

{ MAKE FOOD CHOICES AN EASY “A” }



Help Make Food Choices an “Easy A”

Education isn’t easy. It takes a lot to master reading, writing, arithmetic and the skills that turn us into productive, successful adults. Add in the pressures of growing up, and there’s already plenty on a kid’s plate. The last thing they need is more junk food at school.

Studies have shown that eating better helps students perform better in school.¹ And forming strong nutritional habits early will help lead to a lifetime of better eating habits.

Let’s help make food choices an “easy A” by implementing national standards for snack foods and beverages in schools. The first step is learning the facts about “Smart Snacks in School.”

- Childhood obesity in the United States is a widespread epidemic. Since 1980, rates of childhood overweight and obesity have tripled, and now nearly one in three children are overweight or obese.
- Children and adolescents often consume as many as 50 percent of their daily calories at school—and while at school they’re often exposed to a variety of unhealthy foods.²
- These unhealthy foods are usually found in places like school vending machines, snack bars and à la carte cafeteria lines.
- Even small changes to students’ school-based diets—such as replacing a candy bar with an apple—may reduce their risk of tooth decay, obesity, and chronic illness through decreased calorie, fat, and sugar intake.³
- Since students with healthier diets are more likely to perform better academically, implementing strong nutrition standards in every state could not only boost efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic, it could also improve academic performance and behavior.
- It’s not just students who benefit from nutrition standards: schools benefit financially when these types of policies are enacted. Research shows that on average food service revenue increases or remains flat when guidelines are applied.⁴



When kids enter the school doors each day, getting the foods they need to succeed shouldn’t be a test. Implementing national standards for snack foods and beverages in schools will help make food choices an easy A.

SOURCES

¹ Hollar D, Messiah SE, Lopez-Mitnik G, Hollar TL, Almon M, and Agatston AS. “Effect of a two-year obesity prevention intervention on percentile changes in body mass index and academic performance in low-income elementary school children.” *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(4):646–553, April 2011.

² Story, Mary. “The Third School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study: Findings and Policy Implications for Improving the Health of US Children,” *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 109, no. 2 (2009): S7–S13.

³ *Out of Balance: A Look at Snack Foods in Secondary Schools across the States*. Rep. The Pew Charitable Trusts and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Kids Safe and Healthful Foods Project, Oct. 2012. Web. 11 Oct. 2013.

⁴ *Snack Facts: Raising the Bar for Nutrition Standards in Schools*. The Pew Charitable Trusts and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Kids Safe and Healthful Foods Project, 20 June 2013. Web. 11 Oct. 2013.