



The  
UNIVERSITY  
of VERMONT

## Vermont Legislative Research Shop

### Healthy School Meals Incentives

Currently, Vermont school systems utilize several programs available through federal funding, including the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, The Special Milk Program and The Summer Food Service Program. However, other states are examining additional creative programming options and have implemented programs with a focus on increased nutritional content in school meals.

#### Idaho

The Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET) provides training and resources in order to improve the quality of child nutrition programs and to conduct educational assessments of the program's sponsors and teachers. An additional grant expanded the training beyond the school system in order that the children share their positive eating habits with their parents. A current NET demonstration grant awards mini-grants to school districts, distributes a newsletter for educators, completes a school administrator training package and trains a school food service on fiscal management. School districts are then eligible for an additional grant if they serve as a Team Nutrition Demonstration site (Safaii 1998).

#### Maryland

Montgomery County in Maryland looked to its students for ideas on how to increase the nutritional value of school meals while keeping them appetizing. Students developed recipes according to guidelines that were set by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Some of these guidelines include that each meal must provide  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of a fruit or vegetable from two different sources, 1-2 slices of bread (or other starch), 1 cup of milk, and must be  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the recommended dietary allowance and contain at least 2 ounces of high-protein food. All of this must be accomplished at a reasonable price (Lorente 1995). School officials judged the recipes and the winning recipe was served in schools throughout the county. Many students opted to submit vegetarian recipes.

#### Ohio

A recent memo sent from the Superintendent of Ohio Schools discussed that the shortcoming of the School Meals Programs: criteria could be met while still incorporating carbonated beverages and other popular food with little nutritional value (i.e., candy, doughnuts, chips, jellies and gum). In response to this problem, Ohio now requires that local school boards pass their own strict nutritional requirements, including a ban on carbonated beverages and sugar items. Unfortunately, the state does this to the financial detriment of each school (Rubin 2000).

#### New Jersey

Annually, each New Jersey school is eligible to sponsor a program in which it will receive cash reimbursement and commodities from the United States Department of Agriculture based upon the number of lunches served to students. The sponsored programs need to comply with certain requirements, such as meals that meet the U.S.

Dietary Guidelines that have been established for Americans, including a diet low in sodium and fat and high in Vitamin A, C, and iron (Kovalsky 2000).

### **Arizona, Florida, Iowa, West Virginia, Kentucky, Connecticut, Louisiana, Texas, New York**

The USDA regulates the sale of "competitive foods" that are of low nutritional value by banning their sales only during scheduled school mealtimes. Arizona, Florida, Iowa, West Virginia, Kentucky, Connecticut, Louisiana, Texas, and New York have passed their own restrictions on such foods by banning sales entirely. The revenue from competitive food sales in the states that simply follow the USDA guidelines is used for a variety of school programs, such as art exhibits, drug-free events, athletic uniforms, and scholarships (Cavanaugh 1999).

### **References**

Cavanaugh, M., 1999. "Competitive Foods and the School Lunch Program" <http://www.nsd.com> The National Soft Drink Association

Kovalsky, Linda S, 2000. "In the Schools: New Jersey Team Nutrition Days." <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/InTheSchools/NewJersey.html>.

Lorente, Carol Wiley. "Meals that make the grade: enterprising high-school students develop meatless dishes for their cafeteria." *Vegetarian Times* (62), 1995.

Rubin, Hank, 2000. "Compliance with school meal programs." [http://cns.ode.state.oh.us/PDFdocs/compliance\\_hank\\_memo.pdf](http://cns.ode.state.oh.us/PDFdocs/compliance_hank_memo.pdf). Associate Superintendent for Students, Families, and Communities.

Safaii, SeAnne, 1998. "Nutrition Education and Training Program." <http://www.sde.state.id.us/child/programs.htm>. Idaho Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs.

---

Compiled by Julie Britt, Thomas Miller, and Robyn Schmidek, February 6, 2001.