

# News Of Nutrition

## What Schools Can Do To Keep Kids Healthier

(NAPSA)—Many schools have reduced or eliminated the junk food they used to offer students. That's good news, since about a third of American children are overweight, a rate three times greater than a generation ago.

Now, experts say, it's time for schools to take the next step by offering more nutritious foods.

"It is great that many schools are pulling junk food from vending machines, cafeteria lines and school stores," says Rob Bisceglie, executive director of Action for Healthy Kids, a nonprofit organization that works to improve school health practices. "But switching from fried to baked chips is only part of the solution. Schools need to offer more nutritious foods."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), just 2 percent of children consume the minimum recommended amount from all food groups. Youths need to consume more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nonfat and low-fat dairy products. Action for Healthy Kids emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach:

- School food service must provide nutritious, tasty meals that students will find appealing enough to choose over "competitive" foods.

- Parents need to reinforce healthy eating at home and pack nutritious lunches that include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.

- Teachers need to find opportunities to provide nutritious foods, such as adding cut fruit and vegetables and low-fat milk to a class pizza party.



**Good nutrition and physical activity have been linked to better academic performance, concentration and class behavior.**

- Superintendents and principals need to hold staff accountable for implementing healthy practices that have been established.

- Student leaders need to stand behind healthy improvements and share enthusiasm with other students.

- Parent organizations operating school concession stands or sponsoring fundraisers should provide healthful options.

A recent national survey showed that 96 percent of parents feel that they play a critical role in improving school health practices, yet only 24 percent have ever contacted a teacher or principal to suggest improvements to students' nutrition or opportunities for physical activity.

"Parents often act as a catalyst for change in schools, so their involvement in creating healthier schools is critical," says Bisceglie. "Now is the time to take action."

To learn more, visit [www.ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org).