



Creating Healthy Schools

7.2 Ensure Adequate Time to Eat

What is the current policy?

Our school district cares about the health and well-being of students and understands the impact the school district can have on healthy behaviors. For many students school lunch may be the most nutritious meal of the day. Therefore, students must have adequate time to eat.

Schools will provide appropriate meal times with adequate time allotted for students to eat. All schools must offer every full-day student a daily lunch period of at least 20 minutes from the time they are served. Lunch must be scheduled between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Ideas!

How can your school get more involved?

There are several ways you can help ensure students have adequate time to eat. Below is a list of suggestions:

School Policy

- Form a collaborative multi-disciplinary team of teachers, staff, parents, and school leaders to consider how to make the lunch environment better and allow for adequate time for students to eat.
- Provide lunch menus (preferably with photos) to students ahead of time or while they are in line so they can decide what they want prior to reaching the serving area.
- Schedule recess before lunch so children can come to lunch ready to eat and can go back to class less distracted.
- Give students at least 20 minutes from the time they are served to eat lunch.
- Give students at least 10 minutes to eat from the time they are seated for breakfast.
- Consider staggering lunch times to allow for fewer students and shorter food lines in the cafeteria and thus more time to eat.

(more on back)

Why is this important?

Under the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, each school is required to create and implement individual School Wellness Policies. Support of these policies should come from administration, staff, faculty, families and community members. As staff members, you have the capacity to ensure school wellness policies are implemented effectively.

School wellness policies are important in promoting healthy behaviors among students and helping students create healthy habits to last into adulthood. Allowing students to have adequate time to eat helps create a positive school environment. School lunch is a time for students to eat healthful foods, take a break from class, and prepare for the remainder of the day.

Taking time to eat is one healthy behavior that schools can model for students to carry throughout their lives. When students have adequate time to eat and a positive lunch experience, they are more able to concentrate and learn during afternoon classes and more likely to feel connected to the school.

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a positive school environment.**

Resources:

- Whole Child Action in conjunction with the Orfalea Foundation has produced a document comprised of ideas, tips, and strategies for maximizing the amount of time students are seated and eating during school. Information can be found at: <http://wholechildaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Attachment-for-SSPI-Letter-.pdf>
- The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. created a handout on suggestions for making the cafeteria a positive environment for students. A copy of the handout can be accessed here: <https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/Cafeteria-Mealtime-Info-Sheet.pdf>
- California Project Lean, an organization committed to improving health behaviors of children, has created a handout on how school wellness policies can help create a healthier school environment. To read more visit: <http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/docuserfiles//The%20School%20Environment.pdf>

Two other versions of this policy item are available for both administration and family to assist with implementation.

Ideas!

School/Classroom Food Environment

- Dismiss class on time for lunch.
- Do not use lunch period for disciplinary action.
- Allow adequate access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before meals or snacks.
- Provide accommodations for tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs (e.g. orthodontia or high tooth decay risk).

