

7.1 ENSURE ADEQUATE TIME TO EAT

ADMINISTRATOR

Creating Healthy Schools



Implementation for success

The cafeteria environment is a place where students must have:

- Adequate clean space to eat.
- Pleasant surroundings.
- A relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere.
- The School Nutrition Association (SNA) recommends at least 20 minutes for lunch from the time students are seated with their food and at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast.
- Meal periods at appropriate times, e.g., lunch will be scheduled between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.
- Lunch periods that follow recess periods (in elementary schools).
- Adequate access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before meals or snacks.
- Accommodations for tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs (e.g., orthodontia or high tooth decay risk).

In addition, tutoring, club, or organizational meetings or activities may not be scheduled during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities.

Model 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 only nutritious meal of the day. Therefore, students must have adequate time to eat.

Schools will provide healthy meals served at appropriate meal times, and will provide adequate time for students to eat. All schools must serve all full-day students a daily lunch between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. and provide a lunch period of at least 20 minutes after the student is served.

Evaluation:

In order to meet the requirements of the Healthy Hunger Free Act of 2010, the district wellness council and school administrators will be jointly accountable for implementing, enforcing, and evaluating this policy. Evaluators will observe lunch periods and the cafeteria environment to make sure they meet standards and policy objectives.

Each school will report annually to the district wellness council on the progress of policy implementation and will include recommendations where further district support may be beneficial. The district wellness council may also request select schools to conduct student, family, and/or staff surveys as part of their evaluation process. At the end of each school year, the district wellness council leader will submit an annual report to the superintendent/board of education on the implementation and evaluation of this policy. This report shall be posted on the Internet for easy public access.

Rationale:

Today about 1 in 3 children is overweight or obese and studies show that overweight children are likely to become overweight and obese adults.¹ If obesity among children continues to increase at this rate, our current generation could become the first in American history to live shorter and sicker lives than their parents.

Allowing students to have adequate time to eat is an essential part of a positive school environment. School lunch may be the only nutritious meal of the day for some students and it provides a break for students to rest and regain concentration for the rest of the day. Also, school lunch is an opportunity for students to build important social skills and a time to interact with peers. Finally, ensuring adequate time for school lunch facilitates healthy eating habits, which can influence health patterns and behaviors in adulthood.²



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time for school
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Two other versions of this policy item are available for both staff and family to assist with implementation and communication.

Resources:

- Eating at School: A Summary of NFSMI Research on Time Required by Students to Eat Lunch, National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI); This can be accessed: www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/resources/eating_at_school.pdf
- Relationships of Meal and Recess Schedules to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools, National Food Service Management Institute; can be accessed: <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080225034510.pdf>
- California School Nutrition Association Position Paper on Mealtime Management; can be accessed: <http://www.calsna.org/documents/PositionPapers/PositionPaperMealtimeManagement.pdf>
- Adequate Time to Eat: Tips and Strategies from the California Department of Education; can be accessed: <http://wholechildaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Attachment-for-SSPI-Letter-.pdf>

¹CDC Childhood Obesity Facts: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>

²California Food Policy Advocates, Lunchtime Supports Learning <http://cfpa.net/ab2449>