

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.

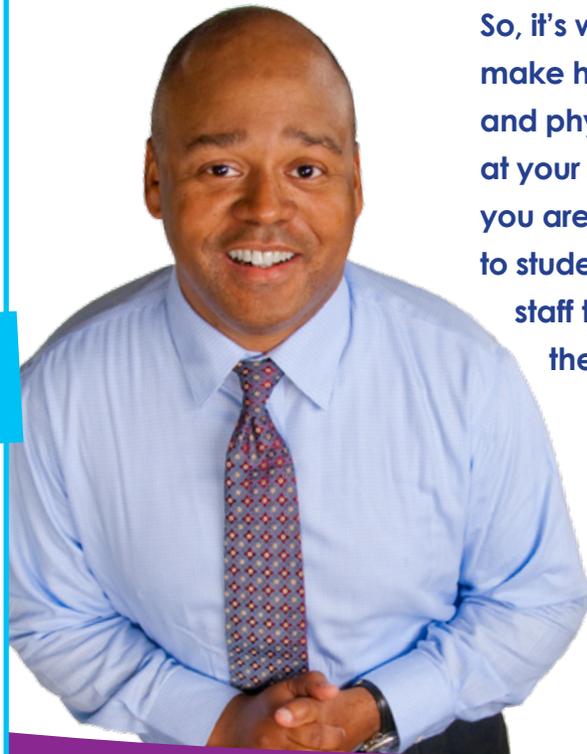
You don't have to start from scratch.

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.

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.

1. Florence MD, Asbridge M, Veugelers PJ. Diet quality and academic performance. *J Sch Health*. 2008; 78:209-215.

2. Fu ML, Cheng L, Tu SH, Pan WH. Association between unhealthful eating patterns and unfavorable overall school performance in children. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2007; 107:1935-1943.

3. Sigfúsdóttir ID, Kristjánsson AL, Allegrante JP. Health behaviour and academic achievement in Icelandic school children. *Health Educ Res*. 2007; 22:70-80.

4. Kim HY, Frongillo EA, Han SS, Oh SY, Kim WK, Jang YA, Won HS, Lee HS, Kim SH. Academic performance of Korean children is associated with dietary behaviours and physical status. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr*. 2003; 12:186-192.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.

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 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!



Keep the ball rolling at TeamNutrition.usda.gov.

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

Thanks for your help.



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