



Executive Summary:

Missouri Eat Smart Guidelines, PreK-12, 2nd Ed.

In 2004, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, Section 204 initiated the mandate that schools participating in the National School Breakfast or Lunch Program develop a wellness policy by June 2006. The policy must include nutrition guidelines, nutrition education and physical activity goals, and other school-based activities supportive of healthier school environments to help address the children's rising overweight status.

The Missouri School Wellness Workgroup, consisting of state and non-for-profit health organizations, partnered with the Missouri School Boards Association to assist schools in interpreting the law. Tools and resources that outlined best practices were identified, revised or created. The 1st edition of the Missouri Eat Smart Guidelines is such a tool and it was adapted in partnership with Kansas State Department of Education, Child Nutrition & Wellness Program.

The 1st edition outlined three levels of nutrition standards for all foods made available in school campuses for students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12: minimum, intermediate and advanced. The standards for each subsequent level are more healthful than the previous level. During regional workshops, input from schools' wellness committee members favored more advanced and challenging guidelines.

The steering committee under the umbrella of the Missouri Council for Activity and Nutrition (MoCAN) presents the 2008 edition of the Missouri Eat Smart Guidelines which adds a 4th level, exemplary, for all categories where food is offered or sold in schools. Like the 1st edition, the guidelines address school breakfast, school lunch, a la carte, vending or school stores, before and after school programs and the other category such as classroom rewards, classroom parties and fundraisers. The Guidelines reflect on the national 2005 Dietary Guidelines, HealthierUS School Challenge of United States Department of Agriculture and the Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools by the Institutes of Medicine.

Environmental factors are a new addition to the latest edition. These factors identify best practices that support our students' participation in the child nutrition programs in combination with academic learning. One recommendation is for schools to establish relaxed dining experiences by lengthening time students are given to eat their school breakfast and lunch. Research finds nutrition as an essential component for learning and relaxing the dining experience, in turn, supports healthy habits and cognitive development.

The overarching dietary recommendations of the Missouri Eat Smart Guidelines challenge schools to make nutrient-dense foods accessible to students wherever food is offered or sold throughout campuses. The exemplary category places even more emphasis on whole grains, fruits and vegetables while reducing the number of calorie-dense foods. It specifically recommends foods lower in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and added sugars.

The guidelines are an effort to protect the health and future of Missouri's children while staying true to academic learning. It is the committee's hopes that schools continue to strive to provide healthier and safer environments for all of our children, present and future.

Alma Hopkins, MEd, RD, LD
School Wellness Policy Consultant
Coordinated School Health Coalition

Karen Wooton, RD, LD
Director, School Food Services Section,
Department of Elementary & Secondary Education