Strategies for Implementing Smart Snacks in School: Learning from 8 Districts’ Successes in Controlling Junk Food and Maintaining Revenue

Illinois Public Health Institute
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Webinar Partners
Illinois Public Health Institute
National Network of Public Health Institutes
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Kid’s Safe and Healthful Food Project

We would also like to thank our research partner:
Jamie Chriqui and colleagues, Bridging the Gap, University of Illinois Chicago

Learning Objectives
• Understand the benefits of implementing healthy food and beverage standards/policies for middle and high schools.
• Identify 3 strategies for effective marketing of healthy foods and beverages.
• Understand the strategies used by a sample of school districts to increase participation in the National School Lunch Program as a means of revenue generation.
• Describe 5 methods of increasing fruits and vegetable offerings and consumption.
Presenters

- Alison Burdick, Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, New London, Connecticut
- Mary Hill, Jackson Public Schools, Jackson, Mississippi
- Penny Parham, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida
- Steve Hortin, Acting Branch Chief, Operational Support Branch, Child Nutrition Programs, USDA FNS
- Caitlin Merlo, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Jess Lynch, Illinois Public Health Institute

Caitlin Merlo, MPH
Health Scientist, School Health, CDC

What is the School Nutrition Environment?
What are competitive foods?

- Foods or beverages sold or served outside of the school meal programs:
  - Cafeteria à la carte lines;
  - Vending machines;
  - School stores, snack bars, concession stands;
  - Fundraisers;
  - Celebrations;
  - Class rewards; and
  - School events.


What are the concerns about competitive foods?

- Most students have access to competitive foods in at least one of these venues.
- “Compete” with school meal programs.
- Historically, the most commonly available competitive foods were high in sugar, fat, and calories.
- Until recently, there has been limited federal regulation of competitive foods.


Institute of Medicine Report on Competitive Foods

- 3 key conclusions
  - Federally reimbursable school meals programs should be the main source of nutrition in schools.
  - Opportunities for competitive foods should be limited.
  - If competitive foods are available, they should consist primarily of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nonfat or low-fat milk and milk products.

Implementing Nutrition Standards

“While some schools report an initial decrease in revenue after implementing nutrition standards, a growing body of evidence suggests that schools can have strong nutrition standards and maintain financial stability.”


Jess Lynch
Senior Associate, Illinois Public Health Institute

Learning from 8 Districts

findings from school districts that have had success

Principal Investigators: Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) and Bridging the Gap at the University of Illinois at Chicago

Purpose of Study

To learn from districts (and schools within those districts) that have successfully implemented strong competitive food standards while minimizing negative financial impacts.

USDA Smart Snacks in Schools


Methodology

- Qualitative research conducted in 2012 with updates collected in 2014
- Sample selection: Bridging the Gap Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago
- Identified districts with strong competitive food policies
- Semi-structured interviews with 31 individuals: 8 Food Service Directors, 13 principals, PTA representatives, cafeteria managers, wellness directors
Geographic Distribution

- Bismarck Public Schools, North Dakota
- Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts
- Corvallis School District 509J, Oregon
- Jackson Public Schools, Mississippi
- Marshall County Schools, Alabama
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Florida
- New London Public Schools, Connecticut
- Perry County School District #53, Alabama

Key Findings

- Profits dipped initially but rebounded with time.
- Increasing participation in the school meal program was a key element of maintaining profits across all food service accounts, offsetting lost competitive foods profits.
- Most schools implemented changes incrementally.
- Engaging multiple stakeholders to implement a variety of strategies was important to successfully transitioning to healthier products.
- “Doing the right thing” with regard to student nutrition was more important than profit among the schools in the study.

Tip Sheets for Healthier Competitive Foods Standards

- Finances: Strategies to Maintain Revenues
- Creating and Implementing Policies
- Improving Access to Healthy Foods and Beverages
- Student Education and Engagement
- Improving Cafeteria Strategies

Finances
• Increased enrollment in school meal programs compensates for revenue from snack foods
• Increasing variety in school meals
• Increasing access to school meals- before and after-school
• Increasing price of school meals that were low because of snack foods revenue
• Comprehensive approach

Policies
• Engaged champions (principals, FSD, school boards, wellness councils)
• Adapting current policies and using structures from CDC (School Health Index) and others
• Incremental approach and trial and error
• Communication with families
• Training staff

Access to Healthy Foods
• Reduce access to unhealthy foods (school stores, vending, cafeterias, fundraising)
• Classroom celebrations and fundraising

Cafeteria Strategies
• Pricing strategies
• Marketing, promotion, product placement
• Addition of more fruits and vegetables
• Staff modeling
• Appeal of the cafeteria: flow, decorations
Student Education and Engagement

• Expand nutrition education: classrooms, Farm to School
• Increased variety and choice in meal program
• Student feedback: surveys, focus groups, taste testing
• Marketing throughout school

Expertise from the field

Penny Parham
Alison Burdick
Mary Hill
Penny Parham, Food Service Director, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, FL

- Establishing partnerships
- Engaging and connecting with adults
- Experiential opportunities
- How we did it: Merchandising, Sales, Incentives, Marketing

Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School

Alison Burdick, Principal
burdickal@newlondon.org

New London, CT

New London is the smallest of the 7 urban school districts in CT
-6 schools; 3,800 students

Recipient of the Healthier US School Challenge Silver Award

Recipient of the Carol M. White PEP Federal Grant
District Statistics

All students receive free meals; 85% of students qualify

Served:
- 12,569 Breakfasts
- 215,326 Lunches
- 179,687 Afterschool Suppers & Snacks

$2.5 Million dollar budget; 45 Food Service Staff

Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School

625 Students

43,000 lunches served
- 85% participation rate

28,000 breakfasts served in the classroom
- Doubled participation to 55%
Gaining Staff Support

- Breakfast in the classrooms
- Fresh Fruit Program
- Staff wellness programs
- Goodbye candy jar!

Listening to the Students

- “What's a kiwi?”
- “You want me to get up at what time?”
- “Can we have hot breakfast?”
- “Have you tried this?”

Changing our Fundraising

- Walk-a-thons
- School spirit wear
- Dances
Promoting a healthy lifestyle

Getting everyone involved

What is your favorite restaurant?

Would you want to eat there on Monday? Tuesday? Wednesday?

Every day next month?

Every day for the next 180 days?
Mission Statement: To provide every student with nutritious healthy meals to nourish their body and mind.

Vision Statement: To Operate a financially sound program that promotes student health and wellness that results in high achievements.

- Enrollment: 30,000 students
- The department's operating budget is approximately $20,000,000 annually.
- Meals: 60 schools sites serving 16,000 breakfasts, 26,000 lunches and 1,500 after school snacks daily, and serving 75,000 summer feeding meals.
- Donated Food USDA - $1,000,000 (District Food Service Warehouse)
- New initiatives: Breakfast in Classroom – grant for classrooms; Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
- Grants: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), and Organ Wise in all Elementary Schools.

- Professional Development: District Cook Training Class and Management Training Class, other Professional Development periodically during the school year, Monthly Food Service Manager Meetings, Principal Meetings (as needed), and Principal/Manager Luncheons.
- Food Service Achievements: HealthierUS School Challenge, School Wellness Initiatives, 10116 10 weeks Weight Loss Badge Program, Weight Watchers, Annual Food Service Appreciation and Awards Banquet.
- Marketing: Fruit and Vegetables, Student engagement, exposure to healthy foods, presentation of food, listening to customers.
- Installed a $1,000,000 of Equipment in schools kitchens and cafeterias.
- Menu Enhancements: Salad of the Day, Combi Ovens, Reduction/Elimination of Fried Foods, and Standardized Recipes, and a variety of salt-free seasonings used in food preparations.

How to support implementation of nutrition standards?

- **Educate** school districts and schools about Smart Snacks
- **Identify** evidence based practices that exceed Smart Snacks
- **Assist** districts to review and revise local school wellness policies
- **Leverage** partners to deliver professional development and technical assistance
USDA opportunities for increasing capacity for school food service

Steve Hortin
Acting Branch Chief,
Operational Support Branch,
Child Nutrition Programs
USDA Food and Nutrition Service

USDA opportunities
http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/grants

USDA opportunities
http://www.fns.usda.gov/tr/team-nutrition-training-grants
USDA opportunities

http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program

USDA opportunities

http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html

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http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html
Q&A

For More Information:

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Thank you to all of our presenters!