

# WSCC Component: Nutrition Environment & Services

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## Nutrition Environment & Services

### Cafeteria

#### Clock

Mr. Baker noticed long lines in the cafeteria, so he reorganized the cafeteria in order to serve students more efficiently. Now, students can move through the lines with minimal wait time. They can socialize while they eat their meals, rather than feeling rushed to finish eating. Once they are seated, they have at least 10 minutes for eating breakfast and 20 minutes for eating lunch.

Mr. Baker promotes menu options during the morning announcements and on signs displayed around the school so everyone is informed about the nutritious choices. The school publishes a monthly menu and provides it online to all students, families, teachers, and administrators. Parents can view the menus in advance and help their children with food choices. Students invite their parents to join them for breakfast or lunch meals occasionally.

You can:

- Make your cafeteria a social center by implementing a staggered schedule for the different classes and setting up conveniently placed serving areas to minimize the time students spend in line.
- Encourage cafeteria staff to greet students with smiles and ask teachers and administrators to spend mealtimes with students.
- Use a variety of communication channels to publicize menus.

#### ***Learn More***

- [School Meals](#)

#### **Nutritional Poster**

Cafeteria staff observed some students were not choosing the nutritiously balanced hot meal or Grab and Go lunch, so it followed the guidelines recommended by the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement to place healthy options in front of less healthy options. Mr. Baker contacted nutritionists at the health department for donations of eye-catching posters to encourage healthy eating.

The GO, SLOW, and WHOA poster is a guide to eating right. GO foods are the healthiest ones—the ones you can eat almost anytime, such as fruits and vegetables. SLOW foods are "sometimes" foods. You can eat them several times a week, but not every day, because they may have added sugars and sodium. WHOA foods are the least healthy foods, and you can eat them only every once in a while. WHOA foods include cookies, soft drinks, and fried foods.

The school cafeteria is the perfect place to teach students about healthy eating.

You can:

- Use colorful posters to brighten up your school's cafeteria and remind students to make good food choices. Posters are available from public health agencies in your community and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Team Nutrition Initiative.
- Change the posters monthly or update them with the seasons to keep students' interest.

### ***Learn More***

- [Team Nutrition](#)
- [Healthy Eating Learning Opportunities](#)
- [BAM Dining Decisions Mobile Game](#)

### **Water Station**

At Jefferson School, students and school staff are encouraged to drink plenty of water every day. They have access to the free water filling station in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch. There are also water fountains and filling stations placed throughout the school. The cafeteria's water filling station provides cups, and students and staff can fill their own water bottles and drink water while in the classroom.

School staff conducts regular maintenance to ensure cleanliness and safety. Recently a water quality specialist came to Jefferson School to test the water. Staff clean up water spills promptly, and the area is kept free of clutter.

You can:

- Provide drinking water in the cafeteria in accordance with federal requirements to help ensure your students have plenty of safe drinking water.

- Operate within the state and local plumbing and sanitation codes.
- Follow all standard operating procedures and water quality testing protocols to ensure regular maintenance of water filling stations and other water dispensers to guard against debris, bacteria, or other contaminants.
- Show students how to develop a lifelong habit of choosing water instead of sugary beverages by promoting drinking water.

### ***Learn More***

- [Water Access](#)
- [Water & Nutrition](#)

### **Menu Board**

Mr. Baker encourages participation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. He puts policies and practices in place to create a friendly, welcoming environment for everyone, and ensures identity protection for student participants in the free meal programs. This action reduces stigma. Mr. Baker worked with Principal Paul to explore different options for providing breakfast to students, including Breakfast in the Classroom during the first 15 minutes of homeroom and a Grab and Go meal just before school. This nutritional boost helps ensure that students are starting the school day ready to learn and better able to concentrate.

Mr. Baker comes up with creative, catchy titles and themes for the menu items. School staff and students can select a hot meal or move through the convenience line for a Grab and Go meal. The menu board for K-5 students shows today's hot meal, which includes baked chicken, brown rice, "power punch" broccoli, "x-ray vision" carrots, "rockin" wheat roll, and fruit. The Grab and Go meal features the "turkey gobbler," a turkey sandwich with lettuce and tomato and whole fruit. Beverages include water and low-fat or skim white or chocolate milk. The salad bar offers a wide selection of leafy greens, tomatoes, broccoli "trees," "cool as" cucumbers, and beans. The school encourages appropriate portions by providing cheeses and salad toppings in smaller containers accompanied by smaller utensils.

You can:

- Serve healthy, well-balanced meals and encourage participation in the school meal programs.
- Follow Smarter Lunchroom strategies to make foods more appealing to students.

- Use the USDA's School Breakfast Program toolkit to help you decide the most feasible way to provide breakfast to students.
- Survey students about their food likes and dislikes, and ask them to create fun names or themes for menu items.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Nutrition Services at Jefferson School.

### ***Learn More***

- [Food and Beverage Marketing](#)
- [Smarter Lunchrooms Movement](#)
- [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#)
- [Breakfast in the Classroom Worksheet](#) [PDF – 93.89 KB]

### **Lunch Tray**

Schools are in a unique position to promote healthy eating and nutrition intake. The Jefferson School cafeteria staff works hard to provide nutritious and appealing meals that meet the federal nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Healthy eating in childhood and adolescence is important for proper growth and development. Students who have access to proper nutrition are better able to concentrate and learn in the classroom.

The cafeteria staff also addresses issues of hunger and food insecurity. Some students come from households that lack money or other resources for food. The cafeteria staff encourages enrollment of these students into community programs that provide meals for free or at a reduced rate. The food services department sponsors the USDA's At-Risk Afterschool Meals program, which provides snacks and even dinner. To ensure these students have adequate meals over weekends and in the summertime, the cafeteria staff organizes food drives to stock community food pantries. As an added service, the cafeteria staff invites parents to the school for meal planning workshops.

You can:

- Work with your school administration, parent groups, and the community as a whole to support and improve policies related to school nutrition programs.
- Use the cafeteria as a meeting place for:

- students to eat adequate meals outside of school hours such as through the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program;
  - families to learn about nutrition; and
  - civic leaders to organize collections for food banks
- Invite the mayor or a local celebrity to share lunch with students and speak about programs to wipe out hunger in the community.

**Learn More**

- [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#)
- [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#)
- [Summer Food Service Program](#)

**Fruit Basket**

Mr. Baker places a variety of fresh fruits in a basket near the check-out at a level where students can see them so they can grab fruit to round out their meals. The apples, oranges, and bananas are attractive and appealing because he buys from local fruit growers and suppliers when possible to ensure freshness. It is an easy sell and the first step in getting students to think of fruits as the better alternative to sugary or salt-laden snacks.

You can:

- Participate in farm-to-school programs or USDA’s Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food program to keep your school cafeteria stocked with fresh fruit.
- Purchase fruits from local farm cooperatives.
- Display fruits in attractive baskets.
- Plan initiatives such as establishing a collective school garden, culinary arts program, or fun taste test activities in your school to encourage students to select fruits.

**Learn More**

- [Community Food Systems](#)
- [Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food](#) [PDF – 13.93 MB]

## Competitive Foods

Mr. Baker enforces the school's nutrition policy for all foods served at Jefferson School. He focuses a lot of attention on competitive foods, which are those foods sold or available in school outside of federally reimbursable school meal programs. Competitive foods include those sold as a la carte items in the cafeteria or offered at concession stands, fundraisers, classroom celebrations, and after-school programs.

Mr. Baker met with parents and secured their buy-in to provide nutritious foods instead of sweets for celebrations. He worked with the school administration and staff to do the same in other school-related venues. He scouted around for good snack options, read nutrition labels, and contacted local vendors to load the vending machines and a la carte stands in the cafeteria with an assortment of appealing snacks, such as veggie chips and yogurt cups.

Healthy snacks have whole grains, low-fat dairy, fruits, vegetables, or protein foods as their main ingredients. These options meet standards of Smart Snacks in School, a set of nutrition standards issued by the USDA. Mr. Baker developed a pricing strategy to make the healthier foods more appealing by being cheaper. Fruits cost less than baked chips.

You can:

- Work with suppliers in your area to purchase healthy options for your school's vending machines.
- Support school policies related to the selling of healthy foods at concession stands, fundraisers, and after-school programs.
- Work with school district and community leaders to make food policies consistent across all schools in the area.
- Adopt pricing strategies to make healthier foods cheaper than less healthy options.

### ***Learn More***

- [Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools](#) [PDF – 1.47 MB]
- [Smart Snacks](#)
- [Tools for Schools: Focusing on Smart Snacks](#)



## Grades K-2

### Reward Box

Mr. Gupta keeps a box of small treasures in his classroom so he can reward students for accomplishments and good behavior. The box has stickers, novelty erasers, pencils, ribbons, booklets, and small games.

When he was a young boy, rewards were often candy and other sweets, but school practices have changed. He knows that rewarding students should not involve candy and other foods that can undermine healthy eating or reinforce unhealthful eating habits. He makes sure not to use food treats to reward his students or withhold food to punish them.

A wide variety of alternative rewards can provide positive reinforcement for accomplishments and good behavior. Mr. Gupta offers praises when he sees outstanding effort and lets those students pick the activity for the afternoon physical activity break. Sometimes he rewards students with special classroom privileges or extra playtime. Students who complete a reading assignment earn a word-play activity sheet reward.

You can:

- Use non-food items and opportunities for physical activity to recognize students for their accomplishments and good behavior. For example, you can recognize students during the morning announcements, or display a recognition board in the school hallway to showcase achievements such as those made by students who participated in the 5K run or the walking challenge.
- Establish a reward box and ask parents to donate non-food rewards and school supplies for the reward box.

### Learn More

- [Non-Food Rewards](#)
- [Tips for Teachers: Promoting Healthy Eating & Physical Activity in the Classroom](#) [PDF – 3.57 MB]

### Cubby Area

Students in Mr. Gupta's class love afternoon story time. They pull their yoga mats and snacks from the cubby area to form a circle around him when he begins telling stories. Some of his students are in the

after-school care program, and he encourages participation in the after-school snack program. Other students are not enrolled, so combining story time with snack time ensures that all his students have a mid-afternoon snack.

Mr. Gupta is aware of which students have food allergies, based on their student medical records. These students, as well as some of his other students, usually bring snacks from home. Mr. Gupta encourages parents to pack healthy snacks by regularly sending ideas and easy-to-make snack recipes home with the students.

Providing time for this nutritional boost allows the students to go home without feeling hungry. This will help them concentrate on their homework assignments before dinnertime and deter them from impulsively grabbing junk food. Junk food generally refers to foods that contribute a lot of calories but are of little nutritional value. These mini meals, which bridge the time between lunch and dinner, are particularly important for students who may have a long wait before they eat their evening meal, or who deal with food insecurity.

All snacks should meet the nutrition standards outlined in the district's school wellness policy.

You can:

- Encourage parents to serve on a school wellness committee to learn about healthy snack options and collaborate with them to supply nutritious snacks in the classroom.
- Involve school clubs and parent organizations to organize a monthly collection to stock the snack bin.
- Promote the after-school snack program so children who stay for after-school care have healthy snacks.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Nutrition Services at Jefferson School.

### ***Learn More***

- [School Meals: Afterschool Snacks](#)

### **Volunteer Desk**

Mr. Gupta's day includes many tasks for completion. Fortunately, parent helpers provide an extra set of hands in his classroom. They do many jobs—from lining up students for lunch to leading physical activity

breaks with stretching and movement exercises. Parent helpers also help maintain the school vegetable gardens.

The volunteer desk is the base of operations for parents, family, and community volunteers. Mr. Gupta keeps a volunteer schedule so he always has help in the classroom. Children cluster around the volunteer during study time for extra help in reading or problem solving. Sometimes parents and other volunteers simply give special attention to children who have concerns and need someone to listen to them.

You can:

- Create a workstation for classroom volunteers.
- Ask volunteers to assist with tasks and follow up on their suggestions to make lessons more stimulating and invigorating.
- Recruit parents and other family members via online newsletters and e-mails, and check with senior centers and community organizations for people who want to share their talents and skills.

### ***Learn More***

- [Parent Engagement](#)

### **Artwork**

Students in Mr. Gupta's class completed a healthy habits drawing assignment. Their artwork shows ways to eat nutritious meals, maintain fitness, enjoy physical activity, manage chronic health conditions, and engage family members in healthy lifestyles.

Mr. Gupta asks each student to make a short presentation about the selected topic, and then he hangs the artwork on the bulletin board. Every month, he puts up new artwork they have created. During parent/teacher conferences, he calls attention to the artistic efforts of his students.

You can:

- Assign drawing projects to your students and let them pick a health topic of interest.
- Ask them to prepare a short presentation for classmates.
- Display their artwork around the classroom; and, after a month, send it home for display in the family home.

## Grades 3-5

### Apple

In the past, many parents brought cupcakes and ice cream to share with the class on their child's birthday. Ms. Lewis did not like the precedent of sugary treats.

Now, Ms. Lewis organizes Celebration Days during which the birthday child receives special privileges, such as selecting the songs or leading the activities during stretch breaks. Ms. Lewis and the School Health Team ask that parents only bring nutritious snacks for celebrations. As an additional option for classroom celebrations, the school cafeteria can provide apples and bananas, if requested a few days in advance.

You can:

- Implement "healthy foods only" policies at your school and start a Celebration Day tradition.
- Provide non-food rewards to your students that are age appropriate.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Nutrition Services at Jefferson School.

### *Learn More*

- [Celebrations & Rewards](#)
- [Non-Food Rewards](#)

### Water Bottle

Ms. Lewis recognizes the importance of drinking plenty of water to keep the body running smoothly. She encourages her students to bring lidded containers from home to keep drinking water handy.

At lunchtime, students refill their containers with ice and water at the water filling station in the cafeteria. Ms. Lewis sets a good example by staying hydrated throughout the day using her water bottle.

Reusable water bottles are on the donation list that Ms. Lewis sends to the parents of her students.

Students without bottles can reach into the donations box, pick a water bottle, and stay hydrated too.

You can:

- Set up a donation box at your school.

- Ask parents or merchants in the community to contribute so everyone has a container.

### ***Learn More***

- [Water & Nutrition](#)

### **Laptop**

Ms. Lewis has noticed that her students seem more ready to learn after they take physical activity breaks. She tries to reinforce the importance of physical activity and other healthy behaviors by educating her students about the benefits of good nutrition and of being physically active. She has introduced them to educational websites and fun games with a health message.

This week, her class is spending time exploring the games and tools available on CDC's Healthy Schools website. The BAM! Body and Mind interactive website is a class favorite!

You can:

- Learn about the basics for establishing healthy behaviors by going to CDC's Healthy Schools website and directing your students to games and other interesting activities.

### ***Learn More***

- [BAM! Body and Mind](#)
- [BAM! Body and Mind Game Room](#)

## **Grades 6-8**

### **Student Agenda**

Mr. Wu kept looking for better ways to communicate with students and parents. He decided to disseminate the student agenda via e-mail and post it on the class Web page to provide more opportunities to engage parents in their children's school activities. This planner helps students and parents organize activities and tasks. Mr. Wu incorporated graphics, quizzes, and puzzles to make it more enticing to read. He added reminders about health practices, such as getting plenty of exercise, staying hydrated, and eating a healthy diet.

The student agenda also promotes school events, such as the talent show and a track meet. It lists the contact information of event organizers so parents and students can sign up to volunteer and

participate. Mr. Wu includes school rules on the student agenda, and he reminds everyone about services available in the Nurse's Office, the Counselor's Office, and the Health Center.

You can:

- Promote student and family engagement by producing an online or paper-based weekly or monthly student agenda. It can have a wellness theme and promote good nutrition and physical activity. Also, it can inform parents about school events, services, and policies.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Health Education at Jefferson School.

### ***Learn More***

- [Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health](#) [PDF – 1.74 MB]

## **Grades 9-12**

### **Student Laptops**

Jefferson School uses the school website and social media sites to communicate health messages and promote a healthy school environment. This includes promoting school fundraisers and announcing events.

Currently on the school website, there is a featured announcement about the school fundraiser in which students and staff are selling fruit baskets. This is the third year that Jefferson School has sold citrus fruit baskets instead of candy bars. There were some challenges as the school made the switch, but now many family and community members look forward to purchasing the fruit each year. Profits have been comparable to previous sales, and Jefferson School staff is glad they are providing a consistent message about nutrition and health in all facets of school programs and activities.

The Jefferson School Health Team helped ensure the success of the fundraiser transition by enlisting local businesses who are part of the team to help promote and support the fruit sale fundraiser. Local businesses have helped advertise the sale; some have even posted fruit basket order forms in their stores and workplaces.

You can:

- Assess your current fundraisers and after-school activities to determine how many incorporate unhealthy food and beverage options.

- Learn the prevalence of these food and beverage sales and concerns the event sponsors may have about adapting sales to nutritional standards or moving toward non-food sales altogether.
- Use available Internet resources to provide the education and support needed to help fundraising sponsors make healthy changes.
- Help enlist community partners to maximize the success of any new healthy fundraisers, such as 5K walks/runs, school-themed merchandise sales, or a Parents' Night Out. Be creative and consider what might work best for your school.

### ***Learn More***

- [Healthy School Fundraisers](#) [PDF – 2.22 MB]
- [Best Practices for Healthy School Fundraisers](#) [PDF – 533.25 KB]
- [Healthy Fundraisers](#) [PDF – 567.33 KB]
- [Fundraising](#)

## **Staff Lounge**

### **Water Dispenser**

The staff lounge makes it easy for staff to access healthy beverages and stay well hydrated. The water dispenser provides access to both hot and cold drinking water.

Although the Staff Wellness Work Group encourages staff to make water their primary beverage of choice, they also make sure the lounge has decaf coffee and low-fat creamers.

Ms. Dubois is a role model for students and staff. She views self-care as an essential skill for academic achievement and life success. At a recent wellness celebration, she remarked:

“I believe in practicing what I preach. How can I convey to my students the importance of taking care of themselves if I don't understand and do what it takes to care for myself? For example, my students see me drink lots of water from my reusable water bottle. I encourage them to use the water stations in the cafeteria and gymnasium to do the same. My hope is that my students will develop habits that will help them concentrate in school and keep them healthy. When I envision the happy and successful lives I want for my students, I think it also helps me choose healthy behaviors for myself.”

Ms. Dubois's example is certainly food for thought!

You can:

- Make hot and cold water available to your staff so they have healthy alternatives to drinking high-calorie beverages.
- Encourage staff to use reusable water bottles.
- Remind staff that they can be great role models for their students by making healthy choices for themselves.

### ***Learn More***

- [Water Access](#)

### **Vending Machine**

Based on results from an employee wellness survey, the Staff Wellness Work Group realized that convenient and consistent access to a variety of fresh foods and healthy snacks was really important to staff. The work group took action. Some work group members immediately began stocking a fresh fruit bowl in the lounge. They placed a money jar next to the bowl, so any staff who wanted to take fruit could help cover the cost. The work group also recommended a refrigerated vending machine that could stock healthier snacks and fresh foods in the lounge. The work group and School Health Team (which includes community partners), collaborated to budget for the new vending machine.

Some staff members bring their food from home or eat in the cafeteria; however, many use the vending machine. The vending machine previously only had unhealthy “junk” foods. The work group turned to community partners for help with the vending machine makeover. They consulted a worksite wellness director at a local business and a registered dietitian nutritionist from the community who were part of the School Health Team. The employee wellness director shared lessons she learned when her business started adding healthier options to their vending machines. The registered dietitian nutritionist suggested the work group use the Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities, which align with Smart Snack standards, when selecting vending machine products.

The Staff Wellness Work Group asked the vending machine company to provide samples of products that meet the nutrition standards. They held taste tests for the staff to vote for their favorites. Food options included fruit cups and bars, baby carrots, dried fruit, yogurt smoothies, yogurt, a variety of nuts and seeds, nut butters, baked tortilla chips, cereals, oatmeal, soup, and hummus cups. Drink options



included sparkling and flavored waters, 100% fruit or vegetable juices, and skim or nondairy milks. The vendor replaced products that were not selling well with some of the healthier option “winners.”

Not all of the staff wanted to have only healthier options, so the work group coordinated with the vendor to retain some of the most popular items while transitioning toward healthier options. The vendor agreed to price the healthier options competitively with similar foods that do not meet the nutrition standards. He also agreed to make the healthier products as visible, or more visible, than the less healthy products. In the future, any advertising materials will only promote products that meet the specified nutrition standards.

You can:

- Work with partners to identify healthier options to sell in vending machines.
- Involve staff in taste testing and selecting new products for the vending machines.

### ***Learn More***

- [Procurement and Vending Machines](#)
- [Healthy Food Service Guidelines](#)

## **Nurse’s Office**

### **Teeth Model**

Nurse Okonjo likes to flash a bright smile when she demonstrates how to brush teeth correctly. She talks about the importance of oral health and conducts dental screenings, just as she does vision and hearing screenings.

Nurse Okonjo urges students to visit a dentist twice a year for checkups and suggests getting dental sealants as a way to prevent tooth decay. Dental sealants are a plastic resin painted onto tooth enamel. The sealants bond to teeth and harden. They protect enamel from plaque and the acids found in foods and beverages.

Nurse Okonjo recommends wearing mouth guards during physical activity, such as football, basketball, and field hockey. She encourages students to avoid soft drinks and sugary snacks.

You can:

- Help students maintain healthy teeth by recommending a ban on soft drinks and sugary snacks from vending machines and food stands.
- Help students protect their teeth by encouraging them to wear mouth guards during strenuous physical activity.

### ***Learn More***

- [Oral Health in Schools](#)

### **Community Poster**

Nurse Okonjo wanted to spread the word about healthy lifestyles, so she worked with the Health Center staff to organize a health fair at the school recently. It was for everyone: students, teachers, parents, grandparents, neighbors, and friends.

She sent invitations to Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, and a lot of other groups to ensure community members knew of the event. She lined up programs about asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and other chronic diseases. She invited doctors, dentists, public health leaders, and nutritionists to give talks and demonstrations on these topics. They answered questions and handed out materials for people to take home.

Leaders from Kolbe's Parks and Recreation Department promoted the use of exercise paths and fitness equipment at recreation centers. They suggested ways to spend family time at community parks, sports fields, and swimming pools. The health fair was a big success, so they plan to hold it again next year.

You can:

- Organize an event in your community with the help of volunteers to create a better environment for health and physical activity.

### ***Learn More***

- [Parents for Healthy Schools](#)

### **Locked Cabinet**

Nurse Okonjo has a record of all students with chronic health conditions, including epilepsy. If a seizure occurs at the school, she can act immediately. She has special training and remains calm and confident in these situations, which may be frightening to classmates.

To help everyone at Jefferson School understand the disorder, Nurse Okonjo hosted a discussion about epilepsy and asked the parents of students with epilepsy to share what they do in their homes to treat and manage their child's condition. She invited a neurologist to visit the school and explain what triggers seizures and what medicines are used to treat epilepsy and side effects. The session was very helpful to students, school staff, and parents.

On a more individual level, Nurse Okonjo provides guidance to each student with epilepsy about managing the disorder and making good lifestyle choices, such as getting enough sleep and lowering stress. She encourages students with epilepsy to participate in sports because exercise and physical fitness may lessen risks of seizures.

You can:

- Learn more about epilepsy and work to ensure the school nurses in your community have proper training.
- Involve parents in discussion sessions to share about their experiences in managing their children's chronic health conditions at home.

### ***Learn More***

- [Epilepsy in Schools](#)

## **Principal's Office**

### **Attendance Chart**

Principal Paul knows the value of data. He compared last year's school attendance records data with this year's data and felt certain the focus on healthy eating, physical activity, and providing access to health services to help manage chronic health conditions was making a big impact at Jefferson School. He noticed a downward trend in absenteeism and tardiness, which appeared to begin just after he and the staff took decisive action to support and promote health and wellness across the school.

He and Nurse Okonjo created a chart showing a composite of attendance records over the past five years and shared the overall data with staff, parents, and the school board via e-mail. As a way to engage parents and school board members, Principal Paul solicited input about ways to keep attendance levels high. Because health and well-being factors play a major role in absenteeism, the Superintendent of Education was confident Jefferson School's ventures played a meaningful role. She

considered Jefferson School a success story and recommended Principal Paul present the data at the upcoming leadership conference of the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

You can:

- Find ways to evaluate health and wellness programs at your school.
- Comb through data and identify trends.
- Promote your successes so parents and community members understand how positive lifestyle changes can make a big difference in well-being.

### ***Learn More***

- [National Association of Elementary School Principals](#)
- [The Relationship Between School Attendance and Health](#)

### **Standing Desk**

Principal Paul realized he was spending too much time sitting when he was in his office. At the start of the school year, he installed a height-adjustable desk in his office and approved the purchase of height-adjustable desks for staff and teachers. Now, he and others alternate between sitting and standing at their desks. Standing at the desk causes the heart to beat faster than sitting does, so they are burning extra calories. Also, changing positions has many health benefits. It improves blood circulation and alertness, and it decreases shoulder and back pain. Principal Paul paces purposefully in his office while talking on his telephone as a way to get a few more minutes of exercise.

Principal Paul keeps reusable water bottles and nutritious snacks at his desk and maintains his weight at a healthy range. He asked the cafeteria staff to place fruit and water bottles in the conference room, staff lounge, and other work areas for staff. He knows he is a role model and is setting a good example for everyone at the school—students and staff alike. When he went to the doctor recently for a physical exam, tests showed he has improved his cholesterol levels.

You can:

- Avoid sedentary work habits by using a desk with standing options.
- Find innovative ways to move about the office, classroom, or work areas.
- Make sure everyone has access to water and healthy snacks.

## Clock

When the clock shows 8 a.m., Principal Paul starts the day with announcements. He runs a smooth operation by keeping classes and breaks on an efficient schedule. Before school, many students participate in the School Meal Breakfast Program. Students are encouraged to go to the cafeteria for breakfast or a snack before classes start or participate in Grab and Go options. Principal Paul ensures students have at least 20 minutes to eat breakfast. He schedules at least one hour of physical activity every day for students and makes sure there is time for physical activity outside of PE class.

You can:

- Structure your school day around an efficient schedule.
- Keep in mind recommended guidelines for physical activity, meals, and social breaks between classes.

### **Learn More**

- [School Breakfast Program](#)

## Conference Room

### Conference Room Conversation 2: Nutrition Services

**Mrs. Ahmed:** Good morning, everyone. The School Health Team completed the *School Health Index* (SHI) modules on School Health and Safety Policies and Environment, and on Nutrition Services. The team identified strengths and weaknesses in Jefferson School's nutrition environment and services based on the results of the module score cards, and then they developed an action plan to recommend improvements. Mr. Baker, would you share with the group the team's recommendations to enhance the school environment and nutrition services?

**Mr. Baker:** Thanks, Mrs. Ahmed. The results of our assessments revealed several areas for improvement. Two years ago, we were on the wrong path with the competitive foods that were available at Jefferson School. We sold a variety of less-than-nutritious foods as a la carte items in the cafeteria and at concession stands. Fund-raisers, classroom celebrations, and after-school programs also included these types of foods. After completing the SHI modules, we developed an action plan to make all food options more nutritious and of better quality. We have already implemented new strategies across Jefferson School.

**Mrs. Chen:** I have noticed the recommendations from my child's teacher to switch from salty, high-fat snacks to more nutritious options when we provide snacks for birthday celebrations.

**Mr. Baker:** Yes! We have been working on nutrition changes over the past year. We focused on ways to upgrade the a la carte offerings during lunch service in the cafeteria by making vegetables more appealing with catchy titles and visually pleasing presentations of the foods. Also, we strategically positioned the more nutritious options in the lines. For example, we put fruits in baskets where students could see them easily, and we moved the white milk in front of the chocolate milk in the coolers.

**Mrs. Chen:** What about the foods available at concession stands during after-school activities?

**Mr. Baker:** Another step in the action plan was to meet with parents and booster clubs to share with them our goal to improve all foods available on campus, including the snack foods sold at games and the party treats at classroom birthday celebrations. Most were in agreement with the changes and had suggestions for how to make it work, but some wondered if fund-raising would suffer.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Yes, we worried about that too, because we depend on concession stand sales to support our athletic programs. We found out that sales did not drop when we replaced unhealthy food items, such as cheesy nacho chips, with more nutritious foods, such as air-popped popcorn. After a short time, sales actually improved because people liked the healthier choices.

**Mr. Baker:** Parents and people in the community gave us new ideas for fund-raisers. Instead of selling doughnuts and chocolate bars, now we are fund-raising with coupon books and evergreen wreaths during the December holiday season. Also, we made a huge effort to follow the guidance in the Nutrition Environment and Services component of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model. We are pleased with the changes we made last year in our nutrition services, and I'm sure we will see improved scores on our SHI score card when we reassess next year.

**Mrs. Chen:** Did this year's score card show other areas for improvement?

**Mr. Baker:** We still have too much fat in some food options. Crispy chicken strips are favorites, yet they contain unhealthy amounts of fat. We are finding better ways to prepare food favorites.

**Nurse Okonjo:** Fried foods usually contain unhealthy fats and can increase the risk of chronic conditions like heart disease. Now is the time to establish healthy eating habits. What is your solution?

**Mr. Baker:** We are upgrading the kitchen equipment so we can improve our food preparation practices. Roasting racks will help us drain fats from meats and chicken. With our new steam-jacketed kettles, we

can prepare soups from scratch efficiently and no longer have to buy ready-made soups that tend to have high sodium content. A chef will train us to adjust recipes so they have less fat and sodium. For example, a chef will help us develop herb seasoning mixes to use on chicken strips, vegetables, and other foods so we can serve them with less salt. We will also put herb seasoning mixes in shakers so students can flavor other foods.

**Mrs. Chen:** That's a big improvement! What else will you do?

**Mr. Baker:** We are purchasing blenders so we can add fruit and vegetable smoothies to the breakfast and lunch menus. We are also buying sectionizers to help cut fruit and vegetables for the salad bar. After our training with the chef, we will continue to search for recipes with more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. We also get the students involved by having them identify recipes for the school menus and inviting them to serve on the School Health Team.

**Christina Brighton:** I enjoy serving on the School Health Team. My friends and I really like being on taste panels to help pick out healthier recipes too!

**Mr. Rodriguez:** It's exciting to hear about the kitchen's new equipment. Mr. Baker, will you provide training for the food services staff on using the equipment properly?

**Mr. Baker:** The equipment company's kitchen specialist will train the staff on food preparation practices using the roasting racks, kettles, and blenders. We will also hold in-service training at the beginning of the school year. The food services staff will participate in a culinary boot camp that will provide hands-on training on a range of topics, such as knife skills, food safety, and seasoning with spices and herbs.

**Nurse Okonjo:** Speaking of training, we need to make safety training part of the professional development of the food services staff. The staff needs to know how to avoid personal injuries in the kitchen and cafeteria.

**Mr. Baker:** Yes, we have a series of courses planned for them. The first in the series is a course to cover general health and safety concerns.

**Nurse Okonjo:** That's a great idea. That way, they will be trained to handle emergencies, such as giving first aid if a student chokes on food or has an allergic reaction to food.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** There is also a course in emergency planning. Staff will learn what to do if the power goes off, causing the refrigeration units to shut down, or if the school turns into a community shelter during severe weather emergencies.

**Principal Paul:** We are well on our way to increasing our capacity to handle emergencies by following the guidance in the Physical Environment component and the Nutrition Environment and Services component of the WSCC model. By staying focused on the well-being of our students, we continue to build and sustain a healthy school environment at Jefferson School.

If you want to learn more about the *School Health Index*, visit the [Healthy Schools website](#). For training, visit the [Professional Development & Training page](#).

## **Community Map**

### **Farmers' Market**

The town of Kolbe is home to several farmers' markets that promote nutritious eating and offer residents opportunities to buy fresh, affordable, local foods. Several neighborhoods and community settings throughout the county regularly hold farmers' markets. Shoppers have the opportunity to meet local food producers and learn more about where and how their food is grown or raised. Children learn how farmers raise plants and animals in their local area.

The vendors have been able to partner with the local health department and other government agencies so that the farmers' markets can accept Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program vouchers, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition payments for produce purchases.

In addition to produce shopping, the markets frequently offer music, crafts, and local artisan wares to create an enjoyable community atmosphere. The markets have also had a positive impact on the local economy, which helps contribute to a healthier community overall.

### **Learn More**

- [Community Food Systems](#)