



## HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES: FOOD

# Improve School Nutrition

Creating a healthier school food system requires more than just new recipes and menus. It takes a systems approach—one that requires reevaluating existing school food systems, developing new partnerships, and investing in new strategies. Below are examples of successful initiatives that take a Health in All Policies approach.

### Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools (LMSB2S)

LMSB2S is a growing public health movement that strives for local, state, and national level stakeholder engagement to support putting salad bars in schools. LMSB2S helps connect schools that want to implement a salad bar with donors who can help make that a reality.<sup>1</sup>

LMSB2S requires cross-sectoral collaboration between agriculture, education, and health sectors, and collaboration between environmental health and chronic disease departments within health agencies.

Schools that have implemented LMSB2S have found that children increase their intake of fruits and vegetables when they have access to a variety of choices on a school salad bar.<sup>1</sup> A 2007 study conducted by University of California, Los Angeles researchers found that offering children a school salad bar “significantly increased” the frequency of their fruit and vegetable consumption.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, offering children an assortment of fruits and vegetables may encourage them to eat foods they have never eaten before, teaching them to incorporate a greater variety of foods into their diets.<sup>3</sup> Finally, school salad bars can help children learn, at an early age, to make healthy food decisions even after the school day ends.<sup>4</sup>

#### Minnesota

Building off of its farm-to-school program partnerships with the Minnesota Department of Education and the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Health's Physical Activity and Nutrition Unit addressed the barriers to getting salad bars in

schools through a small grant from the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists. Because state environmental health staff were concerned about food safety, nutrition staff first presented the concept to sanitarians at the statewide food safety partnership meeting. This helped build support for the concept, and allowed the nutrition and environmental health staff to jointly create an implementation guide for Minnesota schools that addressed both nutritional benefits and best practices in food safety.<sup>5</sup>

#### Farm to Schools

Farm-to-schools programs aim to connect schools with local food distributors or local farmers. Schools can procure farm-to-school foods from a variety of sources, but the most common source is local farmers. Schools may also consider starting a school garden on or off of school property to source their programs. School gardens can also be an excellent way for children to learn about ecosystems and stewardship and engage in physical activity.<sup>6</sup>

#### Minnesota

Minnesota is using its statewide health improvement program (SHIP) to connect schools with local farmers in order to implement farm-to-school programs.<sup>7</sup> Through SHIP, the Minnesota Department of Health has supported numerous farm-to-school efforts, including providing kids the opportunity to eat more local, fresh foods and even learn about where the food comes from.<sup>8</sup>

## South Carolina

South Carolina Senate Bill 191, signed into law in June 2013, established a new voluntary program to bring schools and local farms together to serve fresh fruits and vegetable to students.<sup>9</sup> The South Carolina Department of Agriculture oversees these Fresh on the Campus programs, and collaborates with the state Department of Health and Environmental Control, the state Department of Education, and Clemson University.<sup>10</sup> The goal of the Fresh on the Campus programs is to provide students with “fresh and minimally processed farm foods for use in their daily meals and snacks.”<sup>11</sup> Under the bill, school districts are also encouraged to design nutrition plans and offer training to school food service employees.<sup>11</sup>

## Federal Policies to Improve School Nutrition

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 required USDA to issue new school nutrition standards that comply with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, federal nutrition guidelines for competitive foods on school campuses, and individual school wellness and food safety policies.<sup>12</sup> Many cities and school districts have adopted policies, some even more strict than the federal guidelines, to make school food environments even healthier.<sup>13</sup> The act’s implementation has required collaboration between the education, agriculture, and health sectors at federal, state, and local levels.

As part of the act, the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program help combat hunger by providing balanced meals to millions of children in the United States every day. It is estimated that 12 million children utilize the School Breakfast Program, while some 32 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program.<sup>14</sup>

## Massachusetts

In 2010, Massachusetts passed the Act Relative to School Nutrition ahead of new federal standards. The act directed the state Department of Public Health and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop standards for snacks and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores, snack bars, and cafeteria a la carte lines. The

standards, finalized in 2011, promote non-fried vegetables and fresh fruits, whole grains, and low- and non-fat dairy products. Plain drinking water is required to be available throughout the school day at no cost, while highly processed and calorie-laden junk foods, like sodas, candy bars, and potato chips, are very limited. Farm-to-school provisions in the act make it easier for schools to purchase food directly from Massachusetts farmers. Additionally, the act requires training public school nurses in screening and referral for obesity, diabetes, and eating disorders.

*Additional resources for public health officials:*  
<http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/feeding-americas-schoolchildren-resources-public-health-and-school-stakeholders>

- 
- <sup>1</sup> University of California, Los Angeles. “Kids eat more fruits, vegetables when schools offer salad bar.” December 2011. Available at: <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/kids-eat-more-fruits-and-vegetables-40698.aspx>. Accessed 1-8-2014.
- <sup>2</sup> Slusser W, Cumberland WG, Browdy BL, *et al.* “A school salad bar increases frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption among children living in low-income households.” *Public Health Nutrition*. 2007; 10(12): 1490–1496.
- <sup>3</sup> Savage JS, Fisher JO, Birch LL. “Parental Influence on Eating Behavior: Conception to Adolescence.” *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*. 2007; 35(1): 22-34.
- <sup>4</sup> Let’s Move Salad Bars to Schools. “Why Salad Bars?” Available at: <http://saladbars2schools.org/why>. Accessed 1-8-2014.
- <sup>5</sup> Minnesota Department of Health. “Nutrition: Let’s move salad bars to schools.” Available at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdrr/nutrition/FTS/saladbars.html>. Accessed 1-8-2014.
- <sup>6</sup> Blair D. “The Child in the Garden: An Evaluative Review of the Benefits of School Gardening.” *Journal of Environmental Education*. 2009; 40(2): 15-38. Available at: <http://www.csupomona.edu/~smemerson/business318/articles101/childrens%20gardens.pdf>. Accessed 1-8-2014.
- <sup>7</sup> Minnesota Department of Health. “SHIP Strategies.” April 2013. Available at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/strategies.html>. Accessed 1-8-2014.



---

<sup>8</sup> Minnesota Department of Health. “Stories: Improving Nutrition.” Available at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/stories/#nutrition>. Accessed 1-8-2014.

<sup>9</sup> Eat Smart Move More South Carolina. “2012 Legislative Agenda.” Available at: <http://eatsmartmovemoresc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/2012-Legislative-Agenda.pdf>. Accessed 1-8-2014.

<sup>10</sup> The National Farm to School Network. “Farm to School Bill Summary (H4200 and S812).” Available at: [http://www.farmentoschool.org/files/policies\\_105.pdf](http://www.farmentoschool.org/files/policies_105.pdf). Accessed 1-8-2014.

<sup>11</sup> South Carolina General Assembly. “Senate Bill 191.” Available at: [http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess120\\_2013-2014/bills/191.htm?utm\\_source=06%2F2013+LHC+E-News&utm\\_campaign=LHC+June&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess120_2013-2014/bills/191.htm?utm_source=06%2F2013+LHC+E-News&utm_campaign=LHC+June&utm_medium=email). Accessed 1-8-2014.

<sup>12</sup> Public Health Law Center. “Access to Healthy Affordable Food.” Available at: <http://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/access-healthy-affordable-food>. Accessed 1-8-2014.

<sup>13</sup> Illinois Public Health Institute. “Controlling Junk Foods and the Bottom Line: Case Studies of Schools Successfully Implementing Strong Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods and Beverages.” 2013. Available at: [http://iphionline.org/pdf/IPHI\\_Controlling\\_Junk\\_Food\\_Report\\_32113.pdf](http://iphionline.org/pdf/IPHI_Controlling_Junk_Food_Report_32113.pdf). Accessed 1-8-2014.

<sup>14</sup> Let’s Move. “Healthy Schools.” Available at: <http://www.letsmove.gov/healthy-schools>. Accessed 1-8-2014.