

Nutrition Education

For Lifelong Wellness

Federal law requires every school district to have a local wellness policy. These policies promote healthful school environments by addressing nutrition education, physical activity, school meals, and all foods and drinks at school. Research shows that children and teens who eat smart and move more focus better and have fewer behavior problems. They also have better math, reading, and writing test scores. As educators and administrators, you have the chance to put the policy into practice in a variety of ways. Encourage smart snacks and beverages from home and healthy options for after-school programs, meetings and field trips. Support pricing options that sell healthy foods for less. Restrict marketing to students. Promote quality nutrition education.

Children today. Adults tomorrow. Nutrition education helps students understand why, when, and how healthy behaviors can be part of a daily lifestyle. Whether it's elementary, junior high or high school, schools are the best place to provide nutrition education. Studies show that education in schools can influence the health-related behaviors of students. So promote and protect your students' health by making nutrition education important. You'll also enhance their readiness to learn, and increase student attendance and achievement. Equip students with the knowledge, attitude and skills to make healthy choices. Eating healthy and being active are lifelong habits that take time to develop.

What's Quality Nutrition Education?

One that—

- Is integrated into every grade level, and provides continuity through the grades.
- Contains lessons based on current science, research and national guidelines.
- Links classroom nutrition education to the larger school environment (cafeteria, after-school programs, school garden) and community resources.
- Engages families and the community as partners to support healthy active lifestyles.
- Highlights and encourages physical activity.
- Builds critical thinking skills like health and media literacy, and gives students the chance to apply those skills.
- Is reinforced throughout the year, and supported by all school policies, activities and staff.

Nutrition Education Not Part of Your Local Wellness Policy?

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 states that Local Wellness Policies must include goals for nutrition education that are designed to promote student wellness.

Revisit your Local Wellness Policy today. See the example from Durham County Schools to assist you in developing this part of your policy.

How should it be structured? Use a learning-centered curriculum that is comprehensive, interdisciplinary and culturally relevant. Make it enjoyable, experiential and skill based! Provide fun, hands-on, and developmentally appropriate activities. Examples of these are contests, promotions and taste-testing sessions. Use social learning techniques like providing incentives, role modeling and building social resistance skills. Work on goal setting and reducing behavioral change barriers. Promote and provide opportunities for peer education. Make the most of classroom time by bringing nutrition concepts into other subjects. These can be math, science, language arts, social studies, or elective subjects. Link nutrition education with physical education (see the North Carolina Healthful Living Standard Course of Study). Also include enough instructional time to build the students' confidence and competence in health-enhancing skills.

For help developing nutrition education content, go to:

- North Carolina Healthful Living Standard Course of Study:
www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/healthfulliving
- Action for Healthy Kids:
<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.php>

Get Creative with Nutrition Education!

- Use the school cafeteria as a learning laboratory to allow students to put into practice lessons learned in the classroom.
- Spice up those menus! Place nutritional facts and healthy eating tips on school menus to educate parents and caregivers. Provide teacher guides, so that menus can be used as 'teachable moments' in the classroom.
- Take field trips to farms, food production facilities and gardens, or visit health fairs and nutrition-related community services.
- Link up with existing events like National School Lunch Week, National School Breakfast Week, National Nutrition Month, and Fruits and Veggies Month.
- Invite health speakers or community partners as guest speakers to talk about nutrition in school assemblies or the classroom.

Example Nutrition Education Policy in North Carolina

Durham County Schools in North Carolina

Students will receive nutrition education consistent with the Healthful Living Standard Course of Study, and nutrition education shall be integrated into health education or other subjects in order to teach students the skills necessary to adopt healthy eating behaviors. Nutrition education will be interdisciplinary. In developing nutrition education lessons, relevant personnel will endeavor to consult with a qualified, credentialed nutrition professional (e.g. School Food and Nutrition Specialist (SFNS), a Registered Dietitian (RD), who specializes in school-based nutrition).

For more information on local wellness policy...

www.NCActionForHealthyKids.org
www.nutritionnc.com
www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com

