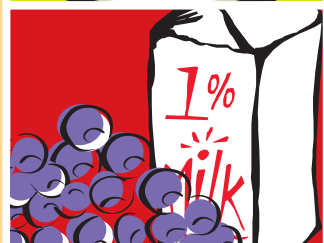
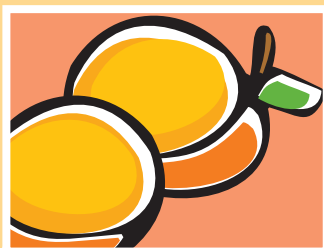
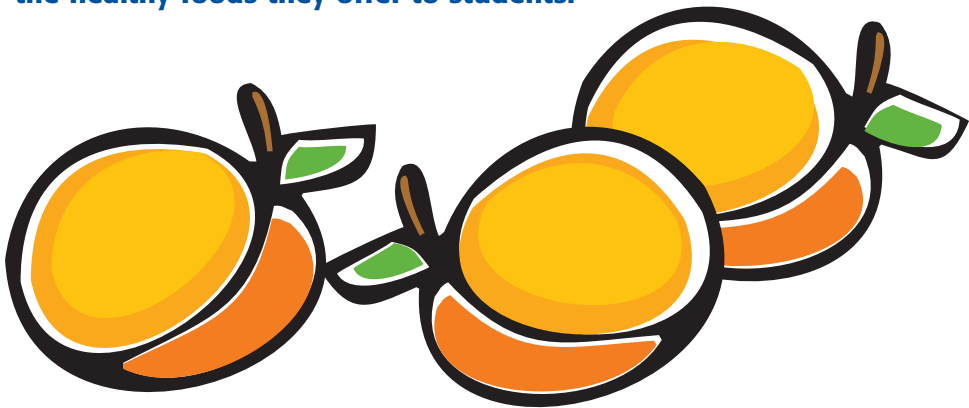


Marketing Healthy Foods Tool Kit



The Marketing Healthy Foods Tool kit has been developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program to help school food service departments promote the healthy foods they offer to students.



Why Marketing Healthy Foods Is Important

The rate of childhood obesity has exploded among elementary, middle, and high school students nationwide. Since 1976, the rates of overweight and obesity have more than doubled among 6-11 year olds and tripled among 12-19 year olds¹. Currently, children's diets are too high in calories, saturated and trans fat, refined sugars and salt, and too low in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and calcium. It has been well documented that these poor eating habits increase the risk for numerous chronic diseases including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

The health risks associated with poor nutrition are not only concerns for the future, but 60% of 5-10 year olds already have risk factors for heart disease such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels². Additionally, type 2 diabetes can no longer be called "adult onset" diabetes because of the rising rates in children. If the current obesity trends continue, it is estimated that 1/3 of all children, and 1/2 of all African-American and Hispanic children, born in 2000 will develop diabetes³.



Improving the nutritional value of school meals often seems like a losing battle when kids have access to so many sweet, salty, and carbonated alternatives. The widespread availability and promotion of "junk food" within and around our schools poses a significant challenge to food service directors who must compete with vending machines, candy sales, and local stores for students' dollars. However, by making healthy foods more appealing through effective marketing strategies, food service directors throughout Massachusetts can convince students that nutritious food tastes good and is good for them.

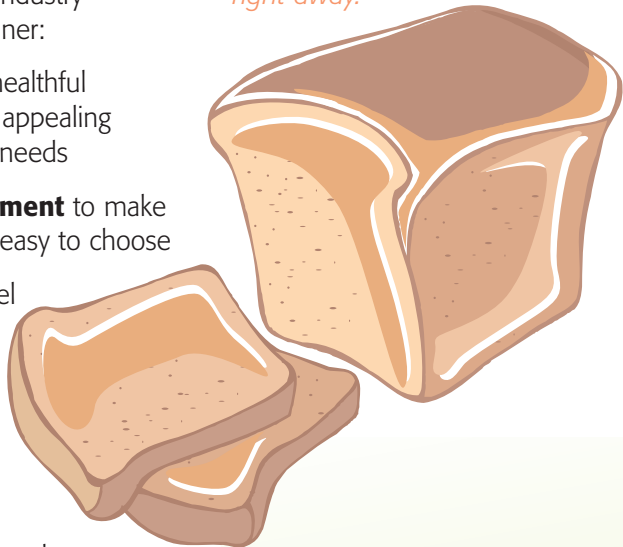
How To Market Healthy Foods

Successful marketing has a direct, meaningful impact on customers and their purchasing decisions. There are four basic components of an effective marketing strategy, commonly known as the **4 P's**. These can be applied to the school food service industry in the following manner:

- identify and offer healthful **products** that are appealing and meet student needs
- use product **placement** to make healthful products easy to choose
- set **prices** at a level that encourages students to purchase the healthier options
- use **promotion** strategies so that students know about these products and are motivated to try them

Many food service directors have started changing their menus and increasing the number of healthy choices offered. However, it is not enough just to change the menu. Marketing these new items is the key to getting students to choose them.

The next several pages of this booklet will give you a wide variety of ideas to promote healthy foods. The ideas marked with an **have an example featured on the enclosed disk that you can tailor to your needs and start using right away.*



Disk Contains:

Nutritional Information
Fact Form

Value Meals Template

Healthy Foods Flyer

Media Letter

Menu Template

Celebrity Invitation Letter

Healthy Foods Parent Flyer

Nutrition Contest

Suggestion Form

Product

Identify and offer healthy products that are appealing and meet student needs.

Make it easy

Cut up fruits and vegetables and wrap them in single servings so they are “ready to go.” Students are more likely to eat carrot sticks with a dip than a whole carrot.

Packaged salads are appealing to students and can help minimize cafeteria lines.

Offer snacks

When early afternoon “munchies” set in, students typically head to the vending machines for a snack between classes. Why not sell foods at lunchtime that can be eaten as an afternoon snack? Market these foods separately as an “afternoon pick-me-up.”

Apple slices with a small container of peanut butter, yogurt parfaits with fruit and granola, and fruit salads all make great afternoon snacks.

Display nutritional information

It’s easy for students to ignore how healthy or unhealthy items are if the information is not right in front of them. Create “Nutrition Fact Forms” and fill in the blanks for each item. Use different colors for filling

in the blanks to brighten up the form. You could also post a Nutrition Fact Form for an unhealthy item next to a healthier alternative. This will draw students’ attention to the nutritional differences and hopefully affect their food choices. **See Nutritional Information Fact Form template on enclosed disk.*

Celebrate “National Nutrition Month” or promote “5 A Day for Better Health” by placing nutritional information on table tents, flyers, and menus.

Incorporate into curriculum

Ask teachers to introduce students to the basics of eating right including lessons on portion sizes, the new USDA MyPyramid Food Guidance System, and the importance of eating essential nutrients found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and milk. What they don’t know can hurt them!

Speak to the principal to see if teachers could incorporate healthy eating or nutrition as part of an academic lesson, i.e., counting fruit and vegetables in math class.

Placement

Use product placement to make healthful products easy to choose.

Showcase healthy foods

Think about how supermarkets are arranged. When an item is being promoted, it is put near the checkout line and on shelves at the end of the aisles. By featuring healthy items at the front of the display or at the point of purchase, kids will be more enticed to buy them.

Use color

Color attracts attention, which is the first step in making a sale. Students are overwhelmed by stimuli in their daily environment so you need to **grab their attention** in a bold manner.

Serving fruit? Mix different colored fruit in one bowl or set up a display with all red in one bowl and all orange in the next. Yellow bananas stand out even more when served in bright purple bowls lined with red paper.

Serving items that don't have much color? Place them on bright tablemats or put colored tissue paper around the display. Garnish foods with contrasting colors.

On holidays such as Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day, add the holiday color (red or green) to as many items as you can.



Price

Set prices at a level that encourages students to purchase the healthier options.

Create “value meals”

Everyone loves a value. If you’re offering a healthy sandwich and fruit one day, sell them together for a slightly lower price (even a 5 cent difference) and market it as a “value meal.” **See Value Meals template on enclosed disk.*

Pair popular, less healthy items with healthier options. Students may be more likely to take a salad if it comes with a slice of pizza.

Charge more for unhealthy items

Foods such as packaged donuts and cookies are cheaper to supply, but selling them cheaply just encourages students to buy them over healthier items. Try to charge more for these foods than your healthy selections.

Promote a “healthy foods sale” with fruits and vegetables sold at reduced prices to encourage students to try them.



Promotion

Use promotion strategies so that students know about these products and are motivated to try them.

Advertise

To put it simply, the more you promote an item, the more you will sell. Invest in a dry erase board or chalkboard for the front of the cafeteria and highlight your healthy offerings.

Try marketing one of the healthy items as a “house special” and make it only available for a limited time.

Post flyers and banners with healthy messages around the school so that students see this information several times a day. The frequency of these messages will ensure that students remember the information. **See Healthy Foods Flyer template on enclosed disk.*

Feature themes

Create excitement in the cafeteria by offering foods that tie in to a monthly holiday or multi-cultural theme such as “South of the Border Sensation” or “Far East Feast.” Have the staff dress up in costumes, hang decorations, and play music to set the stage for the day. Or, to get students more involved, incorporate a theme around a school activity like a sporting event and have the

school mascot or cheerleaders help promote the meal to kids in the cafeteria.

Get creative with descriptions

Make your healthy alternatives sound more appealing. Don't just call it an apple, call it a “Super Red Delicious Apple.” Or, use alliteration such as calling bananas “Boston's Best Bunch of Bananas.”

Utilize the name of a popular staff person to promote a food, such as “Principal Anderson's Smart Apple.”

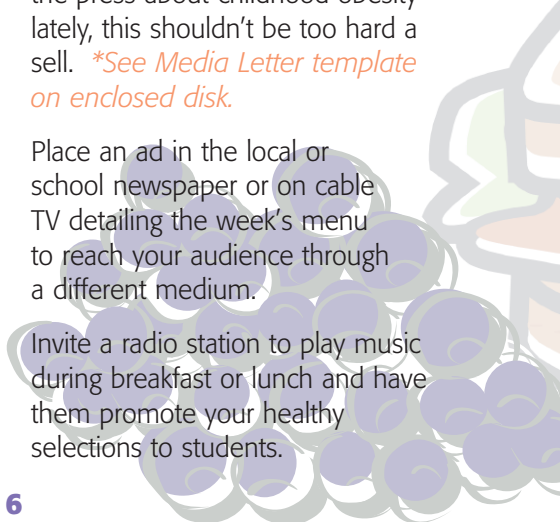
Feature fun, relevant facts to draw attention to an item such as “Apples were planted across the country by Johnny Appleseed, who was from Leominster, MA.”

Use the media

Invite the local paper to do a story on nutritious school meals and highlight your program. With all of the press about childhood obesity lately, this shouldn't be too hard a sell. **See Media Letter template on enclosed disk.*

Place an ad in the local or school newspaper or on cable TV detailing the week's menu to reach your audience through a different medium.

Invite a radio station to play music during breakfast or lunch and have them promote your healthy selections to students.



Offer free incentives

Give away free stickers, pencils, bookmarks, water bottles, or frisbees to get students to try a healthy food.

Feature “testimonials”

Did any teachers or students comment on how much they liked a particular food the last time you served it? Write up a short blurb about the item using their comments and place it next to the food. The story will be something for the students to read while waiting in line and may influence their meal selection as well.

Jazz up menus

Try to make your menus more eye-catching by changing their color and format every so often. Post them around the school so that kids can see your healthy offerings in advance. **See Menu template on enclosed disk.*

Send home menus with students and teachers so they have time to review them away from school.

Hold celebrity visits

Invite a local celebrity, such as a sports hero, politician, or chef, to come and promote healthy food during breakfast or lunch. One of the dishes could even be named after him or her that day. Be sure to get the word out to all students and staff about the appearance well

in advance. It could also be used as a press opportunity for both the celebrity and the school.

**See Celebrity Invitation Letter template on enclosed disk.*

Use suggestive selling techniques

Make sure that teachers and cafeteria staff understand the importance of serving healthy items so that they support menu changes.

Train your cafeteria staff to encourage students to try healthier items.

Remind teachers and cafeteria staff that any negative comments about healthy food items may influence students' food choices.

Inform parents

Let parents know about your healthy school meals by getting menus and articles included in principal, teacher, or PTO letters. **See Healthy Foods Parent Flyer template on enclosed disk.*

Ask to be present at parent meetings and be available for any questions they may have. Remind them that healthy nutrition contributes to better academic performance.

Invite parents to join their children for breakfast or lunch so they see first hand your healthy, tasty offerings.

Promotion with Student Participation

Hold contests

Hold a poster, story, or poetry contest around nutritious foods and post the winning submission in a prominent place in the school. Or for the musically and theatrically inclined, develop a contest around a nutritious song, dance, or skit with the winner(s) getting to perform at a school assembly.

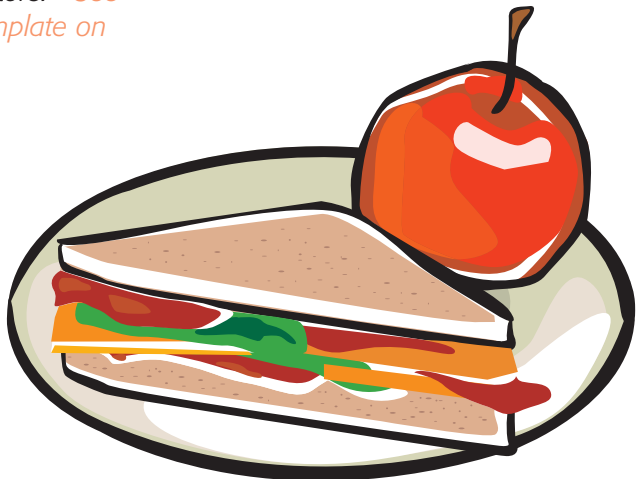
Have kids guess the number of grapes or cherry tomatoes in a jar. Make something with whatever is in the jar, such as a fruit salad, and give this to the winning student as a prize to share with his class.

Feature a "Nutrition Question of the Day" and hold a raffle of all the correct answers. To obtain a more expensive, exciting prize, try to get one donated by a local store. The prize should be connected to health in some way such as a bike or gift certificate to a sporting goods store. **See Nutrition Contest template on enclosed disk.*

Host a vegetable eating contest where students get a card stamped every time they select a vegetable. Any student with 10 stamps could be entered into a raffle for a prize.

Offer a prize for the student who creates the best marketing campaign promoting healthy food and post it as a flyer around the school.

Have students submit healthy recipes for the cafeteria to prepare. If the recipe is used, the student who submitted it could receive a free lunch or breakfast. The student should also be able to name the dish and be acknowledged in a flyer or announcement over the loud speaker.



Make announcements

Making an announcement about school meals over the loud speaker is a great way to communicate information to students since they are a captive audience. To generate even more interest, have a student leader, nurse, or physical education teacher read the daily menu.

Host taste tests

Kids know they like unhealthy foods such as pastries and hot dogs, but are not as certain about healthy foods because they may have never tried them before. Cut up fruits or vegetables that you will be offering on the week's menu and allow students to sample them for free.

If you are considering adding a new item to the menu but are not sure whether students will eat it, make a small batch and offer it as a free sample to kids. They will certainly tell you if they like it. If you do add the item to the menu, promote it as "back by popular demand."

Allow students to vote on the items that they sample. Students who vote will be more likely to look for the new item on the menu.

Get feedback

Place a suggestion form for students in a prominent area near the food line. Ask for healthy menu suggestions and provide pencils and paper for responses. **See Healthy Foods Suggestion Form template on enclosed disk.*

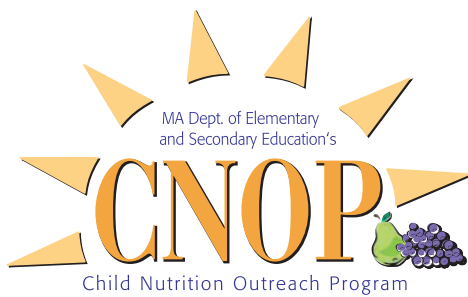
Conduct surveys to determine student opinions about healthful products. Have teachers distribute the surveys in class to get a higher return.

Implement a Student Nutrition Advisory committee where interested students taste test potential menu items and suggest healthy foods and promotional ideas that would go over well with their peers.

¹Hedley, AA, Ogden, CL, Johnson, CL, Carroll, MD, Curtin, LR, Flegal, KM. Overweight and obesity among US children, adolescents, and adults, 1999-2002. *JAMA* 291:2847-50. 2004.

²Freedman D, Dietz W, Srinivasan S, Berenson G. The relations of overweight to cardiovascular risk factors among children and adolescents: the Bogalusa Heart Study. *Pediatrics*. 1999;103:1175-1182.

³Narayan KMV, Boyle JP, Thompson TJ, Sorensen SW, Williamson DF. Lifetime risk for diabetes mellitus in the United States. *JAMA* 2003; 290(14):1884-1890.



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread
145 Border Street, East Boston, MA 02128
phone: 617.723.5000 • fax: 617.248.8877 • www.meals4kids.org

Disk Contains:

Nutritional Information Fact Form

Value Meals Template

Healthy Foods Flyer

Media Letter

Menu Template

Celebrity

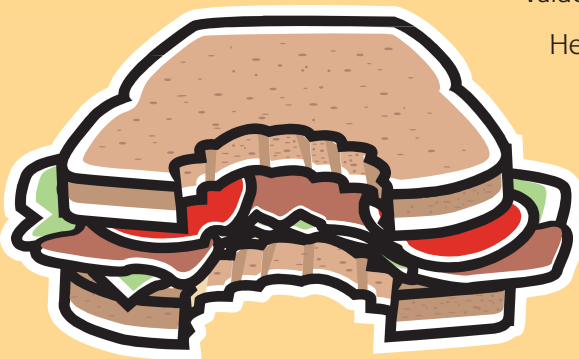
Invitation Letter

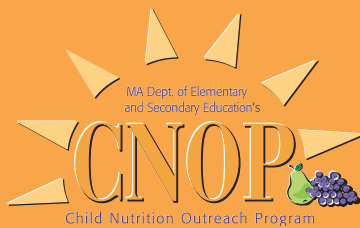
Healthy Foods

Parent Flyer

Nutrition Contest

Suggestion Form





Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread
145 Border Street, East Boston, MA 02128
phone: 617.723.5000 • fax: 617.248.8877 • www.meals4kids.org