

Five Tasty Ways to Enjoy Smart Nutrition at School

Smart food choices provide the fuel that kids need to perform well at school – both in the classroom and during athletic events. There are many ways to support smart choices wherever children, staff, and families eat together on the school campus. Family involvement is always an important part of healthier school environments.



1. Get behind breakfast at school.

When it comes to school performance, there's no doubt that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A morning meal fuels children's brains for paying attention, staying on task, and absorbing new information. If your school offers breakfast, use it whenever you need it. If not, ask if they can start a program.



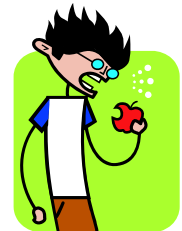
2. Support school lunch.

Exciting things are happening in school dining rooms: more fruits and veggies, more whole grains, more tasty good-for-kids options. As you read the menus, realize that things have changed. That pizza may have a whole wheat crust, low-fat cheese, and several veggies. Join your child for lunch – and taste for yourself.



3. Makeover brown bags and lunchboxes.

When your child takes lunch from home, pack fun, nutritious foods for optimal performance. Plan on five items: a fruit, a veggie, a whole grain, a protein, and a dairy food. It's as easy as sliced turkey on whole wheat with lettuce and tomato, a single-serve cup of canned fruit, and low-fat milk purchased at school.



4. Focus on fruit and vegetable treats.

Fruits and veggies make the perfect treats for classroom celebrations and for booster clubs sales at athletic events. You can go simple with veggie sticks plus low-fat Ranch dip – or go fancy with fruit kebobs or a fresh fruit pizza. Veggie boats and fruits cups are popular with kids and parents at concession stands.

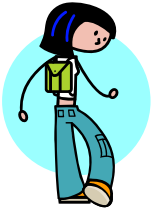
5. Push for effective, non-food rewards.

Sugary rewards can cause real problems – for kids' teeth and their long-term eating habits. Check your school wellness policy to see what it says about classroom rewards. Push for effective, non-food rewards. Special privileges (like extra recess for the class or computer time for an individual) can work wonders.

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Five Fun Ways to Make School Days Active Days

Physical activity is as important for children's minds as it is for their bodies. Being active before, during, and after school can help kids feel better, behave better, and perform better at school. It can also help them maintain a healthy weight naturally. Being active with family and friends adds social benefits to this win-win situation.



★ Walk to and from school.

For generations, walking to and from school was the tried-and-true fitness path for children. It still can be an awesome way for kids and adults to get physically fit and enjoy some family togetherness at the same time. To get started, plan to walk at least one way every day – or back-and-forth a few days per week.

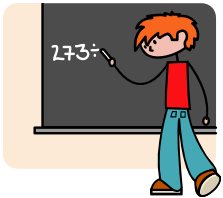


★ Use pedal and push power.

Bikes and scooters are also good ways to make school-day transportation work for everybody's fitness. Make sure that everyone wears a helmet and knows the details of bike or scooter safety. Have younger children? No problem! Let them walk as far as they can and then push them in the stroller for the rest of the way.

★ Start a walking club at school.

If walking to or from school isn't practical due to distances involved or safety concerns, walking at school is a great alternative. Children can walk around the playground before the bell rings (a little music always helps) or enjoy a nearby park. Check with the PE teacher about getting a club going in your school.



★ Take 5 or 10 in the classroom.

Savvy teachers know that a 5 to 10 minute activity break is a great way to switch from subject to subject. It can also be an effective way to calm down an antsy class and to refocus students' attention where it should be – on learning. Coaches and PE teachers often know where to find lots of fun and easy energizers.



★ Plan for active recess.

Recess is a time for playing with friends rather than leaning against the wall. Recess works best when teachers (and parent volunteers) engage children in age-appropriate games focused on movement and fun rather than winning and losing. Old-fashioned jump rope and hopscotch can be lots of fun for today's children.

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