can make it either easy or hard for students to be healthy at school. Some school policies affect food and physical activity choices. Here are some examples:

- The school allows students to use school fields and gyms after school, on the weekend and during school vacations; or
- The school requires low-fat snacks to be sold in school vending machines.

### You Can Make a Difference!

How many times have you sat around with your friends saying, “I wish things were better”? With a good plan, some new skills, and lots of energy, you can take action to make your school and neighborhood healthier places. Take a look at this real-life story of young adults in action!

#### WE NEED HEALTHIER SNACKS!

A group of students at King City High School in California decided that it was time to make a change in the snacks that were offered in the vending machines at school. They wanted some healthier choices that students actually liked!

The group worked with the Vice Principal and the snack company to find low-fat foods that could be sold in the machines.

The group even did a taste-test on campus so that the whole school could vote on which snacks tasted best.

All of their hard work paid off! Vending machines at King City High School now offer healthy snack options, like pretzels and low-fat cereal bars that students like to eat.

### Now It's Your Turn

Sometimes taking action means changing a rule that already exists. Other times it means creating a new rule. There are many ideas out there. So grab your friends and get started!

- |               |                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Step 1</b> | Pick a Problem and Find a Solution |
| <b>Step 2</b> | Identify the Policy Players        |
| <b>Step 3</b> | Build Your Action Plan             |
| <b>Step 4</b> | Review How You Did                 |



STEP

1

## Pick a Problem and Find a Solution

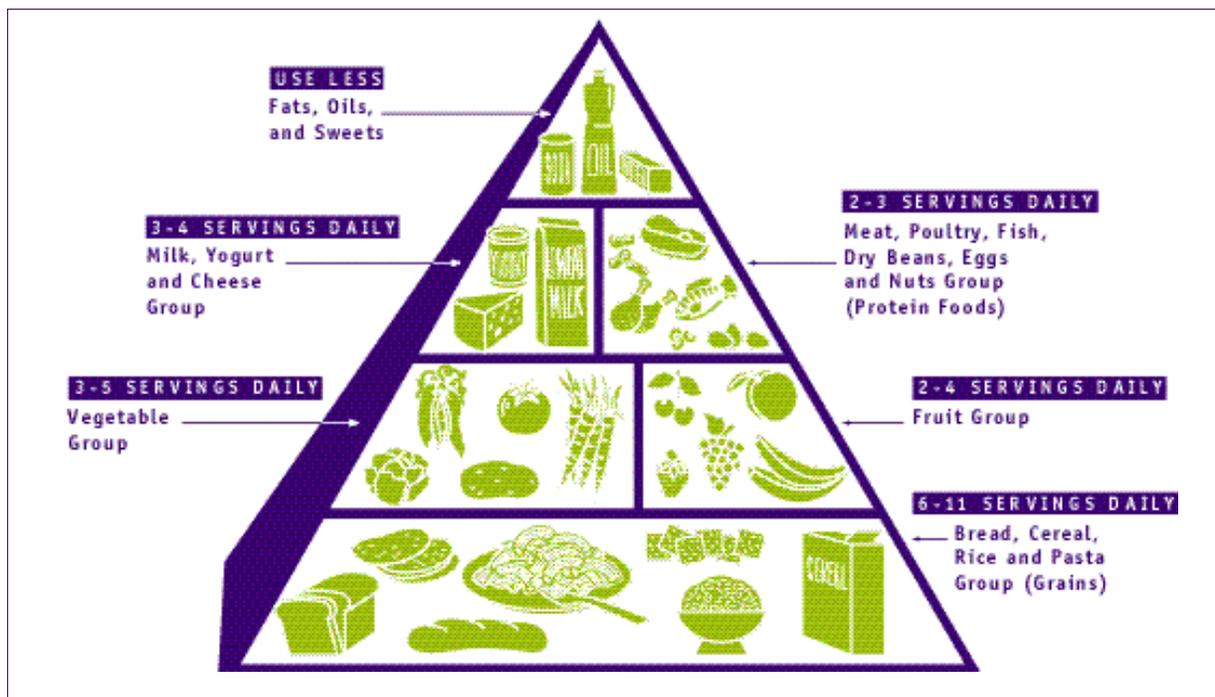
Before you play the policy game, you need to understand the basics of healthy eating and physical activity.

### What Does Healthy Eating Mean?

Healthy eating means choosing a variety of foods that will help you look and feel your best. Choose foods like:

- grains, such as corn tortillas, and bagels
- dairy products, like low-fat milk, and low-fat yogurt
- vegetables, like carrot sticks, and green salad
- lean meats, fish, and poultry, and beans.
- fruits, like apples, and oranges

Avoid foods that are high in fat or added sugars, like french fries, cookies, and soda. Use this food guide pyramid to find healthy food choices.



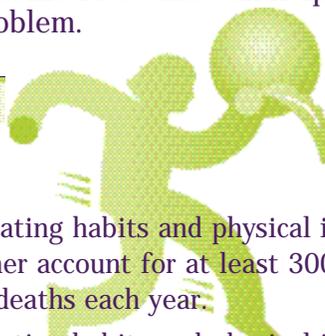
### What Does Physical Activity Mean?

Physical activity means doing any type of activity that gets you moving, such as walking, dancing, working out, playing sports, swimming, jogging, martial arts, and biking. Try to get 30 minutes of physical activity every day.



## Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Facts

Here are some facts that can help you pick a problem.

- 
- Poor eating habits and physical inactivity together account for at least 300,000 adult deaths each year.
  - Poor eating habits and physical inactivity increase a person's risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, high blood pressure and osteoporosis.
  - The number of teens who are overweight is increasing in the United States.
  - Most teens eat more fat than is recommended.
  - Less than 20% of high school students are physically active for at least 20 minutes each weekday in Physical Education class.
  - Most kids and teens want to be more active.
  - Teen girls only get half of the calcium that they need for strong bones.

For even more facts and figures:

- Talk to teachers, parents, and doctors.
- Invite an expert like a local hospital dietitian to speak to your group.
- Visit your local library. The reference librarians are paid to answer your questions and they can refer you to books and websites.
- Look on the Internet to learn about:
  - the effects of being a junk food junkie,
  - rising rates of teen obesity, or
  - reasons teens are not physically active.

Look in last section of this booklet for a list of groups that can give you healthy eating, physical activity, and policy information!

## Exploring Your World

Part of picking a problem and finding a solution is to gather information that can guide your efforts. Finding out what is happening on your school campus can give you some good ideas. Do physical education classes offer activities students like? Are physical activities available for all students or just the best athletes? Does the cafeteria sell fast food? Can students buy healthy foods they like? Is there enough time to eat lunch? A Campus Survey can help you answer these questions.

### Campus Survey

Write down a list of questions or use the survey on the next page. Walk around your school to see what is going on. Here are some examples of information you might collect with a campus survey:

- Count the number of vending machines and list all of the foods and drinks sold.
- Look at the advertising around school—in the school newspaper, on Channel One, on posters around the school. Count the number of advertisements for healthy and unhealthy foods.
- Identify the types of foods sold at school events like games and dances.
- Describe the healthy options that are available and how often they are available. Are the healthy foods more expensive than other foods?
- Identify the physical activity options that are available to all students, not just athletes.
- Count the number of students who play on sports teams, and compare it to the total number of students.

Check out the Campus Survey on the next page. It is used by some California high school students.



## Campus Survey Worksheet

1) What low-fat, fat-free, and healthy food items are offered for students to eat on campus?

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| a) salad/fresh vegetables | g) 100% fruit juice  |
| b) low-fat dressing       | h) low-fat entree    |
| c) fresh fruit            | i) vegetarian entree |
| d) dried/canned fruit     | j) whole grain item  |
| e) fat-free milk          | k) others:           |
| f) low-fat (1%) milk      |                      |

2) What kind of nutrition information is posted for foods on campus?

- a) low-fat
- b) fat-free
- c) nutrition label
- d) other: \_\_\_\_\_

Where is the information posted?

- a) on the menu
- b) by the food
- c) campus walls
- d) other: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Where else on campus can students get food? What low-fat/fat-free/healthy items are available?



Type of places:	List the low-fat fat-free/healthy items:
a) Branded fast food <small>(like McDonalds, Taco Bell)</small>	
b) Snack bar	
c) Food cart	
d) Vending machine	
e) Other:	

4) What promotions of healthy eating can be seen or heard at your school?

- a) posters/signs
- b) student paper
- c) over the public announcement (PA)
- d) parent newsletter
- e) other promotions and events: \_\_\_\_\_

5) What promotions of physical activity can be seen or heard at your school?

- a) posters/signs
- b) student paper
- c) over the public announcement (PA)
- d) parent newsletter
- e) other promotions and events: \_\_\_\_\_

6) Does your school require physical education in order for students to graduate?

Yes/No

7) In addition to physical education class, what school physical activity options and facilities do students use DURING school hours?

- a) organized activity/sports
- b) playing fields
- c) gym/weight room
- d) basketball courts
- e) equipment check-out
- f) other, during school:

8) What physical activity options and activities do students use AFTER school hours?

(This does not include competitive and/or varsity sports)

- |                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) sports clubs/teams | f) Boy's/Girl's clubs       |
| b) playing fields     | g) community sports leagues |
| c) gym/weight room    | h) health clubs/gym         |
| d) basketball courts  | i) other, after school:     |
| e) YMCA/YWCA          | _____                       |



# What Did You Find?

Your campus survey probably gave you a lot to think about. Sometimes there are obstacles to eating healthier and being more physically active at school. Here are some solutions that other students and schools have tried. Would any of them work at your school?

## Policy Solutions

### Healthy snacks in the school vending machines and snack bar

Most school leaders know that everyone loves to snack, so they sell snack foods. The problem is, most of these foods are high in fat and added sugar. Chips, doughnuts, cakes, fries, candy, and soda are okay to eat sometimes, but it's also nice to have healthier choices like fruit or pretzels. A solution would be to require that vending machines and snack bars offer some healthy choices. Then students who are looking for a healthy snack can find one.

### School and community spaces for physical activity

Many students don't have a place to be physically active. They might not feel safe in their neighborhood or they may not have parks or gyms nearby. This problem could be solved if schools and neighborhood spaces (like gyms, fields, pools, and courts) were open on weekends, evenings, and during school vacations.

### Promote healthy foods

Now and then we all need a little help to do the right thing. What if your school made an effort to promote healthy foods? What if they tried to sell these as hard as Taco Bell or Burger King sells its newest item? More students just might make a healthy choice if schools offered and promoted healthy foods with eye-catching packages and lower prices. School newspapers and fliers could also advertise the healthy foods. Taste-tests could be done so students can try healthy foods.

Here are a few other policies to consider:

- Lunch periods are long enough to give students a chance to eat.
- Fast food and soda are not advertised at school.
- Physical education classes include activities that students like to do such as aerobic and dance classes, or martial arts.
- The school provides transportation for students taking part in after-school physical activities.
- Foods that are high in fat and added sugar cost more than healthier ones.



# Brainstorming with Your Team

Now that your group has reviewed the background information, it's time to get together with your group and think of as many solutions as you can. Write down every idea you come up with. Remember, all ideas are okay during brainstorming. Nobody criticizes anyone else's ideas! Here's an idea to get you started.

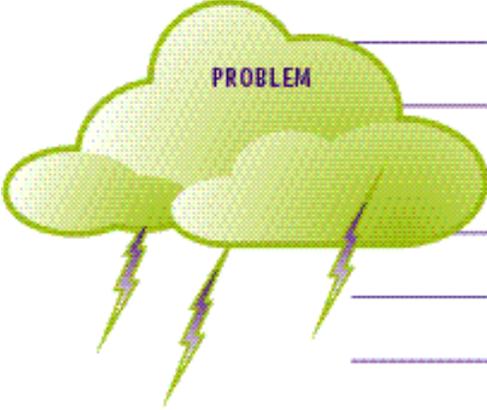
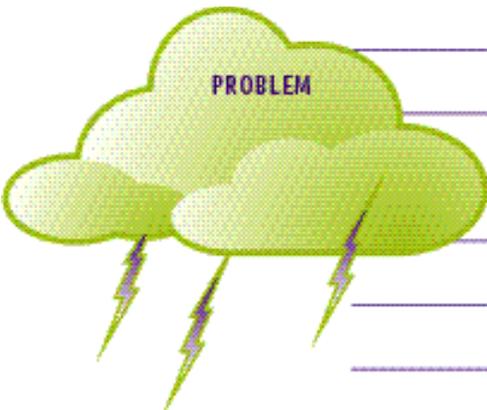
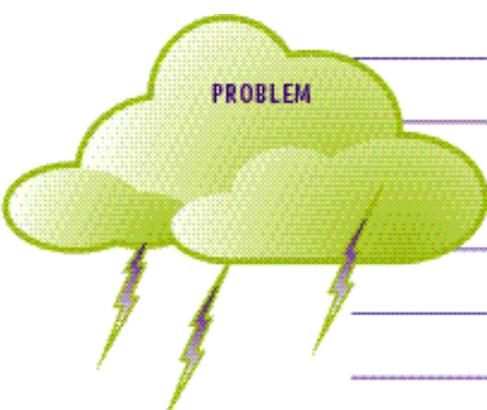
## Brainstorming Example





## Brainstorming Worksheet

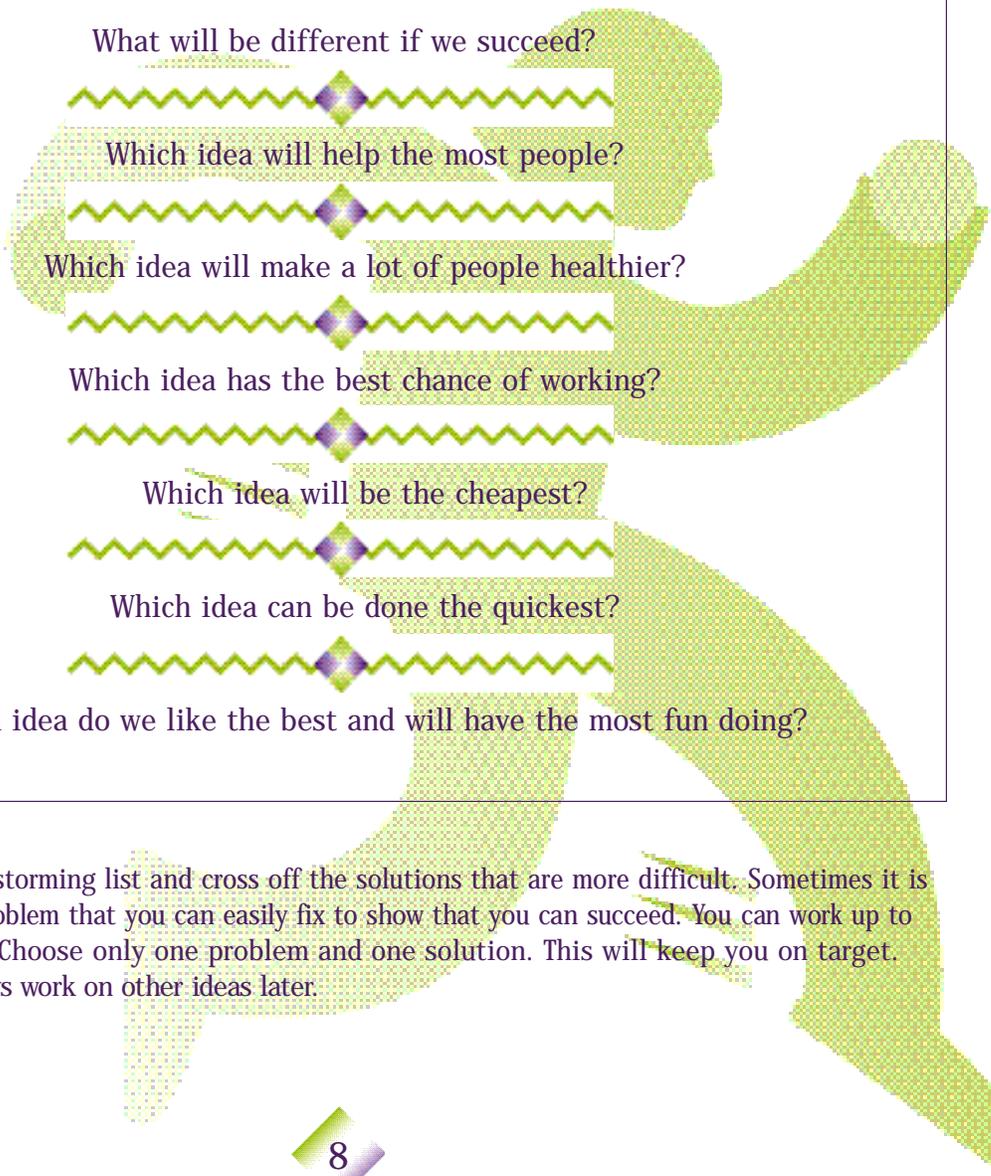
Use the Brainstorming Worksheet to keep track of your ideas.

	_____	SOLUTION
	_____	SOLUTION
	_____	SOLUTION
	_____	SOLUTION
	_____	SOLUTION
	_____	SOLUTION



# Guidelines for Picking a Final Problem and Solution

Once you have all your ideas on paper, it's time to pick one problem and one solution. These questions can help you decide on one:



What will be different if we succeed?

Which idea will help the most people?

Which idea will make a lot of people healthier?

Which idea has the best chance of working?

Which idea will be the cheapest?

Which idea can be done the quickest?

Which idea do we like the best and will have the most fun doing?

Go through your brainstorming list and cross off the solutions that are more difficult. Sometimes it is best to start with a problem that you can easily fix to show that you can succeed. You can work up to harder problems later. Choose only one problem and one solution. This will keep you on target. Besides, you can always work on other ideas later.