

Pricing Matters

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, staff meetings and field trips. Support pricing options that sell healthy foods for less. Restrict marketing to students. Promote quality nutrition education.

Simply offering healthy food choices in schools does not ensure that students will choose them. It is important to use key marketing concepts to help students make smarter food choices at school. Effective marketing is based on the 4 Ps of the marketing mix which includes **P**roduct(s), **P**lacement, **P**romotion, and **P**rice. This means choosing healthy products, placing them in visible locations, setting competitive prices and promoting them to students.

Offer healthier options at a lower price. Research has shown that when students are choosing foods at school, price is a key factor in their decision. In order to encourage healthy choices, it is important that schools consider nutritional quality when setting prices. For example, charge less for fresh fruits and vegetables than for products high in added sugar or saturated fat. Studies have also shown that lowering the price of healthy offerings, even for a short time, can motivate students to buy and try new foods.

Take Action—Here's How!

School Board Members

- Does your district's local wellness policy include price reduction and increased availability of healthier foods? If not, add these in!
- Support lower pricing as an incentive for students to make healthier food choices at school.

School Health Advisory Council/School Wellness Committee Members

- Advocate for school policies that encourage competitive pricing of healthy food options.
- Work with schools to develop promotional activities that include a short-term reduction in the price of healthy foods.

Principals

- Enforce the district wellness policy to encourage marketing of healthful foods and beverages on school grounds.
- Encourage the promotion of healthy foods and beverages within your school.

Pricing Strategies

Highlight Healthy Food Choices

- Offer discount coupons
- Set the price for healthy foods slightly lower than less healthy options
- Sell affordable snacks (for example, \$0.25 for a piece of fruit) for students to enjoy on the bus ride home
- Offer a week-long promotion with reduced prices for a particular healthy food such as 1% milk
- Highlight the price of healthy foods and make their placement more prominent
- Negotiate lower prices on fruits and vegetables or other nutrient-dense foods when establishing vendor contracts

Discourage Less Healthy Food Options

- Increase the price of foods high in added sugar or fat
- Sell soft drinks at a higher price than bottled water at concession stands
- Reduce the size of high-fat desserts such as cookies or brownies, but sell them for the same price
- Sell full-fat snack foods for \$0.10 more than their baked or reduced-fat counterparts

The Positive Impact of Price

Fayette County Public Schools, Lexington, Kentucky

Smart and health conscious vending contract negotiations resulted in both increased profits and healthy foods for students. In the contract, the price of healthy snacks was set at \$0.60 while other snacks were sold for \$0.65. Schools received a 9 percent commission on snack sales compared to no commission in the previous contract. The school offered additional healthy items including low-fat snacks. These, as well as bottled water, became very popular. Some students initially complained about the higher prices of less healthy items. Yet the same students were pleased with the increased variety of healthy choices. During the first half of the following school year, the school district earned an additional \$13,000 in revenue compared to the previous year. For more information on this program, visit http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/resources/g_app2.pdf.

For more information on local wellness policy...

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

