IMPACTING SCHOOL NUTRITION IN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Chera Sevcik, MS
SHIP Coordinator – Faribault, Martin & Watonwan Counties - Minnesota
Passed by the 2008 legislature as part of Minnesota Health Reform.

Minnesota Department of Health awarded funds that covered all Community Health Boards and 7 of 9 tribal governments.

Uses sustainable policy-system-environmental approach to improving health.

Targets four sectors: Community, School, Worksite, Health Care Organization.
Faribault, Martin & Watonwan Counties received a SHIP grant to work in schools, worksites, health care organizations and communities.

Selected school interventions and offered mini-grants to schools.

Four School Districts participated in SHIP School Nutrition work.
IDENTIFYING THE CHAMPIONS
Martin County West (MCW) & Blue Earth Area (BEA) Schools applied for SHIP mini-grant

Other school districts were invited to partner - United South Central (USC) Schools joined the partnership

$42,000 was awarded to improve school nutrition policies and environments over 1.5 years

SHIP Staff/Public Health involvement was key**
GRANT ACTION PLAN DEFINED

- Hire a Nutrition Consultant
- Convene Wellness Committees to review existing policies
- Conduct School Health Index
- Conduct School specific nutrition assessments
- Draft action plan & present to stakeholders
- Revise school wellness policies
- Implement environmental changes
- Educate parents, students and staff
- Develop replication guide
CONSULTANT – LESLIE LYTLE, PHD, RD

- Help collect pre/post data
- Develop resources/materials for schools to aid in implementation
- Helped schools convene wellness committees
- Provide training & technical assistance to school food service staff, school nurses, administration
A principal survey used to collect data on current school policies and procedures as well as their opinions about school wellness issues;

A survey to parents, school staff and food service about their attitudes and opinions about school wellness issues;

An inventory of all vending machines, a la carte, and concession foods in all schools; and

A review and scoring of each district’s wellness policies.
School District Population of 1212 students reaching the communities of Blue Earth, Frost, Winnebago, Delevan, and Elmore

53% qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch

Three school buildings in two cities (Blue Earth and Winnebago)
BEA identified the following as priority areas after completing assessment:

- Increasing support of and alliance with Food Service through collaboration and training
- Improve number of students eating breakfast
- Reduce the use of foods/beverages as incentives and rewards by teachers
- Improve the healthfulness of foods/beverages offered as part of:
  - Classroom Celebrations
  - Vending & Concessions
Completed School Health Index Assessment in addition to nutrition assessment conducted by Dr. Lytle.

Pass comprehensive wellness policy in August 2011 for immediate implementation.

Implemented “Grab-n-Go” breakfast options to help increase student participation in school breakfast in both middle and high-school.

Changes to school lunch menu

Changes to milk/snack break and a la carte

Changes to birthday/classroom celebrations

Received funding from USDA for Fruit/Veggie Snack Program
INSTEAD OF BIRTHDAY CAKE
INCREASED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AT LUNCH
WHOLE GRAINS AND 1% MILK
Dear Parents & Guardians,

Our school is excited to announce our newly revised school wellness policy! For the past year we have been working with the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), nationally recognized dietician, Leslie Lytle, PhD., RD, and numerous dedicated parents, teachers and administrators to ensure our school district promotes an environment which encourages and provides healthy foods and opportunities for students to be physically active during the school day. The following changes will begin in the Fall of 2011.

**We thank you for working with us to ensure a healthier school environment for all children!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MILK BREAK</th>
<th>BIRTHDAY'S</th>
<th>CLASSROOM PARTIES</th>
<th>SCHOOL MEALS</th>
<th>BREAKFAST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teachers may request parents bring a snack from the following list for milk break:</td>
<td>Birthday's will now be celebrated without food or beverages. Classroom teachers are exploring alternative ways to celebrate birthdays. We are asking for parent support with this policy by not sending birthday treats or beverages to school.</td>
<td>The classroom teacher will decide if food will be part of the holiday party. Foods we encourage for classroom parties include: Fruits &amp; Vegetables (cut and ready to serve) Pretzels Whole Wheat Crackers Unfrosted Animal Crackers Graham Crackers Saltines Water</td>
<td>A number of changes will be occurring in our school food service as a result of new standards issued from the Institute of Medicine and USDA. Students will now see a larger variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products. We encourage our students to participate in the school food program and encourage all families to check out the free and reduced breakfast and lunch program! Contact the school for more information!</td>
<td>Blue Earth Area Schools provides breakfast daily for our students and encourages all students to eat a well-balanced breakfast each day. Our breakfast items will include a variety of healthy choices for students including whole grains and fruits and low-fat dairy.</td>
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- Pretzels
- Whole Wheat Crackers
- Unfrosted Animal Crackers
- Graham Crackers
- Saltines

Our school will only serve skim and 1% milk per USDA guidelines.

The school is aware of the increase in students with allergies. Not knowing what is in a baked product limits our ability to protect our students therefore we are asking that you not send food or beverages into the classroom.
When reviewing district wellness policy
- BEA scored a 34 out of 100 with district wellness policy **comprehensiveness**
- BEA scored a 9 out of 100 with district wellness policy **strength**

When reviewing district wellness policy after implementation of new policy:
- BEA scored a 70 out of 100 with district wellness policy **comprehensiveness**
- BEA scored a 45 out of 100 with district wellness policy **strength**
Martin County West School District Population of 736 students reaching the communities of Welcome, Sherburn, Dunnell and Trimont in Minnesota

Free and Reduced Lunch Rate of 36%
MCW identified the following as priority areas after completing assessment:

- Work with school food service.
- Increase the number of healthy options offered in a la carte and through concessions.
- Create an acceptable policy limiting or eliminating food used as a reward or incentive by school staff.
- Create an acceptable policy limiting treats brought into the classroom.
- Increase awareness of MCW staff and parents of childhood obesity risk for students.
MARTIN COUNTY WEST RESULTS

- Completed School Health Index and additional nutrition assessments
- Passed Comprehensive Wellness Policy in July 2011
- Convened Student Catalyst Group focused on Nutrition
- Partnered with FFA to support School Garden
- Changes to school lunch menu including access to daily salad bars for K-12 students and staff.
- Changes to milk/snack break and a la carte
- Changes to birthday/classroom celebrations
Student Catalyst Group with School Nurse Laura Kramer promoting ‘Think Your Drink’ information
When reviewing district wellness policy:
- MCW scored a 73 out of 100 with district wellness policy *comprehensiveness*.
- MCW scored a 28 out of 100 with district wellness policy *strength*.

When reviewing district wellness policy after implementation of new policy:
- MCW scored a 82 out of 100 with district wellness policy *comprehensiveness*.
- BEA scored a 59 out of 100 with district wellness policy *strength*.

**POLICY FUELS SUSTAINABLE CHANGE!**
School District Population of 660 students reaching the communities of Wells, Bricelyn, Kiester, Easton, Walters and Freeborn.

50% qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch

One building housing all students in K-12
USC identified the following as priority areas after completing assessment:

- Create and enforce a policy that restricts student access to unhealthy foods during the school day and in classroom (including foods as rewards and incentives and celebrations).
- Create and enforce a policy that promotes only healthy foods or non food items as school and classroom fundraisers.
- Create a process for strengthening and maintaining a strong wellness policy that includes many different school stakeholders.
UNITED SOUTH CENTRAL RESULTS

- Completed School Health Index and additional nutrition assessments
- Changes to school lunch menu including:
  - Daily access to salad bars for K-12 students and staff
  - Increase amounts of fruits and vegetables, low-fat milk and whole grains served at each meal
- Changes to elementary snack break (implementing the snack cart program)
- Changes to a la carte including elimination of high calorie/high fat foods and introduction of more healthful options
- Continuing education for parents, students and staff
USC CHANGED SCHOOL LUNCHES
LESSONS LEARNED

- Wellness champions are needed to move change forward
- Making changes is time intensive
- Value added by working across school districts
- Support from administration helps move changes forward
- Focus needed on changes that are supported and doable
- Winning people over
- Change is not always easy
Implementation strategies moving forward
- Continue to explore curriculum and activities to support nutrition work
- Continue education with parents, students and staff
- Expand activities whenever possible

Outside grant opportunities to help continue the momentum
- Youth Catalyst Movement
- USDA Fruit/Vegetable Snack Program
- SHIP
Faribault, Martin, and Watonwan Counties School Nutrition Project Case Study report can be found at http://tinyurl.com/3o6zn5v
Faribault, Martin & Watonwan Counties SHIP
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Smart Choices in Dakota County Schools

Making It Better Conference
Minneapolis, MN
November 16, 2011
• Smart Choices began in early 2009

• Partnership between five school districts and the Dakota County Public Health Department

• Funded by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota through its Prevention Minnesota initiative

• Expanded to nine school districts later in 2009 with funding from the Minnesota Department of Health’s Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)
Smart Choices’ Goals

- Support the health of students and staff by creating an environment that encourages healthy food choices

- Increase access, availability, and consumption of healthy foods

- Decrease access, availability, and consumption of unhealthy foods
Smart Choices’ Goals

• Sustain efforts through policy, systems, and environmental changes

• Create a norm in schools and the community that leads to improved eating behaviors

• The long-term impact will be improved health and a reduction in the escalating health care costs caused by poor diets
Key Components of Success

- School wellness champions
- District-wide wellness committees
- Food environment assessment
- School districts created action plans
- Funding and support for schools
The Role of Public Health

- Convened countywide Smart Choices Leadership meetings
- Provided funding and training
- Staff attended district wellness committee meetings and assisted with:
  - Assessment
  - Planning
  - Evaluation
Countywide Smart Choices’ Results

• School districts made 118 policy, systems, and environment changes in meals, snacks, vending machines, classroom celebrations, school stores, rewards and fundraising

• Reports of districts staying within budget in spite of reducing unhealthy food choices

• Reports of increase in sales of fruits, vegetables, water and skim milk
ISD 192 Smart Choices
Farmington Schools
Highlights in Farmington Schools

Comprehensive wellness policy and guidelines revised and passed that include:

• All foods sold in schools will meet Institute of Medicine (IOM) nutrition standards

• Healthy snacks

• Non-food rewards

• Non-food and healthy food celebrations
Highlights in Farmington Schools

• Food marketing and fundraising

• District Wellness Committee

• Supportive food service staff

• Report wellness goals and plans annually to the Board of Education
Specific Accomplishments

• Snack carts and healthy snack policies
• Non-food birthday celebrations
• Non-food rewards
• Eliminating a la carte at elementary and middle schools
Healthy Fundraising
More Accomplishments

Improving healthy options in vending, school store, and a la carte at the high school

School Store Before ↓

School Store After ↓
Key Components to Success and Sustainability

- Administrative support
- District champion
- Wellness committee with representatives from each building
- Dakota County Public Health staff support
- Comprehensive policy and guidelines
ISD 191 Smart Choices
Burnsville/Eagan/Savage Schools
191 Wellness Committee

• 10 Smart Choices Leaders from each elementary school plus five others from administration, principals, and parents

• Meets monthly – learn from outside resources, plan activities, share challenges and successes. Crucial to success of program!

• Smart Choices Coordinator about 50% FTE

• Focus on Nutrition and Physical Activity
Nutrition Initiatives

• Taste testing in lunchrooms to promote new foods like legumes, fruits, veggies. Students hand out samples

• Monthly one-page Smart Choices Wellness Updates with recipes, information in all parent newsletters

• Promote healthy classroom parties (one school policy)
Nutrition Initiatives

• Promote healthy classroom snacks and rewards (goal is to include language in parent handbooks)

• Simply Good Eating (nutrition education) in four schools (30 classrooms) last year, more expected this year
Student at Sioux Trail hears from beekeeper

← Students at Vista View enjoy squash samples
In-School Student-Led Initiatives

- Healthy cooking segments on morning announcements: students plan and perform cooking segments like “food channel” - have cooked fruit kebobs, ants-on-a-log, mini-English muffin pizzas

- “Mystery” fruit and vegetable trivia and healthy eating information on Rahn Elementary TV3 morning news
Healthy Fundraising

- Two elementary schools in partnerships with Valley Natural Foods Cooperative for healthy fundraising and Community Nights

- Monthly healthy low-cost meal, cooking demonstration, scavenger hunt, and cooking demos and tasting at store

- Valley donates over $1,000 to each school

- Also working with all PTOs to promote fruit boxes, “fun runs” and other healthy fundraising options
Other Nutrition Outcomes

- Removal of unhealthy items from Burnsville High School vending machine
- Removal of unhealthy “a la carte” items from middle and elementary lunchrooms
- More healthy options at lunch everyday!
- Sub sandwich line at Eagle Ridge Junior High
Other Nutrition Outcomes

- Snack Program – healthy snacks for all second graders in district for 8 weeks January-March

Broccoli, snow peas, grapes, kiwi, jicama, fresh pears and more!
Other Nutrition Outcomes

- Increased purchasing from local farmers
- Local honey and classroom presentations from beekeeper
- Sweet corn from Pahl’s Market, Apple Valley
- Variety of fresh produce from local farmers including Akerberg Acres in Belle Plaine
Goals for 2011-2012 and Beyond

- More community connections and partnerships with Valley YMCA, hospitals, insurance agencies, City of Burnsville
- Increased parent involvement: volunteering in classrooms, lunchrooms, etc.
- Policy changes – get healthy party policy and healthy snack policy in handbook
- More administrative support for all policies to enforce Wellness Policy language
Resources

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Resources

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Smart Choices Website
http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Departments/PublicHealth/Projects/HealthyEating.htm
Building and Sustaining School–Public Health Partnerships

Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department
Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)

- Physical activity
- Nutrition
- Tobacco
SHIP Deliverables

• Hire SHIP coordinator
• Assess school wellness environment
• Develop action plans
SHIP Deliverables continued

- Communicate with stakeholders
- Implement PSE changes
- Promote policy changes
- Develop sustainability plans
SHIP Outcomes

• Established wellness councils
• Implemented best practices
• Revised policies
SHIP Partnership Highlights

Osseo Area Schools
Eat Smart to Be Smart

Robbinsdale Schools
Daily Salads
Osseo Area Schools
Eat Smart to Be Smart
Osseo Area Schools

*Eat Smart to Be Smart* continued

**Assessment**

- School Health Index
- Staff survey (classroom practices)
Osseo Area Schools
Eat Smart to Be Smart continued

Planning and Implementation

• Consultation with U of M faculty
• Staff and parent focus groups
• Staff training
Osseo Area Schools  
Eat Smart to Be Smart  
continued

Implementation

Parents

- Letter/snack list
- Displays
  - Open house
  - Conferences

Being Healthy Is Important!

Snacks are an important part of any person’s diet. Proper snacks build healthy bodies and teeth. Snacks also give us energy. I recommend that your child bring a healthy snack each day to give them the energy they need to succeed in learning. When meal time comes they are very hungry and need nourishment.

Please DO NOT send snacks that are not nutritious (cookies, chips, donuts, candy, etc.). Non-nutritious snacks are not good for us and digest too quickly, making our blood sugar go down and then plummets almost immediately. This leaves us feeling hungry and tired.

Healthy Snack Ideas

- String cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Turkey sandwich
- Pretzels
- Nuts
- Sunflower seeds
- Dry cereal (less than 12 grams of sugar)

- Hand-baked egg
- Crackers
- Turkey stick
- Popcorn
- Trail mix
- Raisins
- Vegetables

*Please be aware of any food restrictions (such as peanuts) that may be in place in your child’s classroom due to food allergies.

THANK YOU for helping your child be the BEST he or she can be!
Osseo Area Schools

Eat Smart to Be Smart continued

Implementation

*Parents* continued

- Reminder slips
- Newsletter articles
Osseo Area Schools

Eat Smart to Be Smart continued
Osseo Area Schools

Eat Smart to Be Smart continued
Osseo Area Schools
Eat Smart to Be Smart continued

Implementation

Schoolwide

– Fun food facts
– Poster contest
Osseo Area Schools
Eat Smart to Be Smart continued

Implementation

Schoolwide

– Fruit walk
– Food service song
Osseo Area Schools

Eat Smart to Be Smart continued

Implementation

School District/Community

– District health fair

– District Web site
Osseo Area Schools
Eat Smart to Be Smart continued

Surveyed

• Staff
• Parents
Osseo Area Schools
Eat Smart to Be Smart continued
Robbinsdale Schools

Daily Salads

Assessment

• Healthy School Builder
  (Alliance for a Healthier Generation)
• All 14 school sites
Robbinsdale Schools

Daily Salads continued
Robbinsdale Schools
*Daily Salads* continued

**Promotion and Marketing**

- Kitchen posters
- Salad presentation
- Communication with students
- Salad coupons for staff
Robbinsdale Schools
Daily Salads continued

Salad-making Instructions

1. Obtain ingredients for salads including:
   a. Container of salad dressings #1551-3160
   b. Romaine lettuce ONLY #1571, #1773, or #15707 OR begin #1563 or #15504
   c. Vegetables/Fruit/Meat/Meat Alternate (order accordingly from Bix or Berg

2. Wash all lettuce and vegetables thoroughly.

3. Chop lettuce, vegetables, and/or meat as needed into smaller pieces. Pick out any bad pieces of lettuce or vegetables, as we want the salad to look as fresh and appetizing as possible.

4. Layer 3 ounces of romaine lettuce in bottom of container.

5. Arrange toppings per recipe on top of the lettuce, keeping ingredients grouped together. You may choose to add items such as mandarin oranges, cheese, navel oranges, sunflower seeds, etc., at your own discretion. Be sure lettuce or other raw foods don’t become soggy.

6. Extra items such as cheese sticks, sunflower seed packets, cream packets, etc., if they do not fit into the container, can be available next to the salads.

7. Close containers and keep cool.

8. Salads should be placed on the line preferably close to the hot entree or sandwich line to allow students to make a choice between a salad, hot entree, or sandwich at the beginning of the line.

Samples:
- Chef Salad
- Vegetarian Salad
- Mandarin Orange Chicken Salad
- Orange Cucumber Salad
Robbinsdale Schools
Daily Salads continued
Robbinsdale Schools

Daily Salads continued

NEW Robbinsdale Wellness Policy

Each school in the district offers a daily entrée salad with a minimum of three fruits or vegetables in addition to a mix of leafy greens. If dressing is offered, it must be portion controlled (not exceeding a 2 oz serving) and include a low- or no-fat dressing option.
Robbinsdale Schools
Daily Salads continued

Salad Sales

First year
Total salads sold = 8,343

Second year
Total salads sold = 15,625
Robbinsdale Schools

Daily Salads continued

Feedback

• Positive comments
• Increased salad consumption
• Support from parents

Strawberry chicken salad is popular!
Robbinsdale Schools

Daily Salads continued

Project Strengths

• Districtwide assessment
• Strategic plan
• Interdisciplinary wellness council
• Leadership commitment
• Salad sales evaluation
Building, Sustaining School–Public Health Partnerships

Q&A
Building, Sustaining School–Public Health Partnerships

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