

Teachers Make a Difference for Healthy School Food



1. Model positive eating / drinking behaviors.
2. Offer unlimited fruits and vegetables in the classroom.

NYCHSF is conducting a pilot program in Ithaca. Children have access to fresh fruit and vegetables in the classroom when they are hungry. The produce is supplied by private foundations who adopt the classroom. This program is based on the very successful, but limited, USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program. While the foundations can gain positive PR for doing this, it is not an opportunity for them to “advertise” to the children.
3. Use **Wellness Wakeup**, a program of **NY Coalition for Healthy School Food**.

Wellness Wakeup delivers empowering messages about nutrition over the loudspeaker in the morning, or in some other way for schools that do not have morning announcements. The messages are in the form of sound-bites, so children learn a little bit each day. If you can not get your school to use the messages for morning announcements, read them to your class in the morning, or write them on the board and have the children write them into a journal. NYS schools can access the **Wellness Wakeup** program for free at www.healthyschoolfood.org (out of state schools pay \$50 per year.)
4. Keep corporate influence out of the classroom.

Fast Food Nation, by Eric Schlosser outlines how businesses can “buy” their way into curricula. The Institute of Medicine recommends that schools “are as advertising-free as possible.”
5. Do not use food as a reward.

This once-common practice undermines parents who are trying to feed their children healthfully, and dietitians and eating-disorder experts are urging teachers to discontinue this practice. You can find alternative ideas for rewards at: www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/constructive_rewards.pdf and <http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf>
6. Do not allow junk food in the classroom. Set standards for snacks.

The Institute of Medicine released guidelines for snacks in schools. You can find these guidelines at: www.iom.edu (look for “Nutrition Standards in Schools,” dated April 25, 2007). Even so, the guidelines could be better. There needs to be a focus on fresh fruits and vegetables for snacking, as opposed to processed, packaged foods that are marketed as “healthy” choices. Children don’t get enough fruits and vegetables, so they are ideal.
7. Rethink Birthday parties and other celebrations.

Consider having birthday parties once per month for all children with birthdays that month. Offer one **treat** food and make sure the rest are healthy **snack** foods. If you can’t switch to the once per month model, consider celebrating with healthy smoothies, which children love to make, or non-food activities. One school found that every child in the entire school preferred extra recess over a party with food.
8. Advocate for healthful fundraising.

Find alternative fundraising ideas at: <http://www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/schoolfundraising.pdf>
9. Be a voice in your school for the Local Wellness Policy.

All schools that participate in the National School Meal Program are mandated to have a Local Wellness Policy. It is up to the schools to be sure they are implemented. You can ask your superintendent for a copy, or check the district website.
10. Educate and motivate your students with these resources.

For elementary: **Food is Elementary** curriculum available at www.foodstudies.org.
For ages 9-14: *Chew on This* by Eric Schlosser & Charles Wilson (kids’ version of *Fast Food Nation*).
For junior high and high school: www.meatrix.com; True Cost of Food & Mouth Revolution (watch at www.youtube.com and search on “True Cost of Food” and “Mouth Revolution”).
See NYCHSF’s handout of educational resources. Contact us to email you one.

New York Coalition for Healthy School Food

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Great resources also available at: www.cspinet.org, go to “Nutrition Policy” then “School Foods”