Prevention Strategies for School Personnel

- Be a good role model. Show your students how important it is for you and them to make healthy food choices.
- Be an advocate of healthy eating in school. If your school has a vending machine that allows students to purchase soda and candy at school, work with administration and parents to limit vending machine options to water, 100% fruit and vegetable juice, milk, and healthier snacks (such as granola bars, boxes of raisins, graham crackers, and pretzels). Your school will still earn money without compromising students' health.
- Incorporate nutrition education lessons into the curriculum. Learning is improved when new information is presented in a familiar context. You can implement nutrition education information into science, math, language arts and health lessons.
- Incorporate a family involvement component when working with young children, because young children rely on caregivers to purchase and provide healthful foods.
- Inform families about what their children are learning regarding healthy eating in school.
- Offer concrete, culturally appropriate suggestions for parents to help their children make healthful choices.
- Avoid using candy as a reward. When candy is used as a reward, children are more likely to develop preferences for these foods. In effect, when candy is used as a reward, its value will increase.
- Suggest and use alternative fundraising activities that do not involve the sale of candy, cookies, and cake.
- Discourage junk food and candy in school. Institute no junk food days in your building. Help students understand that foods high in sugar and fats are fine to eat as long as they are eaten in moderation.
- Expose students to healthful foods during nutrition education lessons. Taste testing is an enjoyable activity for children. Many children have never eaten certain types of fruits and vegetables. However, before doing taste-testing activities at school, check with your students' caregivers to make sure they are not allergic to any of the foods you will be serving.
- Supplement nutrition education lessons with class trips to the fruit and vegetable section of a local grocery store or a farm. Lessons can focus on selecting ripe fruit and vegetables, learning how fruits and vegetables grow, and tasting fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Establish a class-wide motivational system to encourage students to eat a healthful breakfast every day. For example, you can set up a weekly raffle with a mystery motivator prize that students can enter each day by bringing in a signed breakfast raffle ticket to the classroom. If students are eligible to participate in the school breakfast program, you can give them a blank raffle ticket that they can have the food service staff sign that they ate breakfast that day. If students eat breakfast at home, their caregivers can sign the breakfast raffle ticket.
- Understand that the provision of knowledge does not necessarily translate into behavior change. Simply informing students about the importance of daily physical activity and healthy eating behaviors does not mean they will adopt these behaviors. It is also important to provide students with an environment that supports these behaviors, motivation and reinforcement for engaging in these behaviors, and role models who espouse these behaviors.
- Help students set realistic, well-defined, measurable goals for themselves regarding healthy eating and physical activity. For example: "I will eat five servings of fruit and vegetables each day." "I will eat breakfast every day this week." "I will play basketball at least 4 days this week." In addition to setting the goal, have them record their progress over time. Students' performance on their goals can be graphed and incorporated into a math lesson.

Resource