



Oregon Schools Make Wellness Work

If you're a school foodservice director looking for inspiration and examples of wellness initiatives that keep both students and the government happy, look to the state of Oregon. While districts nationwide have been ramping up their wellness programs to meet a federal compliance deadline of July 1, 2006, Oregon has taken an aggressive approach, particularly when it comes to establishing and promoting a strong school breakfast program.

In fact, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) recently recognized the state as having one of the most successful breakfast initiatives in the nation. Oregon ranked No. 1 on FRAC's 2005 School Breakfast Scorecard in ratio of breakfast participation to lunch participation for low-income students.

Oregon's Model Local School Wellness Policies & Recommendations for Administrative Rules include:

1. Create school health councils to develop, implement, monitor, review and, as necessary, revise school nutrition and physical activity policies. Council members should include parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, members of the school board, school administrators, teachers, health professionals and members of the public.
2. Assure the nutritional quality of foods and beverages sold and served on campus. Meals served through NSLP and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) must
 - a. Be appealing and attractive to children.
 - b. Be served in clean and pleasant settings.
 - c. Meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements established by local, state and federal regulations.
 - d. Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables.
 - e. Serve only low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk and nutritionally equivalent non-dairy equivalents (to be defined by USDA).
 - f. Ensure that half of the served grains are whole grain.
 - g. Engage students and parents, through taste tests of new entrees and surveys, in selecting foods sold through school meal programs in order to identify new, healthful and appealing food choices.
 - h. Share information about the nutrition content of meals with parents and students. Such information can be made available on menus, websites, cafeteria menu boards, placards or other point-of-purchase materials.

3. Ensure that all children have breakfast, either at home or at school, in order to meet their nutrition requirements and enhance their ability to learn. To that end, schools will, to the extent possible:
 - a. Operate the School Breakfast Program.
 - b. Arrange bus schedules and utilize methods to serve school breakfasts that encourage participation, including serving breakfast in the classroom, “grab-and-go” breakfast or breakfast during morning break or recess.
 - c. Notify parents and students of the availability of SBP.
 - d. Encourage parents to provide a healthy breakfast for their children through newsletter articles, take-home materials or other means.
4. Schedule appropriate meal times, including a commitment to:
 - a. Provide students with at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast and 20 minutes after sitting down for lunch.
 - b. Schedule meal periods at appropriate times, e.g., lunch should be scheduled between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.
 - c. Prohibit the scheduling of tutoring, club or organizational meetings during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities.
 - d. Schedule elementary school lunch periods to follow recess periods.
5. Discourage students from sharing foods or beverages with one another, given concerns about allergies and other dietary restrictions.

For more information on the Oregon Model Wellness Policy and packets, as well as a new “Healthy Kids Learn Better” video recently announced by the Oregon Department of Education, visit, respectively, www.ode.state.or.us/services/nutrition/nslp/wellness/model_policy.pdf and www.ode.state.or.us/services/nutrition/nslp/memos/2005.