

The Role of School Nutrition Programs

View school nutrition programs as essential partners in our quest to promote healthy eating and active living. School food service programs, more progressively called school nutrition programs, often operate independently from the greater school environment. However, schools implementing 5210 can benefit greatly from a relationship with the school nutrition program and vice versa.



What 5210 teams can do:

- Invite the district school nutrition director to join your team. Let them know what 5210 is and that you are looking at the entire school environment (celebrations, snack time, fundraisers, etc). Invite them to participate because of their expertise in feeding kids and your desire to develop a productive relationship. A good way to start off on the right foot is to ask what you can do to help the nutrition program. Be positive and don't immediately request changes.
- If you are working on a healthy snack program, don't go it alone! Involve your school nutrition director. Each school also has a kitchen manager. You may get more headway with the director, but having the manager on board is helpful too.
- Embrace lunch staff as valuable members of the school community. Give them a chance to show off their stuff! Offer them the opportunity to come into the classroom to offer nutrition education.
- Get in the cafeteria. Walk through the hot lunch line. Help kids identify how their lunch choices can contribute to their 5-a-day. Go to the salad bar. Sit with the kids. Be a healthy eating role model!
- If you want to work on the school menu, developing a positive working relationship with the director is the first step. Be curious. Ask about what nutrition standards they follow and how much money they have per meal. It's a real eye-opener.

See reverse side for more information...

What school nutrition directors can do:

- Adding a healthy new menu item? Rely on your 5210 team members to help promote the new item. Ask the principal, school nurse, or school secretary to help serve the new item.
- Write descriptive menu, e.g. write 'Grandma's Garden Vegetable Stew' instead of 'Vegetable Soup'¹
- Encourage teachers to eat school lunch with students. Enter these teachers into a drawing for a healthy snack for their classroom.
- Increase the nutritional quality of school meals by achieving the Healthier US School Challenge.
- Include classroom teachers in "March through the Alphabet" or "Eat your way through the Rainbow" initiatives. These efforts can be complemented in the classroom.
- Market, market, market! Let people know why your program is great!



Reference

(1) Wansink, B., Just, D. R., Payne, C. R., & Klinger, M. Z. (2012). Attractive names sustain increased vegetable intake in schools. *Preventive Medicine*, 55(4), 330-332.