Improved School Nutrition -
A Strategic and Moral Imperative

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June 18, 2013
A Reality Check
Lifestyle Realities

• The average American consumes 131 pounds of sugar per year (it was 10 pounds in the 1800s and 40 pounds in early 80s). 400-473 calories or 18-23 teaspoons a day. (USDA)

• Of the 600,000 packaged food items available for sale in US, 80% are laced with sugar. (Barry Popkin, MD, UNC)

• Fast food consumption has increased 5 fold in the past 30 years. On any given day, 1/3 of US children between the ages of 4 & 15 consume fast food. (Pediatrics, Jan. 2004)

• Over the past 30 years, consumption of processed fruits has increased 913%, processed vegetables 306%, soft drinks 135%, food colors 1,006%, and corn syrup 291%. (USDA)
• French fries are the most commonly consumed vegetable. French fries, along with potato chips, comprise 41% of all vegetables eaten by our youth. (USDA)

• Sodas comprise 25% of liquids consumed in this country. (National Soft Drink Association)

• Middle and high schools are now some of the largest sources of junk foods for our children. (GAO, Sept. 2005)

• 50% of calories consumed in America come from just four food commodities— corn, wheat, soy and rice. (USDA)
Lifestyle Realities

• Less than 3% of Americans engage in the 4 most basic strategies for healthy living: avoiding tobacco, maintaining a healthy weight, eating 5 or more fruits/veggies daily, and exercising regularly. (*Archives of Internal Medicine*, April 2005)

• The average American family views 8 hours cumulatively of TV daily.

• Less than 25% of Americans engage in the amount of physical activity necessary to maintain health and avoid premature chronic disease. (CDC)
Many breakfast cereals marketed to children (ex. Lucky Charms, Fruit Loops) contain more sugar per ounce than soda. >50% of total weight from sugar. (EWG, 2013)

Almost 1/3 of the calories consumed daily in this country come from junk foods – soda, pastries, salty snack foods, fruit drinks, and other sweets. (Journal of Food Chemistry and Analysis, June 2004)

The average American considers doing his own personal tax return easier than knowing how to eat a healthy diet. (IFIC Foundation 2012 survey)
The Tragic Consequences

- Over the past 30 years, rates of overweight and obesity have skyrocketed for all segments of our population.

- From 1988 to 2004, there was an overall 65% increase in abdominal (belly) fat in our youth – 126% increase in girls ages 18-19. (CDC)

- Over the same period of time, the formerly “adult only” disease, type 2 diabetes began occurring in our youth and currently affects 176,000 kids with another 2 million 1 step away from it. (CDC)

- In late 2003, the CDC reported that 1/3 of all US children born in the year 2000 will become type 2 diabetics in their lifetimes and for Blacks and Hispanics, ½ will.
The Tragic Consequences

- Even kids “at risk for overweight” display significant abnormalities in cardiovascular function, including elevated blood pressure and left ventricular dysfunction. (*Pediatrics*, January 2008)

- Behavioral related disorders have skyrocketed in children over the past 10 years, with the cost of medicating them rising 77% from 2000 to 2003. (*Pediatrics*, Sept. 2004)

- Metabolic syndrome currently affects 25-30% of our obese youth & has been shown to increase risk of CVD in adulthood by 14.5 fold. (*Pediatrics*, August 2007)

- Today’s teens are gaining weight twice as fast as their parents. (AHA 44th Annual Conference in CVD Epidemiology)
According to a new report from the Department of Defense, 75% of young Americans 17 to 24 are unable to join the military and being overweight/obese is a leading cause of failing to qualify.

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is now the most common disease in America, affecting 45% of all Latinos, 33% of all Caucasians and 24% of all African Americans.

Prolonged sitting has recently been identified as a powerful, independent risk factor for premature chronic disease and death on par with being obese or being a regular smoker.
Record numbers of our kids are sick and unhealthy and the costs to their quality of life is difficult to fathom – “medical prisoners”
And the economic costs are simply unsustainable
Schools, as the most important public institutions in the lives of our children, have a responsibility to teach and model healthy living and provide an environment where health is the only option.
Evidence is conclusive that healthy, well-nourished children

- Are more prepared to learn
- Have less absenteeism
- Are better able to leverage educational opportunities
- Have less behavioral issues
Poor Health Can Be VERY Costly to Schools

- In states that use attendance to help determine state funding, a single-day absence by just one student can cost a school district anywhere from $9 to $20.

- If nutrition-related health problems like obesity kept children out of school just one day per month, this could cost a large school district like New York about **$28 million each year**, while Chicago would forfeit about **$9 million each year** in state funds.

Source: AFHK Press Release: March 2004
Poor Health Can Be VERY Costly to Schools

• This type of absentee rate is highly probable given current obesity rates and could cost an average-size school district from $95,000 to $160,000 annually in important state aid.

Additional “hidden” costs of poor health include:

• Extra staff time and attention devoted to students with low academic performance or behavior problems caused by poor nutrition and physical inactivity.

Source: AFHK Press Release: March 2004
Additional Hidden Costs....

• Costs associated with time and staff needed to administer medications needed by students with associated physical and emotional problems.

• Rising healthcare costs, absenteeism, and lower productivity due to the affects of poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems among school employees.

Source: AFHK Press Release: March 2004
Bottom Line.....

Schools cannot afford to act like poor nutrition and poor health are somebody else’s problem.
Improved school nutrition can boost a school’s academic standing and their financial bottom line.
Health Promotion

Schools

Match Made in Heaven
Why School Wellness Works

• Captive audience
• Built in channels & protocols for reaching students
• Built in social support/community
• Direct control over physical environment
• Direct control over cultural environment
• Policy power
• Everyone has real skin in the game
School Wellness

Everyone Wins!
Students Win

- academic performance
- Improve health, happiness and quality of life
Schools Win

- ↑ academic achievement
- ↓ absenteeism
- ↑ financial bottom line
- ↑ employee work moral
Schools Win

Gratification for doing the right thing!
Best Practices for Improved School Nutrition

• Building public/private coalitions to improve school nutrition.

• Incorporating appropriate, standardized nutrition curriculum for all grade levels (CATCH, Team Nutrition, etc.).

• Offering school breakfast programs that incorporate both grains and protein at every breakfast.

• After school programs that incorporate healthy snacks and include nutrition education.
Best Practices for Improved School Nutrition

• Replace refined grains with whole grains – 100% whole wheat bread, brown rice, etc.

• School-based vegetable gardens

• School-based cooking classes

• Vigilance in being compliant with federal school food guidelines

• Make salads available daily.

• Eliminate all deep-fried foods. Best to physically remove deep fryers.
Best Practices for Improved School Nutrition

• Eliminating or at least improving the nutritional quality of à la carte food items to meet the following guidelines:
  o No more than 30% calories from fat
  o Less than 10% calories from saturated fats
  o Trans fat free
  o No more than 35% of added sugar by weight
    – (Nuts, seeds and reduced fat cheeses an exception)
• Establish and maintain an active school wellness committee.
• Post nutritional info signs for all cafeteria offerings.
Best Practices for Improved School Nutrition

- Serve baked fries or sweet potato fries.
- Establish regular taste testings of fruits, vegetables, and healthy dishes.
- Incorporate recipe contests.
- Remove all sugary beverages from school campus and offer only 1% or skim milk, plain water, and 100% fruit or vegetable juice in amounts not to exceed 6 ounces for middle and 8 ounces for high school students.
- Implement non-food reward policy.
Best Practices for Improved School Nutrition

• Insure snacks in school vending meet guidelines for healthy snacks.
• Replace unhealthy food fundraisers with “healthy” fundraisers.
• Educational field trips to local farms or farmers markets.
• Post healthy eating messaging or incorporate them into morning announcements.
• Publish health e-newsletter for parents.
Best Practices for Improved School Nutrition

• Establish healthy snack policy for classroom parent-provided foods.
• Limit availability of French fries to once a week.
• Offer a variety of brightly colored fruits and vegetables each day.
• Incorporate more beans.
Words of Wisdom

- Kids learn by example – Be a role model!
- Commit to having lots of healthy foods available.
- Restrict the availability of unhealthy foods.
- Talk to/educate children regularly about the importance of good nutrition. Know what “pushes their buttons.”
- Know that children and teens respond more effectively to “doing what is right,” versus “not doing what is wrong.” Keep the language as positive as possible.
- Remember that America’s diet/lifestyle is the leading cause of preventable deaths in this country and that diet-related diseases begin in childhood.
- Schools, as the most important public institution in the lives of our children, have a responsibility to teach and model healthy eating and healthy living and to provide an environment consistent with this message.
Somerset, Mass. Shape Up Program

Somerset, Mass – School + Community. Goal – Change the environment with small inexpensive steps.

- Local restaurants switched to low fat-milk and smaller portions
- School district doubled the amount of fresh fruit at lunch
- Encouraged walking to school/work
- Director of school food service focused on improving eating habits through improving taste and quality of food served.
  - Fresh foods for frozen
  - Baked French fries with skin vs. standard fries
  - Mixed whole grain pancake batter
  - Whole grain hamburger buns
Somerset, Mass. Shape Up Program

• Regular parent meetings to explain the goals of the plan (all relevant languages)

• Sent weekly tips and healthy recipes to parents

• Got Whole Foods to donate $35,000 of fresh produce

• No limit on fruit – as much as they wanted

• Always featured a fruit or veggie of the month – had regular taste tests featuring the food. Voting encouraged kids to try the item.
Somerset, Mass. Shape Up Program

- Solicited healthy recipes from parents-kids votes
- Eliminated chips, cookies, ice cream, and sports drinks sold at lunch
- Art class – painted fruits and veggies
- After school curriculum – yoga, dance, soccer
- Snacks offered during class from “healthy list” – group snacks brought in by parent
- Curriculum that taught nutrition/exercise
Other

• Cafeteria workers verbally promoting by asking if they want fruit with their lunch

• School garden – homegrown produce
Thank you!

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