

Role Modeling for Healthy Kids



Adults are powerful role models for youth. This handout suggests ways school staff can be role models for students. As our district implements healthier foods and more opportunities for physical activity, you can help reinforce positive health messaging through your actions.

How can staff be role models?

Select nutritious foods.

The best way for you to encourage healthy eating is to eat well yourself. Students will follow the lead of adults they see every day. If you regularly snack on donuts and sodas, you can't expect youth around you to make more healthful choices. By snacking on smarter choices such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, and not overindulging in foods high in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars, you'll be sending the right message.

Be physically active.

Are you active enough? Experts recommend that adults get at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. For children and adolescents, it's at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. If you are active, let your students know how important exercise is to you. Encourage them to follow your lead. It is never too late to start!

Encourage your students to eat breakfast and lunch.

Breakfast and lunch may help kids concentrate and learn and may also help keep them energized throughout the day. Research suggests that not having breakfast can affect a child's intellectual performance. Encourage students to eat breakfast and lunch instead of skipping meals or relying on options that are high in saturated fat, trans fat and added sugars.

Incorporate wellness messages and activities into the school day.

Talk with students about the importance of making nutritious choices and being physically active. Then, go a step further and create a classroom environment that supports these behaviors. Identify ways to include nutrition information into reading, math, science and other subjects. Schedule brief physical activity breaks throughout the day. Immerse your students in an atmosphere of health.

Join efforts to better the wellness environment of your school.

Consider joining your school's health and wellness council/committee. Provide suggestions for ways to improve the nutritional quality of foods offered to students (i.e. in classroom parties, concessions) and increase the number of physical activity opportunities students have throughout the day. Most importantly, encourage your students to get involved as well.

This handout was adapted from Team Nutrition's *Empowering Youth with Nutrition and Physical Activity* resource. For additional resources, visit Team Nutrition's web site: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>

This publication was made possible by a Wellmark Foundation Grant, *Building on the Healthy Kids Act Opportunity*.