

# Healthier schools & families: Simple ways to get involved

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who’ll decide where to go...” -Dr. Seuss



## School Food

### A PARENT'S ROLE IN MEAL REFORM

#### 1. Educate yourself

- Eat lunch with your child
- Read your school's wellness policy
- Learn the school lunch basics. Procurement, budgeting & meal planning all present their own challenges. See the Resources page for suggested books & online guides.

#### 2. Identify your allies

- Who wants to help you?
- Who should you include to ensure success?
- Consider including other parents, the kitchen manager, teachers, district employees, the PTA, local health organizations and students

#### 3. Choose your priorities

- Pick one simple goal for your first project. Work for steady, incremental change.

#### 4. Schedule a meeting

- Meet with the kitchen manager or school principal. Learn more about their jobs & the challenges they face.
- Ask how you can help. Suggest possible solutions (which you will have because you have done your school food homework).

#### 5. Voice your concerns

- What changes would you like to see? Put it out there. Utilize local media outlets, online social media and speak up at school board meetings.

#### 6. Collaborate towards achievement

- Create an action plan for success.
- Identify necessary resources and plan a projected timeline.

#### 7. Celebrate & build on your success

- Each achievement deserves to be celebrated. Use this opportunity to garner positive media coverage.

Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride.  
-John F. Kennedy



## KEY SUGGESTIONS

- Be positive & encourage collaboration. Immediately attacking your school's kitchen will do nothing for forward progress. Assume that everyone is working towards the same goal: happy & healthy kids.
- Volunteer in the school kitchen. Adequate staffing can be a major barrier to introducing healthier, more labor-intensive meals.
- Get the media involved. Invite a reporter to highlight healthy changes in your school's meals.
- Volunteer to staff a monthly 'Tasting Table' that features seasonal produce from a local farm.

## COMMON FOOD ADVOCACY ISSUES

- Remove flavored milk from the cafeteria
- Include more fresh fruits and vegetables
- Reduce the amount of fat, sodium & refined sugars that are served
- Add more freshly prepared meals into the lunch menu
- Introduce a salad bar
- Start a school garden
- Advocate for a wellness policy that includes health-conscious guidelines for vending machines and fundraisers
- Implement a farm to school program
- Limit unhealthy foods during classroom celebrations
- Encourage participation in a 'Chefs-to-Schools' program
- More: see the Healthy Schools action document for additional ideas

Carrots are divine... you get a dozen for a dime. It's maaa-gic!  
-Bugs Bunny



## Food & Home Life

### BASIC HEALTHY EATING GUIDELINES

- Eat a wide variety of fruit and vegetables
- Include as many whole, unprocessed foods as possible in your diet
- Limit your intake of refined sugar
- Eat until you are satisfied & full
- Avoid foods that contain pesticides or additives

### HEALTHY FAMILIES, HEALTHY MEALS

- Serve meals full of colorful fruits and vegetables
- Plant a small garden or even a few kitchen herbs
- Provide healthy snacks at your child's next party. Fruit cut into fun shapes, dips, popcorn or personal pizzas are all excellent options.
- Let your child pick out one new fresh fruit or vegetable from the grocery store each week

- Give your child options. E.g. "Do you want grapes OR an orange?" rather than simply "Do you want grapes?"
- Take a family "soda-free" pledge
- Let your child choose one family meal each week and assist with preparation
- Picky eater? Blend veggies into soups & sauces
- Limit the amount of salt that you use. Switch to fresh herbs instead.

## Active Families

### GET MOVING!

- Be active & eat well - YOU are the best role model
- Include a bike ride or walk as a part of your weekend family routine
- Teach your child how to be a safe cyclist and pedestrian
- Organize a walking or bicycling school bus
- Initiate an active outdoors play group in your neighborhood



## Resources

### **RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH: A PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

- Detailed guide by the Center for Ecoliteracy for parents, administrators and kitchens

<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/rethinking-school-lunch-guide>

### **FREE FOR ALL: FIXING SCHOOL FOOD IN AMERICA, BY JANET POPPENDIECK**

- A detailed examination of school food. This book covers the history of school meals, reimbursement, meal planning, kitchen hierarchy, case studies and success stories.

[http://www.janetpoppendieck.com/free\\_for\\_all.html](http://www.janetpoppendieck.com/free_for_all.html)

### **USDA'S MYPLATE: NEW DIETARY GUIDELINES**

- Clear eating guideline graphics. Choose YOUR plate!

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

### **LET'S MOVE!**

- A childhood wellness initiative championed by Michelle Obama. Website includes many fun suggestions for healthy living.

<http://letsmove.gov>

### **HEALTHY EATING AT HOME: ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION**

- Tips for healthy & kid-friendly meals

<http://www.healthiergeneration.org/parents.aspx?id=3418>

**For additional resources, please visit the **School Food Tour** website at:**

**<http://schoolfoodtour.org>**

