

Nutrition Education

School-based nutrition education is an important component of comprehensive school health. Teaching nutrition to children throughout their educational experience is key to developing healthy eating habits. Nutrition concepts need to be reinforced throughout the year, and students can learn about food and nutrition as part of many subjects, including math, science, social studies, physical education, and health.

In addition, nutrition education should extend beyond the classroom and needs to involve multiple channels of communications. Teachers, foodservice professionals, and family members all play a role in promoting life-long healthy eating habits. Therefore, nutrition education should be linked with the school food environment and at home.

Nutrition education is designed to help students:

- Improve health literacy, by learning about essential nutrients, the benefits of healthy eating, and safe food preparation;
- Gain nutrition-related skills, such as understanding food labels, comprehending nutrition information, and evaluating commercial food advertising; and
- Assess personal eating habits by using food guidance systems, such as MyPlate and the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

[*The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Standards*](#) provides educators with a framework for teaching nutrition. The standards establish a set of skills and knowledge that should be acquired by the end of fourth grade, eighth grade, and twelfth grade. Implementing these standards is voluntary, however school districts are encouraged to use the standards to support their nutrition education efforts

[📄 Nutrition Education Resources](#)



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The local wellness policy must include goals for nutrition education.



The school cafeteria serves as an excellent location to reinforce nutrition education messages. The cafeteria can act as a classroom where students learn healthy eating habits. There are several ways to connect nutrition concepts learned in a student's classroom to the cafeteria.

[Connecting the Classroom and Cafeteria](#)

The home environment is extremely influential on a child's eating behaviors. Parents serve as role models and home activities should promote positive physical activity and eating habits. Schools can distribute nutrition education to parents using a variety of strategies:

- *Newsletters* – Distribute a newsletter highlighting wellness activities at school. Include healthy eating and physical activity tips for parent to use at home.
- *Health Fairs* – Hold a school health fair to highlight the importance of nutrition and physical activity. Consider inviting local health professionals to provide presentations.
- *School Website* – Create a webpage on the school's website dedicated to nutrition and physical activity. Include healthy recipes, activities for families, and wellness information.
- *Posters* – Hang posters, such as [USDA's Ten Tips Nutrition Education Series](#), where parents and other school visitors can view them

Sample Goal and Objectives

Goal:

- *The school district will provide nutrition education that will teach, encourage, and support healthy behaviors.*

Objectives:

- *Students in grades K-5 will receive at least five hours of nutrition education per year.*
- *Students in grades 6-8 will receive nutrition education in one class required to complete middle school.*
- *Students in grades 9-12 will receive nutrition education within two courses required for graduation.*

Nutrition Education Resources

Eating well can make a positive difference in a student’s ability to achieve in school. Therefore, teaching nutrition to children throughout their educational experience is key to developing healthy eating habits. School-based nutrition education is an important component of comprehensive school health.

The following is a list of nutrition education resources.

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Resources

- [A Guide to Planning Curriculum in Nutrition](#) – Provides age-appropriate details and real life examples that build upon the framework established in the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Nutrition.
- [Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin](#) – Provides fun and creative lessons that focus on local foods. The goal of this curriculum is to broaden the food experiences of Wisconsin students and provide another aspect to learning nutrition as part of the study of our great state.
- [Teaching Nutrition through Family and Consumer Science](#) – Provides 15 nutrition lessons that can be easily integrated into a Family and Consumer Science classroom.

Other Resources

- [Serving Up MyPlate: A Yummy Curriculum](#) – Provides classroom materials that help elementary school teachers integrate nutrition education into Math, Science, English Language Arts, and Health. The curriculum introduces the importance of eating from all five food groups using MyPlate and a variety of hands-on activities.
- [Nutrition Voyage: The Quest to Be Our Best](#) – Provides three lessons that take 7th and 8th grade students on an exploratory journey into school wellness.
- [Create a Classroom That Moves](#) – Provides nutrition lessons that align to select Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and the National Health Education Standards. The lessons are geared towards elementary students.



Connecting the Classroom and Cafeteria

Nutrition education should be linked with the school food environment. The school cafeteria serves as an excellent location to reinforce nutrition education messages. The following are ideas to connect the classroom to the cafeteria.

Taste Tests

Teachers can coordinate with school nutrition staff to conduct taste tests of healthy foods. Teachers can discuss the benefits of the food, while school nutrition staff provides the taste test.

Cultural Theme Days

School nutrition staff and teachers can plan cultural theme days. Include foods on the menu that relate to the culture being studied.

School Gardens

School gardens serve as an excellent learning site to teach students about fruits and vegetables. Produce grown in the school garden can be incorporated into the school meal program. [Community Ground Works](#), a nonprofit organization that connects people to nature and local food, has information on how to start a school garden. Also, Wisconsin Team Nutrition's, [Home Grown](#), provides best practice guidelines for starting and maintaining a school garden.

Cafeteria Artwork

Students can create posters that highlight certain foods, nutrition information, etc. School nutrition staff can hang these posters in the cafeteria.

Harvest of the Month

School nutrition staff can highlight a different fruit and vegetable each month on the cafeteria menu. In the classroom, teachers can discuss facts about the food.

Farm to School

Farm to school programs bring local foods to the cafeteria and classroom. Teachers can have farmers come talk to their classroom and school nutrition staff can showcase that farmer's produce in the cafeteria. The [School Nutrition Team](#) webpage has resources on getting started with a farm to school program.

Curriculum Resources

School nutrition staff can partner with the teaching staff to provide nutrition education lessons to students across all grade levels. [Team Nutrition](#) offers a number of curriculum guides focused on gardening, healthy eating, and wellness at no cost to schools.

