

Foods from Home

Federal law requires every school district to have a local wellness policy. These policies address nutrition education, physical activity, school meals and all other foods and drinks available at school. Since foods and drinks are a part of every school day, local wellness policies can build healthy school environments that support successful students eating smart and moving more. Research shows that children and teens who eat smart and move more focus better and have fewer behavior problems. They also have better math, reading and writing test scores. As families, educators and administrators, you have the chance to put the policy into practice. You can make a difference by changing the dining scene to promote a pleasant eating experience, encouraging healthy options for à la carte and competitive foods, as well as healthy food and drink choices brought from home.

Foods from home can be a good way to provide and promote healthy choices. Your local wellness policy can set guidelines on the foods and drinks that students bring from home. School meals are the best source of nutrition for students and come at an affordable price. Across the state, school meals are being improved to have more variety, fruits, vegetables and whole grains with lots of calcium, iron, protein and fiber. However, foods from home can also be healthy alternatives if they follow the local wellness policy guidelines. As part of your policy, you can limit or prevent students and staff from bringing meals from outside food establishments onto school grounds. Often, meals from these food establishments (like fast-food restaurants) are high in sugar, fat and calories.

Take Action Now

School Board Members

- Are foods from home addressed in your district's local wellness policy? If not, include in your policy nutrition guidelines on what students and staff can bring.
- Show your support for the local wellness policy.

School Health Advisory Council/School Wellness Committee Members

- Show your support for school meals from the National School Lunch Program.
- Use the lunch and snack ideas in this handout to encourage parents to pack healthy food choices for their children.

Principals

- Enforce the district wellness policy for foods from home that promote healthy food and drink choices.
- Consider adopting a stricter policy on foods from home for your school.

PTA Members and Families

- Encourage support of school meals and healthier packed lunches and snacks.
- Send your child to school with healthy snack and lunch choices. Try different fruits and vegetables and prepare them in a variety of ways to find out what your children like best.

Tasty Lunch and Snack Ideas

Dairy/Protein-rich Foods

- Low-fat string cheese
- Low-fat cottage cheese
- Low-fat yogurt
- Pudding cups
- Lean ham, turkey or roast beef
- Hard-cooked egg
- Bean dips
- Hummus

Fruits/Vegetables

- Grapes
- Apple slices
- Orange slices
- Mandarin oranges/tangerines
- Pears
- Bananas
- Melon balls (honeydew or cantaloupe)
- Watermelon
- Mango slices
- Fresh fruit in season (like strawberries, blueberries, cherries, peaches, apricots, nectarines, plums, kiwis, pineapple)
- Cherry tomatoes
- Baby carrots
- Broccoli florets
- Celery sticks
- Cucumber spears

- Red or green bell pepper sticks
- Dried fruit/fruit chips (like raisins, cranberries, apple rings or banana chips)
- Fresh fruit salad or canned fruit cups
- Fresh salads (low-fat dressing packed separately)
- Applesauce

Grains

- Whole-grain bread
- Whole wheat pitas
- Baked tortilla chips
- Animal crackers
- Hard pretzels
- Rice cakes
- Whole-grain cereal
- Whole - grain mini-bagels
- Whole-grain bread sticks or crackers
- Vanilla wafers
- Low-fat/low-sugar breakfast, granola or chewy bars
- Graham crackers

Nuts*/Seeds

- Nuts
- Trail mix
- Peanut butter

*If no nut allergies

Important Tips for a Packed Success

- Pack a lunch that's an adventure. Try something out of the ordinary!
- **Keep it cold!** Use an insulated lunch box with an ice pack to keep cold foods safe.
- Pack variety - fruits, veggies, whole-grain breads, lean meats and low-fat cheeses.

Example Foods-from-Home Policy in North Carolina

Hertford County Schools:

Due to safety issues, glass containers and glass bottles are not permitted on the school campus at any time. No meals from outside food establishments may be brought onto campus to students for breakfast, lunch, or during the school day unless it is for a classroom event or celebration, which have guidelines addressed under a separate heading. Students may bring their breakfast or lunch to school as long as it is packed from home. No carbonated drinks will be allowed to be brought onto campus for consumption by students during breakfast, lunch or during the school day, unless it is for a classroom event or celebration, which has guidelines addressed under a separate heading. Teachers and staff will not be allowed to bring meals onto the school campus from outside food establishments and consume such meals in the presence of students during the school day.

For more information on local wellness policy...

www.actionforhealthykids.org
www.nchealthyschools.org
www.nutritionnc.com
www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com

