

Improving Food and Nutrition Policy

Mr. Zimmer, Ms. García - For Action December 11, 2012

Whereas, The Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District has historically been recognized as a model in implementing nutrition policies that support the healthy nourishment of students to achieve academic excellence and reach 100% graduation for all;

Whereas, Improvement of nutrition practices from the past motions has contributed to the decline in childhood obesity within Los Angeles County, providing a framework for improving our children's health. Despite the progress made, an epidemic of childhood obesity continues to threaten the health of our students;

Whereas, Nationally, one-third of adults and youth between the ages of 6 and 19 years is obese¹, often as a result of poor nutrition and a lack of physical activity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has noted in 2011 that obesity is a priority focus in chronic disease prevention, and is a major contributor to heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, arthritis-related disability, and several types of cancer;

Whereas, Since more than 60 percent of U.S. children and adolescents consume more saturated fat than recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and more than one-third of all adults do not meet the major recommendations for aerobic physical activity based on the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans;

Whereas, The Los Angeles Unified School District is committed to being a national leader in quality education, thereby providing an environment in which students can make choices for lifelong health, demonstrated by the access to community health clinics, physical education programs, nutrition education from the Network for Healthy California-LAUSD, and the District's meal programs which meet or exceed national nutrition standards as outlined in the 2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act;

Whereas, The District is the first in the nation to initiate a large-scale, multi-year public awareness and marketing campaign entitled "I'm In", designed to raise awareness about student and community wellness including the District's healthy meals initiative to help fight childhood obesity, as well as to encourage student attendance, graduation, and dropout prevention;

Whereas, In 2011, 490 District schools have been recognized nationally in the HealthierUS School Challenge;

Whereas, The Board adopted the Motion to Promote Healthy Beverage Sales in 2002 which eliminated the sale of sodas and other sugar-based drinks at all schools at all locations on campus (cafeteria and student stores) during and up to a half hour after the school day and established a list of approved beverages that can be sold on campus. The District was the first large school district to implement such a ban.

Whereas, The Board adopted the Obesity Prevention Motion in 2003 which:

- Sets the District's Food Services Division and student store nutrition standards at higher levels than USDA regulation.
- Limits the amount of fat, saturated fat, sugar, and sodium in all snack foods sold at vending machines and student stores during and up to a half hour after the school day.

¹ Body Mass Index \geq 95th percentile of the CDC growth chart

- Sets deadlines for the implementation of strategies to increase access to breakfast service at all schools, to increase access to salad bars, to improve and broaden nutrition education, and to improve physical education.

Whereas, The Board adopted the Cafeteria Reform Motion in 2005 which set goals of increasing student meal participation through various means and seeking student and parent input to create a comprehensive plan to market cafeteria meals to students. The motion also creates higher District standards for reducing sodium levels and fat content in meals served to students from the cafeteria;

Whereas, The United States Department of Agriculture has adopted new standards for nutrition setting benchmarks for sodium reduction, increased daily servings of fresh fruits and vegetables, and a cap on calorie intake through schools meals.

Whereas, Breakfast is often said to be the most important meal of the day, and research shows that students benefit from eating breakfast in two primary ways. First, students' overall dietary health is positively affected by breakfast consumption, particularly meals provided through the School Breakfast Program. Secondly, there is significant evidence of positive academic effects due to breakfast consumption.

Whereas, More than 80 percent of the District's student enrollment is eligible for free or reduced price meals, and that it is recognized that the District's school meal program may be the only meal of the day providing adequate nutrition for some students;

Whereas, Only 325 (49 percent) elementary school sites provide adequate time to eat, 347 (51 percent) sites have 20 minutes or less to serve and eat lunch. 45 out of 154 of secondary sites have multiple lunch periods and only 29 percent of bell schedules permit senior high schools adequate time to eat. Guidelines from several national organizations call for a minimum of 20 minutes of seat time for lunch and 10 minutes of seat time for breakfast served at school^{1,2,3,4}. The District's own Board Rule 1104, adopted in 1989, calls to ensure that the last child in line has no less than 20 minutes to eat; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District directs the Superintendent to report back to the Board in 6 months on adherence to this nutrition policy to ensure that all District departments and school sites uphold best practices for child nutrition and that every child at every school is afforded the same quality of healthy food environment at school.

Specific actions steps needed to meet the policies are outlined in the Implementation Plan (Appendix A), including increasing students' access to meals, improving student appeal and perception of the meal program, exceeding nutritional standards, connecting nutrition education with the cafeteria, meeting procurement criteria, and meeting accountability measures;

Resolved further, Access to meals: The District shall require that all school bell schedules allow every student at least 20 minutes to eat a school meal and to ensure a minimum of 70% meal participation of average daily attendance (ADA). The District shall also ensure that all schools serve breakfast through "Breakfast in the Classroom" or "After The Bell Breakfast" (Nutrition Break);

¹National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity. Model Local School Wellness Policies on Physical Activity and Nutrition. March 2005. Accessed online <http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/wellnesspolicies.html#quality>

²Taras, H., Duncan, P., Luckenbill, D., Robinson, J., Wheeler, L., Wooley, S. Health, Mental Health, and Safety Guidelines for Schools. Guideline #5 on meal scheduling. 2004. Accessed online <http://www.nationalguidelines.org/guidelin.cfm?guidenum25-07>

³School Nutrition Association. School Nutrition Association Local Wellness Policy

⁴Recommendations. 2005. Accessed online

http://www.schoolnutrition.org/uploadedfiles/schoolnutrition.org/child_nutrition/Local_School_Wellness_PolicyGuidelinesFinal.pdf

Resolved further, Improve Appeal of School Meals: The Food Services Division (FSD) will develop a student driven menu that not only exceeds nutritional quality, but that also appeals to students. Steps will be taken to solicit student feedback on the menu via surveys, focus groups, and taste tests;

Resolved further, Communications: The FSD will develop a comprehensive communications plan in cooperation with the Parent and Community Services Division, food services workers and community based organizations, which focuses on parent education and incorporates parent and student feedback on the meal program;

Resolved further, Good nutrition: The FSD will provide meals that meet and exceed the nutritional standards set forth by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the HealthierUS School Challenge – Gold Level of Distinction. The District will appoint a liaison to work with the County Department of Public Health and other appropriate stakeholders to create comprehensive requirements for the use of salad bars and school garden produce in order to facilitate these programs and maximize student consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables;

Resolved further, Nutrition Education: The District will appoint a liaison between the FSD and the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and School Support to develop a plan to incorporate nutrition education into the curriculum and linking what is taught in the classroom with what is being served in the cafeteria. All schools must display nutrition information on school meals and make information available to parents about the nutritional quality of school meals;

Resolved further, Procurement: The District will work with food services vendors to incorporate a minimum of 5% of locally grown, within 200 miles. fruits and vegetables from small to mid-size farms, whenever possible and competitively priced; and be it finally

Resolved, that Monitoring: The District will convene a School Nutrition Task Force comprised of nutrition experts, community-based organizations, food services workers, parents and other appropriate partners to monitor compliance with all nutrition policies and motions and make recommendations to the District.