

LET'S TALK Healthy Food in Schools



As a majority of children's waking hours are spent in school, it's important to provide them with healthy choices that are good for their overall wellbeing. Children who lack proper nutrition often have trouble focusing in school, while kids who regularly eat nutritious meals are better able to concentrate and have more energy for school work.

Unfortunately, many school-age children are not eating the recommended levels of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and roughly **1 out of 3 children are overweight or obese.**

THE ENDLESS BENEFITS OF HEALTHY FOOD IN SCHOOLS

Healthy food has a significant impact on more than just a child's physical health. Research shows that there is a clear connection between health and learning. Students who eat school breakfast have been shown to **have higher attendance and score higher on standardized math tests.**

And by improving their dietary intake, they decrease the risk of **food insecurity** and protect against **childhood obesity.**



Students who eat school breakfast demonstrate higher attendance and performance



REAL STORIES OF MINNESOTANS PULLING TOGETHER

The philosophy that all kids should have access to healthy food led to the installation of 41 salad bars throughout Minneapolis public schools – even in schools that lacked infrastructure like kitchens and sinks. Regardless of the hurdles, the schools remained focused on the implementation of the salad bars as a way to increase all children's access to healthy foods. The salad bars offer children a healthy choice at lunch, introduce them to new foods and contribute to the adoption of healthy, lifelong habits.

STEPS FOR ACTION



✔ LET'S TALK

Learn more about your school's wellness policy through conversations with teachers, nutrition coordinators and principals.

✔ GET ON THE TEAM

Join your school's health team, a group dedicated to improving the school's health programs and policies. If your school doesn't have a health team or wellness council, help organize one.

✔ DIG UP NEW IDEAS

Suggest that your school plant a school garden, connect with a local farm, or just plant pots of herbs for the classroom windowsill. Kids tend to be more curious about, and connected to, food they grow themselves.

✔ BE SUPPORTIVE

Support school- and district-level wellness and other policies, guidelines, and programs that help students develop healthy food skills and healthy eating habits.

✔ BE ADVENTUROUS

Encourage children to try new, healthier foods and incorporate those foods into meals at home.

Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wsc/index.htm>

http://mnfoodcharter.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/10/MFC_SchoolsLeaderGuide_D10_FINAL.pdf