

Healthier Middle Schools

Every food service manager can help.

It takes a community.

Healthy change takes a school-wide effort. That's why USDA is reaching out not only to middle school food service managers but to teachers, principals, parents and students, as well. Your knowledge can help them understand barriers to healthy change and identify realistic solutions. Working with people across the community also builds support for your meal program.

It's worth the effort.

As any teacher will tell you, well-nourished kids perform better in class and are ready to learn!^{1,2,3,4,5} When we give kids plenty of healthy food choices and regular physical activity at school, they learn healthier habits for life. That helps to reduce childhood obesity, too.

Now's the time to share what you know.

Nobody knows more than you, or has done more, to make school menus healthier. Now it's time to take your knowledge beyond the cafeteria and join with others to make middle schools healthier.



Recipes for success.

On the back of this flyer, you'll find ideas other food service managers are using to get more healthy food choices into every kid's school day. You may already be doing some, and others may offer new things to try.

1. Florence MD, Asbridge M, Veugelers PJ. Diet quality and academic performance. *J Sch Health*. 2008; 78:209-215.

2. Fu ML, Cheng L, Tu SH, Pan WH. Association between unhealthful eating patterns and unfavorable overall school performance in children. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2007; 107:1935-1943.

3. Sigfúsdóttir ID, Kristjánsson AL, Allegrante JP. Health behaviour and academic achievement in Icelandic school children. *Health Educ Res*. 2007; 22:70-80.

4. Kim HY, Frongillo EA, Han SS, Oh SY, Kim WK, Jang YA, Won HS, Lee HS, Kim SH. Academic performance of Korean children is associated with dietary behaviours and physical status. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr*. 2003; 12:186-192.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.

Middle schools get healthier when **food service managers** share their knowledge.



If kids help create it, they're more likely to eat it.

- Let them have a say in selecting new, healthy menu items featuring dark green, red, and orange veggies; beans and peas, or whole grains.
- Host a tasting event where students and teachers can vote on their favorites. Announce the winners and include them on your menus.



Dress up fruits and veggies.

- Try roasting veggies or adding fresh herbs.
- Cut up fruits and veggies into bite-size pieces served with low-fat dipping sauce.
- Explore preplated or packaged salads. Kids choose them to get through the line faster.



Before they'll eat it, first they need to see it.

In the cafeteria, school store, and vending machines, put healthier foods where kids are most likely to choose them.

- Vegetables at the beginning of the lunch line
- Unflavored milk in front of the chocolate



Visit TeamNutrition.usda.gov and keep up the good work.

More ideas and tips are waiting for you, as well as ready-to-use materials, like talking points to use at school meetings and events.

Thanks for your help.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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