

# Healthy School Nutrition Environments - Recommendations from Stakeholders



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

*Children,  
Families &  
Learning*

# Healthy School Nutrition Environments - Recommendations from Stakeholders

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## Introduction

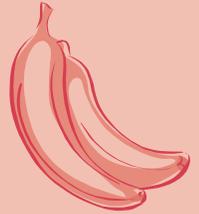


The Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL), Food and Nutrition Service, is the Minnesota agency that administers U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) child nutrition programs, including school meal programs. In July 2001, USDA awarded CFL a competitive Team Nutrition grant that focused on new and innovative methods for improving children's lifelong eating and physical activity habits. Team Nutrition is a USDA initiative that assists schools to meet the goal of implementing the Dietary Guidelines for Americans in school meal programs.

The grant proposal included bringing together a wide range of school stakeholders and interested parties with a view toward common ground, collaborations and partnerships. CFL Food and Nutrition Service proposed a collaborative effort of twenty-five to thirty school stakeholders and interested parties, with at least four meetings facilitated by a communication consultant. The purpose of the meetings would be to generate a list of issues and concerns, discover cooperative ways to work together, and make recommendations that help promote healthy school nutrition environments.



The CFL Core Design Team solicited members for the Steering Committee of the Healthy School Nutrition Environment initiative from school administrators, educators, and food service directors, industry representatives, health professionals, and children's advocates.



## II. Background



Nutrition and physical activity are leading health indicators for all ages. For children especially, healthful eating and adequate physical activity are important for health and learning readiness through the school years and to set a course for adult years.

Since most children spend a large portion of their time in school, the school environment is of particular importance in affecting children's health-related behaviors.

Schools present many opportunities to engage in, and reinforce messages for, healthful eating activities and physical activities.

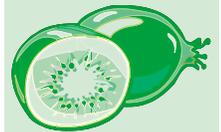
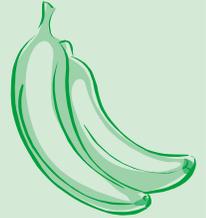
As recognized in The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity (2001) and other reports, school approaches to nutrition and physical activity should extend beyond the classroom to school policy, the school physical and social environment, and links between schools, families and communities.

### Nutrition

Adequate nutrition is essential for growth and development, health and well-being, and learning readiness of students. By the time students reach their adult years, the cumulative effects of poor nutritional and dietary choices also contribute greatly to preventable illnesses and premature deaths. Four of the ten leading causes of death are associated with dietary factors: coronary heart disease, some types of cancer, stroke, and type 2 diabetes.

Recommended goals for eating a healthful assortment of foods are provided by the 2000 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Actual dietary behaviors most often fall short of the guidelines. A primary concern is that most children and adults consume more fat and saturated fat than is recommended. Studies have also shown that most people do not consume enough vegetables, fruits, and grain products that are high in minerals and vitamins, and not enough iron-rich and calcium-rich foods. For example, only three percent were found to consistently meet 4 out of the 5 dietary guidelines for intake of a variety of foods.

Nutritional intake for a student comes from a variety of sources. Forty percent of an average family's food budget is spent on "away-from-home" food, including restaurants, fast-food outlets, and schools. At school, students typically have many options including school



meals and a la carte foods in the cafeteria, as well as foods sold in snack bars, school stores and vending machines.

The impact of food choices at school on overall nutritional quality has been increasingly recognized. Healthy People 2010, which identifies the nation's major public health concerns, provides the following objective for school-age children in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

**Increase the proportion of children and adolescents aged 6 to 19 years whose intake of meals and snacks at school contributes to good overall dietary quality.**

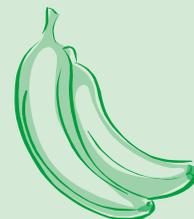


### Physical Activity

Adequate physical activity promotes physical fitness, with health-related benefits relating to body composition, cardiorespiratory function, flexibility, and muscular strength and endurance. The quantity and quality of school physical education programs have a significant effect on the health-related fitness of students by increasing their participation in moderate to vigorous activities. Regular physical activity increases muscle and reduces body fat, reduces risk of development of disease such as diabetes and high blood pressure, provides weight-bearing exercise required for skeletal development, aids in weight control, and enhances psychological well-being.



Unfortunately the average portion of the school day devoted to physical activity has decreased in recent years. For example, in 1999, only one out of three students in grades 9-12 was found to participate in a course of daily physical education.

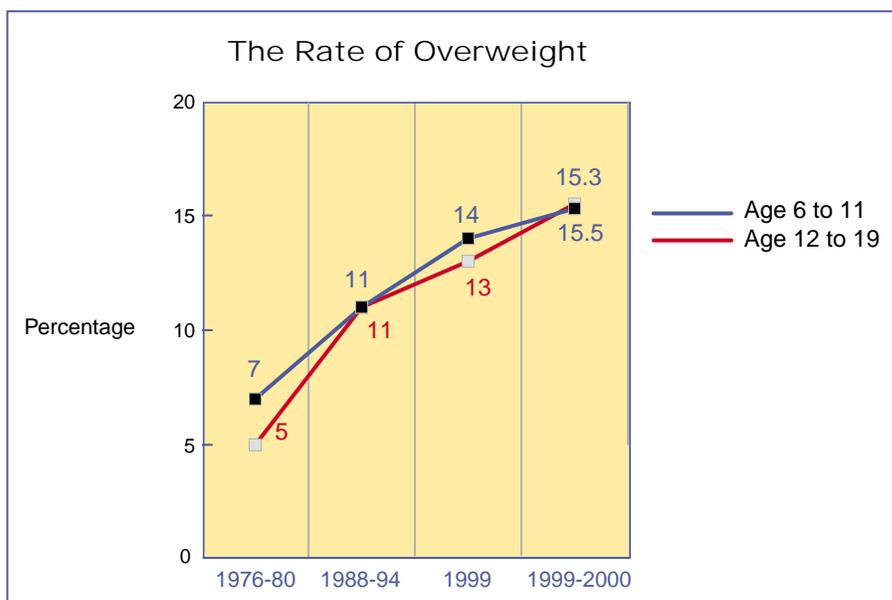


## Overweight and Obesity

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity (2001) has observed that "Overweight and obesity may not be infectious diseases, but they have reached epidemic proportions in the United States."

Overall, the prevalence of childhood overweight *doubled* between the National Health Examination Studies conducted in 1976-1980 and 1999. Overweight is defined as a sex- and age-specific Body Mass Index at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, based on revised Centers for Disease Control and Prevention growth charts.

- The rate of overweight for children ages 6 to 11 doubled during the two decades, from 7 percent to 15.3 percent.
- The rate of overweight for adolescents 12 to 19 tripled during the same period, from 5 percent to 15.5 percent.

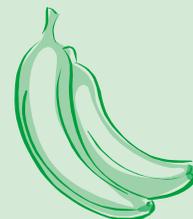


The 2001 Surgeon General's Call to Action specifically expressed concerns about overweight in the school-age population: "Important consequences of excess weight as well as antecedents of adult disease occur in overweight children and adolescents. Overweight children and adolescents are more likely to become overweight or obese adults; this concern is



greatest among adolescents. Type 2 diabetes, high blood lipids, and hypertension as well as early maturation and orthopedic problems also occur with increased frequency in overweight youth. A common consequence of childhood overweight is psychosocial – specifically discrimination."

Excess calorie consumption and inadequate physical activity are major causes of overweight and obesity. A healthy diet and regular physical activity help maintain a healthy weight.



## References

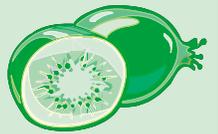
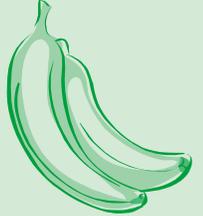
Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health, 2nd edition, 2000, United States Department of Health and Human Services

Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 5th edition, 2000, United States Department of Agriculture and United States Department of Health and Human Services

Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity, 2001, United States Department of Health and Human Services

Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People, 1997, Centers for Disease Control

Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating, 1996, Centers for Disease Control



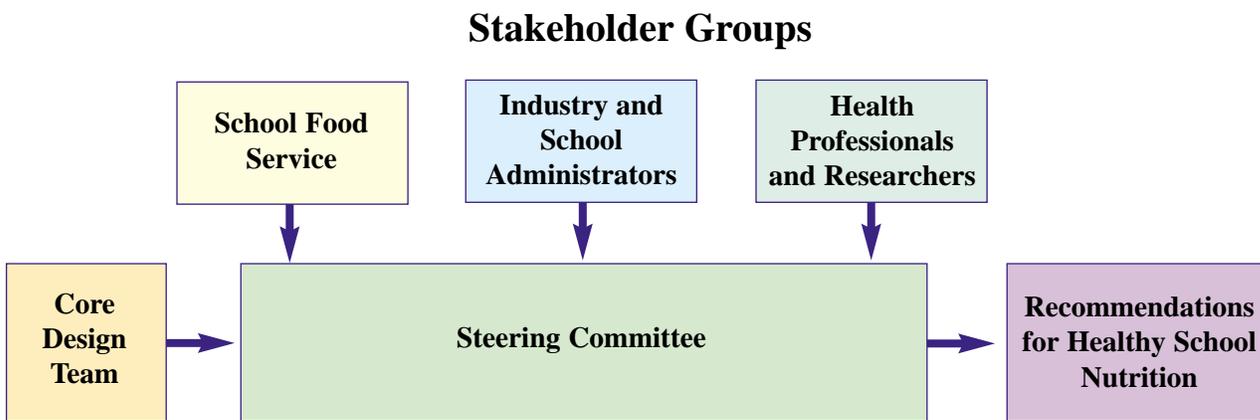
### III. Process Used for the Initiative



The process used for the Healthy School Nutrition Environment initiative was designed to draw together groups of various makeup and size in order to gather input from a broad range of stakeholders. The Core Design Team in Food and Nutrition Service of CFL created the design for formation of the stakeholder groups and the process for generating recommendations for promoting healthy school nutrition environments. This design is based on requirements of the Team Nutrition grant from USDA.

The Core Design Team was composed of four CFL Food and Nutrition Service staff and a communications consultant who would facilitate the process. The Core Design Team met in November 2001 and regularly thereafter to:

- Design the preliminary process.
- Identify and prioritize desired outcomes for the initiative.
- Organize the steering committee and stakeholder groups.



#### Steering Committee

The 22-member Steering Committee was composed of members from school administration, school food service, educators, food industry, health, and advocacy in addition to the CFL Core Design Team. The Steering Committee held four full-day and two half-day meetings, between April and September 2002. Initial tasks were:

- Approve consensus outcomes.
- Review, refine and approve a preliminary process design.
- Complete an “environmental scan” assessment.
- Confirm the organization and makeup of stakeholder groups.



## Members of the Steering Committee



### *Schools*

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Austin School District	Arla Klimesh, Food Service Director
South Washington County School District	Walt Lyszak, Principal, Park High School
	Barb Osthus, Food Service Director
Waseca School District	Karen Howard, Food Service Director

### *Professional Associations*

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Minnesota Association of School Administrators	Dr. Charles Kyte, Executive Director
Minnesota Dental Association	Dick Diercks, Executive Director
Minnesota School Food Service Association	Katherine Jorgenson, Food Service Director
School Food Service Directors of Minnesota	Ronda Stingley, Food Service Director



### *Advocacy*

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Minnesota Children's Defense Fund	Diane Benjamin, Kids Count Director
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### *Industry*

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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota	Michael R. Huber, Director, Cardiovascular Health Initiatives
Midwest Coca-Cola Bottling	Kevin Morris, Community and Government Affairs
Midwest Dairy Council	Al Terwedo, School Food Service Manager
Midwest Vending	Joe Harris, General Manager
Minnesota Soft Drink Association	Joan Archer, President
Upper Lakes Foods	Ron Strasburg, Manager
US Foodservice – Eagan	Paul Malone, VP Sales Support and Services



### *State Agencies/Offices*

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Office of the Governor	Cheryl Savage, Policy Manager for Education
Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning	Mary Begalle, Director of Food and Nutrition Service
	Mary Hunn, Supervisor
	Betty Banas, Team Leader and HSNE Project Coordinator
	Joseph Lee, Policy Specialist
Minnesota Department of Health	Peg Heaver, Coordinated School Health Specialist



Input was also received from observers of the Steering Committee. **Observers attending Steering Committee meetings were:** Ellen Arnsdorf, Midwest Dairy Association; Guy Borglund, Pepsi-Cola Bottling Group; Jenny Eldredge, Minnesota Dental Association; Kevin Fisk, Grocery Manufacturers of America; Mary Jane Getlinger, USDA Food and Nutrition Service; Guy Johnson, Johnson Nutrition Solutions; Elaine Keefe, Capitol Hill Associates; Julie Stauss, USDA Food and Nutrition Service.



## Stakeholder Groups

The Steering Committee created Stakeholder Groups for additional input. Stakeholders were divided into three “affinity groups.”

1. School Food Service
2. Industry and School Administration
3. Health Professionals and Researchers

Each affinity group could then develop and prioritize issues based on the common expertise of the group. It was anticipated that this method would result in more issues being reported back to the Steering Committee, compared to having all backgrounds represented in each Stakeholder Group meeting.

Each stakeholder group conducted a half-day meeting to evaluate and agree on current conditions relating to school nutrition environments. After performing an environmental scan, each group executed a “SWOT” analysis from the group’s perspective:

**S**trengths  
**W**eaknesses  
**O**pportunities  
**T**hreats

After completion of the stakeholder group meetings, the Steering Committee combined the assessment data from all groups.



### **Stakeholder Group – School Food Service**

Mary Anderson, Wayzata School District; Jane Bissell, R & W Food Service and Sales; Allison Bradford, Anoka-Hennepin School District; Pam Bowe, Duluth School District; Kathy Burrill, White Bear Lake School District; Kitty DeMorett, Roisum Elite; Linda Dieleman, St. Paul School District; Bob Foix, New Prague School District; Barbara Hann, Spring Lake Park School District; Karen Howard, Waseca School District; Deb Johnson, Fridley School District; Elaine Keefe, Capitol Hill Associates; Arla Klimesh, Austin School

District; Wendy Knight, Rosemount School District; Sherri Knutson, Rochester School District; Deb LaBounty, Columbia Heights School District; Paul Malone, U.S. Foodservice; Karen Overman, Holdingford School District; Anne Peglow, Glencoe – Silver Lake School District; Cheryl Pick, Foley School District; Susan Richardson, South St. Paul School District; Mark Streamer, Edina School District.



### **Stakeholder Group – Industry and School Administration**

Lee Anderson, General Mills; Joan Archer, Minnesota Soft Drink Association; Scott Benner, Pepsi; Dean Bernick, Bernick’s Management Co.; Guy Borglund, Pepsi Bottling Group; Terry Bowman, USDA Food and Nutrition Service; Roger Carlson, Holdingford School District; Trisha Casey, Midwest Coca-Cola Bottling; Michelle Czech, Foley School District; Kevin Fisk, Grocery Manufacturers of America; Ralph Fix, Midwest Coca-Cola Bottling; Joe Harris, Midwest Vending; Kevin Januszewski, St. Cloud School District; Peggy Leegard, Detroit Lakes School District; Walt Lyszak, South Washington County School District; Steven Olson, Foley School District; John Siffert, Buffalo School District.

### **Stakeholder Group – Health Professionals and Researchers**

Dianna Blaydes, Hennepin County Community Health; Joan Bulfer, Bloomington Public Health; Anne Cisek, St. Paul – Ramsey County Public Health; Matt Clark, Park Rapids School District; Susan J. Crockett, General Mills; Mary Davis, retired teacher; Jane Fulkerson, University of Minnesota School of Public Health; Janet Hawkinson, Mora School District; Deborah Hill, Hennepin County Community Health; Mary Klehr, Waconia School District; Jean Knaak, Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Science; Brenda Lenz, Buffalo School District; Robyn Loewen, Minnesota Dental Association; Leslie Lytle, University of Minnesota School of Public Health; Pat Panshin, University of Minnesota School of Public Health; Ramona Robinson, St. Paul – Ramsey County Public Health; Julianne Seiber, St. Paul – Ramsey County Public Health; Gretchen Taylor, Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Promotion; Pamela Van Zyl York, Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Promotion.



## Methodology for Consensus Decision Making

The Steering Committee and the Stakeholder Groups used a structured process that separated the discussion into manageable stages, starting with definition of the issue and ending with recommended solutions.

### **1. Issue/Problem -**

Generate issue or problem statements and then agree upon a comprehensive issue or problem statement that describes what the group commits to addressing in our work together.

### **2. Facts -**

Generate and agree upon the most relevant facts in relation to the issue. For this purpose, facts include opinions, perceptions, feelings, hunches and scientifically verifiable data.

### **3. Principles/Values -**

Generate and then agree upon the relevant principles or values to which we want to hold ourselves accountable. Values are the deepest and most powerful motivators of personal and group action.

### **4. Solutions -**

Generate and then agree upon the relevant solutions that will best resolve or address the issue.

### **5. Implementation**

Generate and then agree upon the implementation steps that will effectively put our solutions into action and thereby address or resolve the problem.

# Steps to Foster Consensus Decision Making



## IV. Results

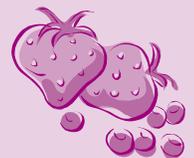
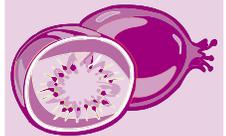


### Issue Statement

The Steering Committee first discussed the general issue of school nutrition environments and the type of solutions that were envisioned. This issue statement was finalized with consensus from the Steering Committee:

**Issue:** *How to create a responsible school climate for good health through collaboration among stakeholders?*

**Desired Solutions:** *The desired school climate should value and encourage healthy behaviors, prevent obesity, increase physical activity, and make nutritional foods “cool.” The desired solutions should increase parental involvement and responsibility, and promote both local responsibility and adequate school funding.*

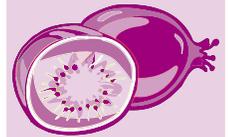


## Values

The Steering Committee identified an array of values that would inform the process as it progressed. The Steering Committee referred back to these values, and the issue statement, at many points during the discussions.

### Some of the major values held by the Steering Committee:

- Contributions of nutrition and physical activity to holistic health of children
- Health as a priority in decision-making
- Availability of healthy food choices in schools
- Educating children to make healthy choices
- Recognizing the role that schools and communities play in contributing to healthy, active children
- Students' rights, responsibilities and freedom of choice
- Parents' rights and responsibilities
- Maintaining financially sound school food service and other school programs
- Free enterprise and its contribution to our society



## Solutions

The Steering Committee identified solutions that could contribute to resolution of the issue within the context of the consensus facts and values.

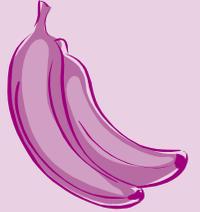
**The Steering Committee reached consensus on the following solutions:**

- Educate school staff and others on good nutrition and health in the classroom.
- Seek opportunities to increase physical activity and education in the lives of students to meet national and state standards.
- Encourage each school district to establish committees, to include parents and students to promote healthy school nutrition environments, focusing on areas such as nutrition, vending policy and physical activity.
- Develop a student-led and youth-oriented public awareness campaign promoting healthy food choices and physical activity and showcase schools that demonstrate a healthy school environment.
- Create incentives for students to make healthy food choices.
- Increase funding for school nutrition programs (through legislation) in order to encourage new, healthy food choices and to increase student consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and other nutritious foods.
- Educate adults who influence students, including parents, to become effective role models for healthy eating behaviors.



- Coordinate and promote new and existing programs aimed at reinforcing healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors.
- Enhance the school meal experience to improve how students eat by addressing issues such as adequate eating time and environment.
- Seek additional funding sources to promote and reward efforts to create healthy school nutrition environments.

Due to the diversity of the stakeholder groups and the limited time for discussions, there also were potential solutions that were identified but may not have been fully discussed, and on which consensus was not reached. These ideas for continued dialogue related to areas such as development of standards for all foods available in schools; changes to product specifications (nutrient fortification and packaging); limitations on vending machines, snack bars, fundraisers and advertising in school; dedication of partial revenues from vending machines or snack bars to promotion of a healthy school nutrition environment; and establishment of state guidelines for the school nutrition environment that are more comprehensive than current standards for school meal programs.



## Recommendations

The Steering Committee recommended three approaches, based on consensus solutions, for focused efforts in the immediate future.

### **1. Public Awareness Campaign**

School nutrition environments would benefit from a statewide campaign that consistently maintains these issues in the public awareness.

Due to the scope of the issues, the need to raise awareness, and the need for a forum to maintain dialogue between major stakeholder groups, the creation of a Governor’s Council on Children’s Nutrition and Physical Activity is recommended. For effective promotion of healthy food choices and physical activity, the campaign should be student-led and youth-oriented. A well-known person may be sought as a “champion” of the issue.

The campaign should be coordinated with ongoing efforts in areas such as childhood obesity, osteoporosis and dental carries.

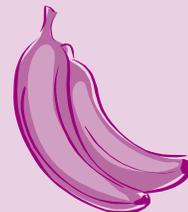
### **2. Minnesota “Tool Kit”**

Schools can use more assistance in evaluating their nutrition environment and deciding what actions to take. Most of the action ideas selected by the Steering Committee were grouped together here because the ideas can be developed and coordinated into a practical “tool kit” resource to support local actions.

This proposed Minnesota Tool Kit will be developed by CFL Food and Nutrition Service to augment the USDA resource “Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment,” which Food and Nutrition is already using as a training resource with schools. The Minnesota Tool Kit will be tailored to Minnesota needs to provide an additional resource to aid local decision makers.

### **3. Recommendations for Other Organizations**

Some of the recommendations to promote healthy school nutrition environments are not actionable through this initiative, but could be put into action at any time by other organizations. For example, schools can create opportunities to increase physical activity and education in the lives of students. Additional state funding for school meal programs could encourage student consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and other nutritious foods. Additional funding sources could promote and reward innovative efforts toward healthy school nutrition environments.



## Organization of Healthy School Nutrition Environment Initiative Solutions

### 1. Statewide Public Awareness Campaign

Develop a student-led and youth-oriented public awareness campaign promoting healthy food choices & physical activity & showcase schools that demonstrate a healthy school environment.

### 2. Minnesota Tool Kit

Educate school staff & others on good nutrition & health in classroom.

Encourage each district to establish committees, to include parents & students to promote healthy school nutrition environments, focusing on areas such as nutrition, vending policy & physical activity.

Create incentives for students to make healthy food choices.

Educate adults who influence students, including parents, to become effective role models for healthy eating behaviors.

Coordinate and promote new & existing programs aimed at reinforcing healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors.

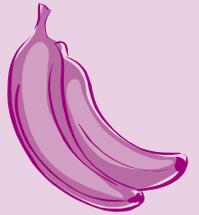
Enhance the school meal experience to improve how students eat by addressing issues such as adequate eating time & environment.

### 3. Recommendations for Other Organizations

Schools and school districts should look for opportunities to increase physical activity/education in the lives of students to meet national and state standards.

MN Legislature should increase funding for school nutrition programs in order to encourage new, healthy food choices and to increase student consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and other nutritious foods.

Seek additional funding sources to promote and reward efforts to create healthy school nutrition environments.



## Future Steps

- Recommend to the Governor’s Office the creation of a Governor’s Council on Children’s Nutrition and Physical Activity.
- Develop a “Minnesota Tool Kit” and distribute to school districts to support local actions to improve the school nutrition environment.

The Healthy School Nutrition Environment brought together diverse stakeholders and began a process to find “common ground.” The project ended with a high level of interest in continuing the work begun with this initiative, including a state-level public awareness campaign.



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