

## Best School Food Policy Practices Compiled by Go For Health!

**Background** The Steering and Child and Youth and Environments Committees of the Go For Health! Collaborative reviewed various food policy resources and gleaned the following list of best practice policies. These are the types of visionary policy elements that Go For Health! believes will have the power to change the landscape of child nutrition. As schools develop their wellness policies, Go For Health! recommends that these policies be considered for inclusion.

The following resources were reviewed by Go For Health! from which this list was developed: Occidental College's "Healthy Food Policies Checklist", Oakland Unified School District Nutrition Policy, "Model School Wellness Policies" developed by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, Alisal Union School District Policy, Pajaro Valley Unified School District Draft Nutrition Policy, and City of Los Angeles Child Nutrition Policy.

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### Goal One:

Ensure that no student goes hungry; increase participation in school nutrition programs.

#### **Policies that support Goal One:**

- ◆ Districts should encourage maximum participation in school meal programs.
- ◆ All schools should offer breakfast and lunch during the day as well as snacks for students in organized after-school programs.
- ◆ Educate students, their families and staff about non-school based programs such as food stamps, food banks, the Federal Women, Infants and Children Program and other resources.
- ◆ Schools with 50% or more free and reduced lunch should apply for USDA Waivers allowing for feeding all children in the school for free.

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### Goal Two:

Improve nutrition, freshness, quality and appeal of food served and sold in schools.

#### **Policies that support Goal Two:**

- ◆ All food served at school and school-related functions shall meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established for school lunches by local, state (SB19) and federal (USDA) statutes and regulations. Schools will:
  - Serve food which is appealing and attractive to children
  - Serve food in clean and pleasant settings
  - Offer a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, sourced from local farmers when possible
  - Serve low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk and nutritionally-equivalent non-dairy alternatives (to be defined by USDA)
  - Ensure that half of the grains served are whole grain
  - Provide healthy snacks as defined by SB19
  - Create a calm environment for students and staff and adequate time for unhurried eating.
  - Ensure foods are available in child-friendly, appropriate portion sizes.

- Ensure that school meals contain:
    - No more than 35% of total calories from fat (not including nuts, seeds);
    - No more than 10% of total calories from saturated fat, including trans fat;
    - No more than 35% added sugar by weight (not including fruits and vegetables when used as additives);
    - No more than 600 mg of sodium per serving
- ♦ Schools should establish relationships with local farms and farmer's markets
- ♦ Increase healthy beverage choices available at school such as:
  - 100% juice
  - Water
  - Beverages that contain at least 50% fruit juice with no added sweeteners
- ♦ Schools should serve enjoyable, culturally appropriate food. Food items served and sold in schools shall reflect the cultural diversity of the student body and consideration of special dietary needs and food preferences and practices.
- ♦ Schools should ensure that candy, soda or other items of questionable nutritional value not be in the classroom; nor should teachers be allowed to distribute such items to students.
- ♦ Vending machines on school campuses shall not dispense sodas, drinks that contain caffeine or a high concentration of sugar, candy, or similar products during school hours.
- ♦ Healthy items will make up 50% of total items offered in vending machines and sales at school, with increases in healthy choices each year linked to increases in sales.
- ♦ Encourage healthy choices by reducing promotion and availability of junk foods.

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**Goal Three:**

Integrate nutrition and physical education into school curriculum.

**Policies that support Goal Three:**

- ♦ Instructs the Superintendent and Director of Food Services to encourage the implementation of a standards-based nutrition/garden curriculum in all schools throughout the district.
- ♦ Provide physical activity and nutrition education training to teachers and staff.
- ♦ The district shall support and encourage such activities as the development of organic school gardens, utilization of fruits and vegetables grown at the schools in cafeteria programs, field trips to farms and farmers' markets, and partnerships between schools and organizations offering programs on good

nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

- ♦ The district shall work with outside agencies to support nutrition education as part of its Life Skills Curriculum. The district's nutrition curriculum shall utilize available materials and service learning to examine the root causes of hunger and food insecurity in students' communities.
- ♦ Work to improve children's knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to healthy eating and physical activity and work to create environments in which practicing these behaviors is both easy and acceptable to create lifelong habits.
- ♦ Train school food service staff to also be nutrition educators; give them roles other than their traditional food serving/preparation roles so that they feel a part of the educational environment.
- ♦ Food Service Department shall train students to lead focus groups to learn about student preference and conduct nutrition education.

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**Goal Four:**

Establish ongoing school wellness (nutrition/physical activity) advisory councils/boards for the purpose of implementing, monitoring and evaluating the school wellness policy.

**Policies that support Goal Four:**

- ♦ School sites shall involve parents/guardians in good nutrition activities.
- ♦ The school wellness council shall include parents/guardians and community representatives; district administrators including Food Services Department staff; teachers, principals, classified employees, and students.
- ♦ The school district and/or individual schools within the district will create, strengthen, or work within existing school health councils to develop, implement, monitor, review and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies. The councils also will serve as resources to school sites for implementing those policies.
- ♦ The school wellness council shall submit an annual report to the Board of Education on the district's compliance with this policy.

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**Resources**

Download these policy resources in their entirety at the following websites.

**Links to policies referenced in this document:**

- ♦ City of Los Angeles Child Nutrition Policy [www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/pdf/city\\_of\\_los\\_angeles\\_child\\_nutrition\\_policy.pdf](http://www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/pdf/city_of_los_angeles_child_nutrition_policy.pdf)
- ♦ Urban and Environmental Policy Institute (Occidental College), "Healthy School Food Policies: A Checklist" [http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/cfj\\_factsheetsarticlesetc.htm](http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/cfj_factsheetsarticlesetc.htm)
- ♦ Alisal Union School District Policy [www.alisal.org/dept/foodsrv/documents/policy.pdf](http://www.alisal.org/dept/foodsrv/documents/policy.pdf)
- ♦ National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity, "Model School Wellness Policies on Physical Activity and Nutrition" <http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/>