

# School Environmental Changes

*Your students are participating in Steps to Health. To help support the Steps to Health nutrition and physical activity messages, here are some simple suggestions for creating a healthier school environment in the classroom, cafeteria, and with school personnel. Choose a few to focus on throughout the year. Keep this list as a reference.*

## CLASSROOM



- Make water the beverage of choice in the classroom.
- Have a discussion each week on new foods students tried in the cafeteria.
- Develop a plan with students on ways to be active on the weekends.
- Eat and drink only healthy snacks or beverages in front of students.
- Promote fruit or vegetable-only snacks on certain days.
- Provide activities for all students to engage in active play during recess or physical education.
- Give students 1-2 minute activity breaks throughout the day.
- Avoid withholding physical activity opportunities as a form of punishment.
- Before lunch, review how the menu fits into MyPlate recommendations and which healthy menu items the students are going to choose.
- Have a farm day and ask a local farmer to talk about where foods come from and what grows in your county.
- Replace food rewards with other fun inexpensive incentives like stickers or pencils.



## SCHOOL-WIDE

- Partner with your local hospital or other local non-profits to provide pedometers. Have a step challenge—see how long it takes students to “walk” across their county, the state, or the US by recording their weekly steps.
- Conduct essay contests on the topic of nutrition and health. Winners can read their entries during school assemblies.

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## SCHOOL-WIDE Continued

- Provide families with information on local parks and recreation programs.
- Allow for after-hours use of playgrounds and gyms.
- Encourage teachers not to drink sugar-sweetened beverages like soda during school hours.
- Promote the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs.
- Start a staff walking club or other fitness groups.
- Post bulletin boards to promote healthy eating and increased activity for staff and students.
- Contact your local Cooperative Extension Service to start a school garden with a Master Gardener.
- Conduct fundraisers or boosters that support good health through selling healthy foods or nonfood items.
- Implement a walk or bike to school program.



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## CAFETERIA

- Post colorful posters promoting healthy foods.
- Give students an opportunity for menu input.
- Provide more whole grain and low sugar a-la-carte menu items.
- Place healthy menu items in locations and in lighting so they are visible and easy to choose.



Adapted from the School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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