

Nevada's School Wellness Policy Best Practices Manual

Division of Food and Nutrition



This manual is designed to support parents, school districts, and school staff in promoting student health and wellness by creating a healthier school environment. It encourages increased consumption of nutritious foods, more opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day, and the adoption of lifelong healthy habits.

Introduction

Nevada's school wellness policy was developed in alignment with the USDA's Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools and the Local School Wellness Policy Implementation, as mandated by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. In accordance with federal law, all school districts receiving USDA reimbursement for child nutrition programs are required to establish local wellness policies that comply with both federal and state guidelines.

We hope this manual serves as a valuable resource as you develop and implement your school wellness policy—offering fresh ideas and new perspectives on enhancing the school environment to better support student health and well-being.

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Section 1: School Wellness Committee

Each school district is required to establish a diverse team of stakeholders—including parents, students, teachers, school health professionals, school nutrition staff, and members of the broader community—to assess the district's needs and develop a wellness policy that not only promotes improved student health and wellness outcomes, but also takes into account the district's unique resources, infrastructure, scheduling constraints, and capacity for implementation.

Section 1: School Wellness Coordinator

School Wellness Coordinator

The school district must establish leadership (one or more school officials) at the school district (and school level) who fully understands the local school wellness requirements and who can facilitate the development and implementation of the policy. Responsibilities of the Wellness Coordinator include:

- **Must** have the authority to ensure that their school(s) complies with the policy.
- Record keeping of wellness goals and progress tracking.
- Record keeping of all Committee meetings.
- Updating and keeping their school wellness policy current.
 - Policies will be updated to reflect any changes made by the USDA or at the state level, ensuring goals and dates align with the current school year.

If the coordinator changes after the LEA has submitted its NSLP application for the school year, the school or district must notify the NDA of the new coordinator(s) within 60 days. Please submit this information as soon as possible to SN@agri.nv.gov.

Section 1: Advisory Group

An effective school wellness policy begins with a strong advisory group. Involving a diverse range of voices ensures the policy reflects the needs and priorities of the entire school community throughout its development, implementation, and review.

Once members are identified, the district should document their names, roles, and connection to the school. Contact information for the school wellness coordinator(s) should also be made accessible to both the school community and the public.

The coordinator(s) should brainstorm to determine any members of the community that would be beneficial for achieving a wide range of opinions and depth of knowledge within the advisory group. Ideas may include:

- **School Employees**: Create a handout or flyer that can be shared with the school staff in board meetings, the staff lounge, staff mailboxes, etc.
- **Health professionals in the community**: Reach out to local professional groups such as the state/local nutrition or Dietetics Association, public health associations, or nursing groups and provide information on how interested members can become involved.
- **General Public**: Bring the school and community together recruit for members at a open house, picnic or other school event.

- Students: Students could write an article in the school newspaper, write an announcement/PSA for the school radio or speak at an assembly about getting involved. Positions for student leadership on the advisory group should be encouraged.
- Parents: Send students home with handouts summarizing the advisory group's mission in creating, implementing and updating the local school wellness policy. The PTA or similar organization could be used to solicit participation on the advisory group.
- Farmers Coalition: Reach out to community Co-ops, farmer's markets, Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC), etc. via email or in person and invite members to participate in the advisory group to provide expertise in their field.

Section 1: Engaging the Public

- Post flyers or informational materials in visible locations around the school, such as the front office, library, or cafeteria.
- Send regular updates via school newsletters (printed or digital) highlighting committee goals, progress, and ways to get involved
- Invite public input through surveys or suggestion boxes (both physical and digital) to gather feedback and ideas from students, parents, and staff.
- Collaborate with local organizations (e.g., healthcare providers, fitness centers, food banks) to support wellness initiatives and increase community visibility.
- Feature student voices by involving them in communication efforts, such as leading social media content, presenting at meetings, or create a student panel for feedback.

Section 1: Keys to a Strong and Sustainable Wellness Committee

- a. Prepare for meetings well in advance
 - a. Choose a meeting place that is accessible for everyone and free of distractions
 - b. Develop an agenda that clearly covers topics to discuss
 - c. Run the meeting in a professional manner and follow up with an action plan for the goals
 - d. Appoint someone to take notes of the meeting and distribute to advisory group members
- b. Set Expectations
 - a. Specify the goals and expectations for achieving the goals
 - b. Specify the areas in which you are seeking help
- c. Keep Members Informed
 - a. Ensure all members are promptly and thoroughly informed about any policy changes, updates, or scheduled meetings.
 - b. Regularly communicate progress on school wellness goals, highlighting both successful initiatives and areas needing improvement or revision.
- d. Consider Alternative Methods for Sharing Ideas:

Find a way to communicate with the entire group through group emails, conference calls, private social media group, google doc, virtual meetings, etc. because everyone may not be able to physically attend every meeting.

Section 2: Wellness Policy Goals

Goals are essential in a school wellness policy as they provide a clear, measurable framework for promoting the health and well-being of students and staff. The USDA requires that school wellness policies include goals in three key areas: Nutrition Promotion and Education, Physical Activity, and Other School-Based Activities that promote student wellness. In determining these goals, Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are required to review and consider evidence-based strategies to ensure that their approaches are effective and grounded in current research. By setting specific, research-informed objectives in these areas, schools can implement focused strategies that support lifelong healthy habits, foster a consistent and proactive approach to wellness, and align with broader educational and developmental outcomes. These goals also help track progress and hold stakeholders accountable for creating a healthy school environment.

Section 2: Nutrition Promotion and Education

1. Implement standard-based nutrition education
 - a. Prioritize strategies that positively influence students' eating habits.
 - b. on methods proven effective by published research
 - c. Should be consistent with the state's/district's comprehensive school health education standards/guidelines/curriculum framework
2. Connect nutrition education with existing curriculums
 - a. Comprehensive school health education
 - b. Include in other content areas such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, family and consumer sciences and elective subjects
 - c. Incorporate nutritional themes into daily lessons, when appropriate, to reinforce and support healthy messages
 - d. School meal programs or other foods sold at school (school cafeteria)
 - e. Nutrition-related community services that occur outside the classroom
 - f. Link classroom nutrition education to the larger school community, such as school gardens, cafeteria-based nutrition education, fresh fruit and vegetable program, and after-school programs
 - g. Assess lessons against states/districts educational goals and curriculum standards
3. Professional Nutrition Education Development for Teachers
 - a. Provide appropriate training for teachers and other staff members
 - i. Basic knowledge of nutrition
 - ii. Instructional techniques and strategies designed to promote healthy eating behaviors
4. Educational reinforcement
 - a. Collaborate with agencies and groups conducting nutrition education in the community to provide consistent messages to students and their families
 - b. Provide opportunities for students to volunteer in nutrition related fields
 - i. Donation drives to benefit local food pantry
 - ii. Food recovery efforts within school
 - iii. Preparing nutritious meals for home-bound people

- c. Supply information to parents, students and staff members about community programs that offer nutrition assistance to families
- d. Establish nutrition, physical activity and body-size acceptance to achieve academic success and lifelong wellness
- e. Model healthy eating and physical activity behaviors
- f. Implement a healthy vending initiative in staff vending machines
- 5. Nutrition Promotion
 - a. Conduct nutrition education activities and promotions that involve parents, students and the community
 - b. Participate in programs that promote and reinforce student health
 - i. Team Nutrition
 - ii. Healthier US School Challenge

Section 2: Physical Activity

Examples of physical activity goals:

1. Implement standard-based physical activity opportunities
 - a. Conduct a survey districtwide to determine baseline activity
 - b. Focus on district's physical activity climate to assess current practices
 - c. Based on theories and methods proven effective by published research
 - d. Consistent with the states/districts comprehensive school health education standards/guidelines/curriculum framework
 - e. Take measures to ensure all students have access to physical activity programs offered in your school
2. Connect physical activity experiences with existing curriculums
 - a. Part of comprehensive school health education
 - b. Also included in other classroom content areas such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, family and consumer sciences and elective subjects
 - c. Incorporate physical activity themes into daily lessons, when appropriate, to reinforce and support health messages
 - d. Physical education programs to provide PE minutes as part of the school curriculum
 - e. Numerous authorities recommend that elementary children receive PE daily and for a total of 150 minutes per week and secondary students receive PE for a total of 225 minutes per week
 - f. Physical activity that occurs outside the classroom
3. Provide access to loose equipment and provide strategic playground or game markings on surfaces.
 - a. Link school's physical activity to the larger school community, such as after school programs, club or intermural sports, and team sports
 - b. Assess school environment against state's/district's educational goals and curriculum standards
4. Professional Physical Education Development for Teachers
 - a. Appropriate training for teachers and other staff members

- b. Basic knowledge of physical activity
 - c. Instructional techniques and strategies designed to promote physical activity
- 5. Educational reinforcement
 - a. Collaborate with agencies and groups conducting physical activity in the community to send consistent messages to students and their families
 - b. Supply information to parents, students and staff members about community programs that offer physical activity opportunities to families
- 6. Health and wellness fairs, sport programs, intramural sports, etc.
 - a. Establish nutrition, physical activity and body-size acceptance to achieve academic success and lifelong wellness
 - b. Model healthy physical activity behaviors
- 7. Physical Activity Promotion
 - a. Conduct physical activities and promotions that involve parents, students and the community
- 8. Field Day, Walk-a-thon, Jump rope-a thon, Mileage club
 - a. Participate in programs that promote and reinforce student health
- 9. Team Nutrition
 - a. Healthier US School Challenge
 - b. Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Section 2: Other School-Based Activities

Examples of other goals:

- 1. Assess your Local School Wellness Policy
 - a. To help with the initial development of the district's wellness policy, each school in the district may conduct a baseline assessment of the school's existing nutrition and physical activity environments and policies.
 - i. The results of these school-by-school assessments can be compiled at the district level to identify and prioritize needs.
 - ii. Assessments can be repeated periodically to help review policy compliance, assess progress, and determine areas in need of improvement.
- 2. Incorporate Sustainable Food Practice Opportunities
 - a. Use locally grown or seasonal food, school gardens and reducing the waste stream
 - b. Start a School Garden/Farm to School program
 - i. Across the country, an increasing number of schools and districts have begun to source more foods locally and to provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition.
 - c. Bring local or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias; hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes; and the

- integration of food-related education into the regular, standards-based classroom curriculum.
- d. Maximize the reduction of waste by recycling, reusing, composting and purchasing recycled products.
 - i. Each school in the district will have a recycling program
 - e. Explore “Non-Disposable Tableware” options with the food service program
3. Establish additional wellness practices within the school environment:
- a. Conduct a Taste Testing/Ongoing Sampling Program
 - b. When creating new recipes, menu items, or offering “Smart Snack” choices at a campus, hold a taste test with students for their input and feedback.
 - i. Serve small, sample-sized portions to students during breakfast or lunch and advertise the results of the taste test when offering the new food item on the menu.
 - ii. Utilize existing student leadership clubs, culinary students or other student groups to facilitate and/or participate with the sampling events.
 - c. Incorporate Harvest of the Month into the existing curriculum which features nutrition education tools and resources to support healthy lifestyle habits like eating fruits and vegetables
 - d. Actively engage families as partners in their children’s education and recognize their fundamental role in promoting and protecting their health and well-being.
 - i. Support parents’ efforts to provide a healthy diet and encourage parents to pack healthy lunches and snacks and refrain from including beverages and foods without nutritional value.
 - e. Add additional sites for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
 - i. The FFVP exposes children to a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.
 - ii. Elementary schools that have greater than 50% eligible free and reduced lunch students are eligible to apply annually for this program
4. Develop School Wide Wellness Promotions for Students:
- a. Hold a poster contest on wellness topics
 - i. Nutrition, Physical Activity, or other related wellness areas
 - b. Develop a school wellness campaign
 - i. Develop public announcements to be read to the students such as “Healthy Tip of the Day or Week”
 - c. Adopt a marquis or bulletin board for wellness tips
 - i. During National Nutrition Month (March), Ride your Bike to School Day (May), or Walk to School Day (Oct)
 - d. Create a Jog-a-thon, Walk-a-thon, Jump-rope-a-thon activities and incorporate healthy snacks at the event

5. Promote Staff Wellness Opportunities within the School/District
 - a. Offer staff wellness programs
 - i. Workshops and presentations on health promotions
 - ii. Education and resources that will encourage healthy lifestyles, reduce chronic disease, and promote role modeling
 - b. Establish or enhance fitness opportunities for staff
 - i. Walking clubs or fitness challenges
 - c. Promote staff wellness initiatives
 - i. Outline ways to encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and other elements of a healthy lifestyle among school staff
 - d. Maximize wellness programs within school or district's worksite wellness programs
 - i. Health fairs and work-based opportunities for all staff
6. Explore Safe Routes to School
 - a. Assess and determine improvements to make it safer and easier for students to walk/bike to school.
 - b. When appropriate, work together with local public works, public safety, and/or police departments in those efforts.
 - c. Explore the availability of federal "safe routes to school" funds, administered by the state department of transportation, to finance such improvements.

Section 3: All Foods Sold or Provided on the School Campus

All food sold or given away to students on the school campus during the school day must meet the Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards.

Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards establish specific nutrient requirements for all food items sold or distributed on school campuses during the school day. These standards limit total calories, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and total sugar to ensure that foods contribute to a healthier school environment. In addition, to qualify, a food item must list as its first ingredient a component from one of the main food groups: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy, or protein.

These standards apply to all foods sold or given away, including those provided through fundraisers or as free items to students—anywhere on the school campus and during the school day.

For more detailed guidance, please refer to Nevada's School Wellness Policy.

Section 3: Incentives and Rewards

LEAs are strongly encouraged to use non-food incentives or rewards to promote and reinforce positive student behavior and achievement. Recognizing students with non-food rewards or engaging activities supports their overall health and well-being, while still celebrating their accomplishments in meaningful ways. If food-based rewards are used, the items must comply with the Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards.

Examples of non-food incentives or rewards:

1. Stickers
2. Sit by friends
3. Teach the class
4. Have extra art time
5. Enjoy class outdoors
6. Have an extra recess time
7. Play a favorite game or puzzle
8. Walk with a favorite provider during a transition
9. Eat lunch outdoors/have a picnic
10. Eat lunch with a teacher or principal
11. Be a helper during class
12. Dance to music in the classroom
13. Take a field trip
14. Teacher will read their favorite book
15. Praise or recognition

Section 3: Holidays/Special Occasions

The Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards require each school or district to establish and document the number of allowable exemption days for celebrating special occasions. These may include events such as holidays, birthdays, and classroom parties. However, general school events—such as spirit days, assemblies, or student club meetings—do not qualify as special occasions and are therefore not eligible for exemption from the nutrition standards.

Section 3: Fundraising

All items sold to students on campus during the school day for fundraising must meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School Nutrition Standards. This applies to all fundraisers, including those by student groups, parent organizations, or other school-related entities. Fundraisers not connected to curriculum-based activities are not eligible for exemptions.

If a Local Education Agency (LEA) chooses to allow exemptions for curriculum-based fundraisers, it is required to establish a formal policy that outlines the criteria and process for reviewing, approving, and tracking such exemptions. This policy must include:

- Clear definitions of what constitutes a curriculum-based fundraiser.
- Procedures for submitting exemption requests for prior approval.
- A method for documenting and monitoring the number and nature of exemptions granted.
- Assurance that any approved fundraiser exemption does not compromise student health or contradict the overall goals of the school wellness policy.

Each LEA is responsible for ensuring that its exemption policy is followed by all sites and, that all approved activities are appropriately documented and monitored. Without an established and approved local policy, no exemptions may be granted. All fundraising requests should be well documented and available upon request.

Best Practice Tip:

Consider developing a simple fundraiser approval form that includes:

- Name and purpose of the fundraiser
- Whether food is being sold
- If food is included, how it meets Smart Snacks OR how it supports a curriculum-based activity
- The proposed date(s)
- Approval signature from a designated administrator or wellness coordinator

By setting a clear process, schools can support both student wellness and fundraising goals—without confusion or last-minute surprises.

Section 4: Meal Consumption

Meal Consumption policy is meant to make sure every student has enough time to eat their food. That means the time it takes to get in line, wait, and pick up their meal doesn't count as part of their eating time.

Section 4: Adequate Time to Consume School Meals

Seat time: Seat time is different from the total time for the lunch period and does not include waiting in line to select and pay for the meal.

- This distinction between adequate seat time and the length of the meal period overall is important because many activities can shorten time to eat, including using the restroom, handwashing, walking to where the meal is served, waiting in line, selecting items for the meal, waiting to pay, walking to the table, socializing with friends, and bussing trays after the meal.

Section 5: Physical Activity

Children spend a significant portion of their day at school, making it essential that they have regular opportunities to be physically active during that time. While physical education and recess are important avenues for activity, they are often limited in frequency or structured in ways that don't maximize moderate to vigorous physical movement. To support students' overall health and well-being, schools should intentionally expand opportunities for physical activity beyond PE and recess. This can include classroom activity breaks, before- and after-school programs, and encouraging active transportation such as walking or biking to and from school.

1. Implement Activity Bursts/Breaks in the Classroom
 - a. Establish one to three 5–10-minute activity breaks per day
 - b. Jumping jacks, marching in place or dancing to music
2. Integrate Physical Activity into the Academic Curriculum
 - a. During science or anatomy lessons allow students to use various body parts
 - b. When talking about muscle groups, have the students perform a few exercises to show which muscle groups are being used (squats, sit-ups, bicep curls)
3. Health Education
 - a. Have students learn about their heart rate and how exercise increases it
 - b. Have students run a lap around the school and take their heart rate before and again after. Instruct students to compare the difference in heart rates and explain why exercise will raise the heart rate. For older students you could talk about the optimal heart rate to burn fat, gain muscle and the long-term benefits of cardiovascular exercise.
4. Physical Education
 - a. Provide recommended physical education minutes per week
 - b. Instructional delivery by certified instructors
 - c. Challenge another class to a sport or activity, participate in a contest or relay, learn the rules to various sports games or activities
5. Recess
 - a. Instructional delivery by trained recess supervisors
 - b. Provide students with at least 20 minutes of recess each day
 - c. Provide students with ample loose equipment and provide strategic playground or game markings
6. School Athletic Programs, Extra-curricular Programs, Before and After School Programs
 - a. Transportation to and from school including support for active transport
 - b. Walking or bicycling to and from school make bike racks available.
7. Teachers as Role Models
 - a. If teachers walk around the playground at lunch students are more likely to do the same, teachers can get involved in physical activities and encourage students to as well

Section 5: Recess Before Lunch

While not a requirement, scheduling recess before lunch has been shown to improve both student health and behavior.

When students play and engage in physical activity before eating, they tend to be calmer and more focused during lunchtime, which can lead to better eating habits and reduced food waste. Research also suggests that students who have recess first are more likely to eat a greater variety of foods, including fruits and vegetables, and return to class more ready to learn. This simple shift in the daily schedule can support overall wellness and contribute to a more positive school environment.

Section 5: Physical Activity & Classroom Behavior

Regular physical activity is not only essential for children's physical health but also plays a key role in supporting positive behavior, emotional regulation, and academic performance. Research shows that when students are given frequent opportunities for movement throughout the day, it can lead to improvements in focus, mood, impulse control, and overall classroom behavior. Physical activity helps reduce stress and anxiety, increases attention spans, and allows children to release built-up energy in a constructive way. This is especially important for students who may struggle with behavioral challenges. For many, movement breaks and active play provide the outlet they need to reset and re-engage in learning.

Conversely, withholding physical activity—such as recess or movement breaks—as a punishment for misbehavior can worsen behavioral issues. Removing these opportunities may increase frustration, restlessness, and difficulty with self-regulation, creating a cycle that is counterproductive to both student well-being and classroom management.

Instead of taking away physical activity, schools should consider using it as a proactive strategy to support behavior. Structured activity breaks, brain boosts, and movement-integrated learning can be effective tools for redirecting energy and reinforcing positive behavior. When physical activity is prioritized and protected, it helps create a healthier, more supportive school environment where all students can thrive.

Section 6: Marketing

Only marketing consistent with the Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards is allowed on the school campus during the school day. By marketing Smart Snack approved products, students will become familiar with MyPlate, food groups, and model healthy eating.

In addition to formal advertising and promotions, schools must also address less obvious forms of marketing that do not align with the Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards. This includes, but is not limited to, student-made posters, flyers, or announcements promoting the sale of foods or beverages that do not meet Smart Snacks criteria during the school day.

Non-compliant marketing may also include the visible presence or labeling of non-Smart Snack items in vending machines, school stores, or on-campus displays during school hours. These forms of indirect advertising can influence student choices and must be treated with the same level of scrutiny as commercial marketing.

LEAs are responsible for ensuring that all forms of marketing, whether formal or informal, are in full compliance with Smart Snacks guidelines. This expectation should be clearly communicated to staff, students, and any school-affiliated groups involved in food sales or promotions.

Healthy Marketing Tips:

1. Allow students to participate in creating posters with nutritious food
 - a. Decorating MyPlate posters or painting a fruits and vegetables rainbow
2. Take turns allowing different classrooms to draw their favorite healthy foods to be displayed in the cafeteria during lunch
3. Have students write down their own nutrition tips and display them around the classroom or cafeteria
4. Invite local farmers to talk about planting and harvesting fruit and vegetables
 - a. Reinforce this by serving those foods in the cafeteria
- b. Promote healthy school meals during the morning announcements, in the monthly school newsletter, or other school communications to students and parents to increase meal participation

Section 6: Nutrition Promotion and Education

1. Smart Marketing in the Cafeteria
 - a. Use colorful signage, posters, and creative naming (e.g., “X-Ray Vision Carrots” or “Brain-Boosting Bananas”) to make healthy foods more attractive.
 - b. Display fruits and vegetables prominently and at eye level in serving lines.
 - c. Feature “healthy item of the week” promotions on bulletin boards or morning announcements.
 - d. Use student feedback to influence menus and promotions, creating a sense of ownership and engagement.
2. Integrating Nutrition into the Classroom
 - a. Incorporate age-appropriate nutrition lessons into science, health, and even math or language arts curricula.
 - b. Use hands-on activities like cooking demos, taste tests, and school garden projects to make nutrition interactive.
 - c. Invite guest speakers such as dietitians or local farmers to speak about healthy eating and food sources.
3. Promoting Consistency Across Campus
 - a. Ensure all food-related messaging—from posters to fundraising events—supports healthy eating.
 - b. Limit marketing or promotion of foods that do not meet Smart Snacks standards during the school day.
 - c. Encourage staff to model healthy eating behaviors and participate in wellness activities.
4. Family and Community Engagement
 - a. Share nutrition tips, menus, and recipes through newsletters, school websites, and social media.

- b. Host family wellness nights, cooking classes, or nutrition challenges that involve caregivers and students together.
- c. Partner with local organizations or farmers' markets to reinforce messages of healthy eating.

Section 7: Nutrient Standards for Food, Smart Snacks & Beverages

All foods and beverages sold or distributed to students on campus during the school day must meet the minimum nutrition standards. These requirements apply to all grade levels unless specifically stated otherwise.

For a snack or entrée item to be allowable, it must meet the following general nutrition criteria:

- It must be a grain product with at least 50% whole grains by weight, or have whole grains listed as the first ingredient on the label;
- The first ingredient must be from one of the main non-grain food groups: fruits, vegetables, dairy, or protein foods;
- It must be a combination food that includes at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit and/or vegetables;
- If water is listed as the first ingredient, the second ingredient must meet one of the criteria above.

Section 7: Minimum Nutrition Standards

Nutrient	Entree	Snack
Calories*	350 calories or less	200 calories or less
Sodium	480 mg or less	200 mg or less
Total Fat	35% of calories or less	35% of calories or less
Saturated Fat	Less than 10% of calories	Less than 10% of calories
Trans Fat	0 grams	0 grams
Total Sugars	35% by weight or less	35% by weight or less

Section 7: Smart Snacks

Smart Snack Standards are nutrition guidelines developed by the USDA to ensure that foods and beverages sold in schools support healthy eating habits. These standards apply to snacks sold outside of the school meal programs—such as vending machines, school stores, and à la carte lines.

- Choose snacks that are **whole grain-rich** or have **fruits, vegetables, dairy, or protein** as the first ingredient.
- Ensure snacks are within calorie, sodium, sugar, and fat limits.
- Promote **water, low-fat milk, or 100% juice** as beverage options.
- Regularly review product labels to maintain compliance.
- Educate students and staff on the benefits of choosing smart snacks.

The [Smart Snack Calculator](#) is an easy-to-use online tool that helps schools determine if a food or beverage meets the USDA Smart Snack Standards.

Section 7: Beverages

Beverage	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Plain water	No Size Limit	No Size Limit	No Size Limit
Flavored water (0 calories, No sweeteners)	≤ 8 fl. oz.	≤ 12 fl. oz.	≤ 20 fl. oz.
Low-fat milk, unflavored*	≤ 8 fl. oz.	≤ 12 fl. oz.	≤ 12 fl. oz.
Non-fat milk, unflavored or flavored*	≤ 8 fl. oz.	≤ 12 fl. oz.	≤ 12 fl. oz.
100% fruit/vegetable juice**	≤ 8 fl. oz.	≤ 12 fl. oz.	≤ 12 fl. oz.
Low/No calorie beverages <5 calories/8oz.; <10 calories/20 oz.	N/A	N/A	≤ 20 fl. oz.
Lower calorie beverages ≤40 calories/8oz.; ≤60 calories/12oz.	N/A	N/A	≤ 12 fl. oz.

Carbonation:

In addition to the USDA Smart Snack beverage guidelines, some carbonated beverages are allowable, but not all.

As a recommended practice, schools may include certain carbonated beverages that align with Smart Snack Standards. Only unsweetened carbonated water and 100% juice that is carbonated are allowable, provided they meet the required portion size and calorie limits.

To maintain compliance, do not offer the following:

- Soda, pop, or soft drinks
- Juice cocktails or juice-flavored drinks
- Any beverage exceeding USDA size or calorie limits

Regularly reviewing product labels and using the Smart Snacks Calculator can help ensure all beverages meet the standards.

Section 7: High School Beverages

When offering beverages beyond water, milk, or 100% juice, it's important to ensure they meet the USDA Smart Snack nutrition standards. As a best practice, schools should carefully review beverage labels to confirm compliance with the following criteria:

- Calorie-Free Beverages:
Allowed in up to 20 fl. oz. servings; must contain zero calories.

- Low or No-Calorie Beverages:
Must contain ≤ 10 calories per 20 fl. oz. or ≤ 5 calories per 8 fl. oz.
Serving size must not exceed 20 fl. oz.
- Lower-Calorie Beverages:
Must contain ≤ 60 calories per 12 fl. oz. **or** ≤ 40 calories per 8 fl. oz.
Serving size must not exceed 12 fl. oz.

Caffeine:

As a best practice, all foods and beverages offered in elementary and middle schools should be completely caffeine-free, apart from trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine found in items like chocolate milk.

While caffeine is permitted at the high school level, it is recommended that schools limit or avoid caffeinated products whenever possible. Final decisions at the high school level are made at the discretion of the Local Education Agency (LEA).