

Improved School Nutrition - A Strategic and Moral Imperative

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Solutions
to the Dropout Crisis

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)



Lifestyle Realities



- 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)



Lifestyle Realities



- 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, 1/2 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)



The Tragic Consequences



- 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

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to the Dropout Crisis

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

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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

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to the Dropout Crisis

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:
 - No more than 30% calories from fat
 - Less than 10% calories from saturated fats
 - Trans fat free
 - 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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