Healthier Middle Schools
Every principal can help.

Lead the way, but don’t go it alone.

In schools where healthy changes have been made successfully, a school-wide, coordinated effort worked best. That’s why USDA is reaching out not only to middle school principals but to teachers, food service managers, students, and parents, as well. Working together builds school spirit, cooperation, and a stronger sense of community that can help you achieve your healthier school goals and other initiatives.

Drive your school’s performance with healthier foods and more physical activity.

Research shows that kids who have healthy eating patterns and get regular physical activity are more likely to perform better academically.1,2,3,4,5 These healthy habits may also play a role in helping kids to have:

✓ Greater concentration ✓ Lower obesity rates
✓ Better attendance ✓ Better self-esteem
✓ Better classroom behavior

So, it’s worth your time to make healthy food choices and physical activity priorities at your school. When you do, you are also sending a signal to students, teachers, and staff that you care about their well-being.

You don’t have to start from scratch.

On the back of this flyer, you’ll find ideas other middle schools have used with good results. Start small with one or two focused efforts and build from there. Even small changes can make a healthy difference.

Middle schools get healthier when principals lead the way.

Keep on walking the talk.
Let students and staff see you making healthy food choices and being active every day. Invite them to join you for lunch, to shoot some hoops, or take a walk...whatever works for you.

Sign up your school for the HealthierUS School Challenge
Visit [TeamNutrition.usda.gov](http://TeamNutrition.usda.gov) for program templates and ideas. Participating schools can get recognized nationally and may earn awards. What school couldn't use that?

Give students a voice in decision-making.
Let them name new healthy menu items, vote for healthier vending machine and school store snacks and beverages, or take a survey of the most popular physical activity choices.

Get everyone to participate.
Let everyone know that healthier food choices and physical activity are important to you and the whole school. Talk it up at staff meetings, Back to School Night, or the next parent’s association meeting. Encourage teachers, staff, students, and parents to participate in the school wellness council and share best practices.

Start a friendly competition between grades.
Award nonfood prizes or privileges to the class or grade that is doing the most physical activity or eating the most vegetables at lunch. Have students invent a cool name and posters to get everyone excited, like the “Fruit and Veggie Victory Challenge” or the “School-Wide Walk Around the World.” Go for it!

Find more ideas that other schools have used successfully, as well as ready-to-use talking points and other materials.

Thanks for your help.