



Promoting Healthy Eating Schoolwide

A Coordinated School Health Approach to Healthy Eating

To truly impact the eating behaviors of children and youth, it is important that schools provide consistent messages throughout the school day and that adults model healthful behaviors. This can be accomplished by promoting a Coordinated School Health approach to healthy eating where the school environment, curriculum and nutrition program all support healthy eating practices for both students and school staff.

A Coordinated School Health approach requires that an organizing body, like a Healthy Kids Learn Better Team (HKLB), ensure that healthy eating is supported and reinforced throughout the eight components of Coordinated School Health and that there are open channels of communication among team members to ensure that nutrition messages are consistent throughout the school community.

The eight components of Coordinated School Health:

(Use graphic from brochure)

- Comprehensive Health Education
- Counseling & Mental Health Services
- Health Promotion for Staff
- Health Services
- Healthy School Environment & Policy
- Nutrition Services & Education
- Physical Education
- Youth, Family & Community Involvement

What Would This Look Like?

There are many ways to take a Coordinated School Health approach to promote healthy eating. Here are a few ideas:

- Administrators and policymakers can review their policies and procedures to ensure that the school environment is promoting healthy eating. They can review issues such as vending machine offerings,

food available through fundraising campaigns, and types of food allowed for classroom events.

- **Curriculum for nutrition education: Implement nutrition education from preschool through secondary school as part of a sequential, comprehensive school health education curriculum designed to help students adopt healthy eating behaviors.**
- The health educator can work closely with the nutrition and food service staff during the school year to ensure that school meal choices reflect topics in health education and that the cafeteria has visual reminders of healthy eating habits such as food pyramids and “5 a Day” posters to promote eating fruits and vegetables.
- Nutrition and food service staff can invite families to be involved in a HKLB Team to ensure that school meals options are culturally inclusive and that students with special dietary needs have appropriate food choices.
- The physical educator can discuss the impact of dietary choices on physical and athletic performance as each new activity or sport is introduced to students.
- The counselor and school nurse can provide information and support for students on issues such as healthy body image, weight management and disordered eating.
- School staff can model healthy eating behaviors and also learn about nutrition through organized staff development, concerted efforts to eat healthy foods in class and the faculty room, and weight management support groups.

Making It All Possible

In order to truly affect healthy eating schoolwide, some key supports need to be in place:

1. There needs to be a coordinating body, such as a HKLB Team to lead the charge. This team should include administrators, educators, nutrition and food service staff, parents, students and other community partners so that both school and community resources can be tapped.
2. Assessment of the issues and evaluation of the efforts are essential to make the best use of time and energy. The HKLB Team can

- conduct a self-assessment using the School Health Index, the USDA'S Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment Tool Kit, and data collected through state-level surveys to identify specific needs that will guide the Team's action plan.
3. Professional development opportunities must be made available to all key staff (i.e. nutrition and food service staff, health educators, counselors) so that they have the tools and skills necessary to carry out the action plan to promote healthy eating.
 4. Policies and practices related to healthy eating must be examined at the school and district levels. Those that provide poor nutrition messages should be reexamined and modified to ensure a consistent message to students.

Where Can I Get Help?

Call us to help you initiate a conversation in your school community about the benefits of establishing a Healthy Kids Learn Better Team. *Ginny Ehrlich*, Oregon Department of Education, 503-378-3600 x2711, ginny.ehrlich@state.or.us.

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