



Nutrition Education and Promotion

Nutrition education teaches students how to choose and enjoy healthy foods along with the benefits of healthy foods on one's body and mind. Nutrition education and promotion can take place across the school, formally and informally, inside and outside of the classroom, whether in the cafeteria, hallways, gym or at school events.

ACTION FOR HEALTHY KIDS

TIP SHEET

How You Can Support Nutrition Education and Promotion at School

- Display posters and signs that promote healthy eating.
- Plan food tastings that give students the opportunity to try healthy foods, particularly when your school food service is willing to incorporate the popular choices into the school menu. Offering taste tests of healthy school menu items helps to promote those items in the lunch line.
- Plan a fun and interactive family event around nutrition education. Take advantage of events like parent-teacher conferences, where you have a built-in audience, to provide healthy snacks and nutrition tips.
- Seek out nutrition experts — from your school nutrition department and in your community — to provide presentations and classroom lessons for students and families. Registered dietitians and university extension staff are good resources.
- Plan a health fair. Bring in community partners to provide resources and different perspectives. Offer these events as part of a staff wellness program, too.
- Lead a student group dedicated to healthy eating and nutrition promotion. The feedback from these students can also help you inform your district wellness and school health advisory committees.
- Write healthy-eating tips for the school newsletter or have the wellness team create its own newsletter or website that provides updates on team activities along with information on healthy living.
- Find out what organizations in your community offer in terms of nutrition workshops, assemblies or events that they can bring to your school. Local healthcare providers and gardening associations are a great place to start.
- Search for free nutrition education curricula online (there are plenty of options!) and share your favorite links with teachers.

A study of 238 middle school students showed that kids in schools offering cooking and gardening classes integrated with classroom curriculum scored higher on nutrition knowledge and showed stronger preferences for green, leafy vegetables. Younger students increased fruit and vegetable intake by nearly one and a half servings per day.¹

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

Many school districts require nutrition education to be taught in the classroom. The 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act adds an additional requirement that all local wellness policies include goals for nutrition promotion. If your district wellness policy or school improvement plan does not meet these requirements, find out what it would take to address this topic.



Every kid healthy, active and ready to learn

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Nutrition Education: School Gardens

Start a School Garden

It's valuable for children (and adults) to gain hands-on experience learning about real, healthy food. Plus, kids are often more willing to try new foods when they grow foods themselves. Garden to Cafeteria programs and Youth Farmers' Markets make school gardening even more educational and sustainable.

- Find out about local resources in your area, such as a Slow Food chapter, an urban gardening or farming association, or a university cooperative extension service.
- Grants for school gardens are available from many sources. The National Gardening Association offers grant programs through different partners, as do many other businesses, foundations and organizations like Action for Healthy Kids.



Farm to School Programs

Farm to School programs connect K-12 schools and local farms with the objectives of improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities and supporting local and regional farmers. Visit the National Farm to School Network to learn more at farmtoschool.org.

Resources

Nutrition Education

Action for Healthy Kids: actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/at-home-challenges/

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) My Plate: ChooseMyPlate.gov

USDA Core Nutrition Messages: fns.usda.gov/corenutrition/core-nutrition-messages

Kids Health: kidshealth.org/classroom

USDA'S Nibbles for Health: fns.usda.gov/tn/nibbles-health-nutrition-newsletters-parents-young-children

School Gardens

The Edible Schoolyard Project: edibleschoolyard.org

National Gardening Association: kidsgardening.org

Slow Food USA: gardens.slowfoodusa.org

USDA Garden Fact Sheet: fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/FactSheet_School_Gardens.pdf

USDA Farm to School Fact Sheet: fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/fact-sheets

Action for Healthy Kids® is a nationwide grassroots network mobilizing school professionals, families and communities to take actions that improve school foods, nutrition education, physical activity and physical education for all students. Through funding opportunities, expert technical assistance, and our flagship program, Game On, Action for Healthy Kids supports schools in becoming healthier places where children thrive.



1: See ActionforHealthyKids.org/References