

Chronic Disease Prevention Bulletin

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Start The School Year Off Right: “Eat Healthy”

Good eating habits and physical activity are essential to the health of our children and families. While parents and family members remain the greatest influence on a child's eating habits, school nutrition professionals are an important partner and resource in promoting a healthy childhood weight. School nutrition programs help build healthy eating habits for life; and parental involvement is paramount in the support of nutritious school meals in Georgia's schools.



As school districts implement local school wellness policies to impact the health and well-being of students, school staff can take a step forward and make positive changes in their own nutrition and physical activity habits. School nutrition professionals are role models for children every day in school cafeterias across Georgia, and personal wellness for these professionals is also important.

A recently released study finds secondary students are increasingly consuming more healthful food options, such as fruit, salads, and milk and passing by traditional fast food items. The study results, published in the June 12, 2006 issue of Nation's Restaurant News, show that food items such as milk, bottled water, salads, and fruit were among the most highly requested food items in the past school year. Typical fast food items, such as soda, burgers, french-fries, and pizza saw a decrease.

Parents, Teachers, and Students (PTSA) across Georgia have a platform to voice concerns for healthier food choices in their schools. Together with school nutrition professionals, PTSAs can promote healthier eating among students and teachers by:

- Implementing wellness and nutrition policies that will spark a significant number of healthy changes;
- Offering greater choices for fruit, vegetables and whole grain foods;
- Changing menus and implementing cuts in fat, sugar and calories;
- Reducing portion sizes;
- Marketing greater consumption of healthier food choices and exercise.
- Providing interactive nutrition education in the classroom; and
- Encouraging student participation in taste tests of new, low-fat food items.



According to the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, all school districts in Georgia were to enact a local school wellness policy by July 1, 2006. The policies include regulations for nutrition education and physical fitness, as well as nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages available in schools. Contact your local school district to inquire about this policy and see how you can get involved.

Source: www.schoolnutrition.org



www.livehealthygeorgia.org