

Healthy Concession Practices Report

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Identifying Healthy Concession Items and Standards

Adapted from the Eat Smart Move More program in North Carolina and available at <http://www.nutritionnc.com/ResourcesForSchools/pdf/esmm/AdvocacyTools/ActionTools/Concessions.pdf>

Dairy Foods (< 200 calories/package)

- Low-fat string cheese
- Low-fat cottage cheese
- Low-fat yogurt

Nuts/Seeds

- Nuts (≤ 1 oz. portions)
- Trail mix
- Out-of-the shell sunflower seeds

Fruits/Vegetables (< 200 calories/package)

- Carrots and/or celery with low-fat ranch
- Sliced apples with natural peanut butter
- Sectioned oranges
- Grapes
- Dried fruit/fruit chips
- Canned fruit cups
- Salsa for baked chips or baked potato
- Fresh salads
- Fruit smoothies
- Applesauce
- Baked potatoes
- Dill pickles

Drinks

- Water
- 1% low-fat milk - flavored and unflavored < 200 calories
- Nonfat milk - flavored and unflavored < 200 calories
- 100% fruit juice (8 oz) with no added sweeteners
- 100% vegetable juice

Grains (< 200 calories/package)

- Baked chips
- Animal crackers
- Hard pretzels
- Whole-grain cereal
- Whole-grain crackers (served with cheese)
- Whole-grain buns (for chicken sandwiches)
- Low-fat/low-sugar breakfast, granola or chewy bars
- Graham crackers

Frozen Foods

(< 200 calories/package)

- Frozen low-fat yogurt
- 100% juice bars
- 100% frozen fruit products/bars with no added sweeteners

Hot Foods

(< 200 calories/serving)

- Soft pretzel with cheese or low-fat ranch
- Baked potato with toppings (salsa, low-fat cheese, low-fat sour cream)
- Low-fat popcorn
- Soups/ bean chili
- Grilled chicken sandwiches
- Hot apple cider
- Hot chocolate
- Oatmeal

Non-food Items*

- Arts and crafts (sometimes kids aren't hungry they just want to spend their \$.50)

Identify and Address Barriers to Change

Equipment Needs

Some food items will require new equipment.

Pretzels warmer:

Warm pretzels require a pretzel warmer for preparation and optional display. The spinning pretzel warmer with humidifier keeps pretzels moist and encourages sales and costs \$900. However, soft pretzels can be warmed in a microwave or pizza oven if already available.

Nacho Cheese warmer:

Changing to a healthier cheese product with no trans fat and less saturated fat will require a different type of cheese warmer. A healthier alternative to the bag cheese is Bakers and Chef Nacho Cheese that comes in 6lb 10oz cans costing \$5.23. The healthier cheese option would require a 4 quart warmer with a ladle that costs \$230.86 from Sam's Club. The 4 quart warmers take additional time to heat the canned cheese compared to the bag variety most concessions are using. The 4 quart warmer and ladle can also be used for chili a popular option during football season.

Refrigeration:

Fruits, vegetables, dips, yogurts and string cheese require additional refrigeration space. Small refrigerators can be purchased for as little as \$150 from Sears up to \$700. Depending on the amount of product and frequency of product purchase the size of the refrigeration needs may vary. Some schools are able to use a portion of the school kitchen's refrigerators for indoor concession usage year round. Refrigeration would also be needed to thaw re-cooked chicken breasts.

Freezer:

Frozen pre-cooked grilled chicken, frozen yogurt bars, and 100% fruit bars would require a freezer for storage.

Grill:

An indoor electric grill such as a George Foreman can be used year round and is portable to outdoor concessions. One successful example of a grilled choice is frozen precooked grilled chicken breast sold as a sandwich on whole grain buns instead of hotdogs.

Crock Pot or Roaster:

A electric powered container may be needed to serve as a warm holding device for cooked chicken breasts.

Display Holders:

New colorful paper signs and plastic display holders for new products are needed to make the healthier choices visible to the public. This will help sales of the new healthier choices.

Apple Corer Slicer:

While whole apples provide a healthy addition to the concession menu, sliced apples with natural peanut butter is another option. **In order to not waste apples they could be cored/sliced at the time of purchase** and placed in a hotdog size paper basket with the preportioned side of peanut butter or light caramel.

Blender:

While smoothies are the most time consuming of the healthy options for concessions, they are very popular. A blender would be needed to make the smoothies.

Equipment	Use	Optional	Necessary	Approx. Cost (\$)	Comments
Pretzel warmer with humidifier	Warms soft pretzels and keeps them moist	X		900	A microwave or pizza oven may be used to warm pretzels. However, the spinning warmer/display has been shown to boost sales dramatically.
Nacho Cheese warmer	Warms cheese for soft pretzels and may be used to warm chili or soups		X	230.86	Switching to a healthier type of cheese may require a different warmer than the kind that warms the less healthy bag cheese.
Refrigeration	Store dairy products, and produce between events - thaw frozen pre-cooked chicken breast		X	150-700	Use of school kitchen refrigerators may be an option for storage but the use of a small refrigerator at the concession stand will help preserve items during sporting events and help concession service speed. Even if a small refrigerator is available at the concession stand, displaying some products such as yogurt in an ice bath will improve sales.
Freezer	Store precooked frozen chicken breast and fruit bars between events		X	150-500	Use of school kitchen freezers may be an option for storage but the use of a small freezer at the concession stand will help preserve items during sporting events and help concession service speed.
Grill	Prepare pre-cooked chicken breast for sandwiches to order during slow concession times and ahead of time for "rushes"	X		15-75	Electric varieties are a must because they can be used indoors with reduced fire risk. In addition most volunteers will be comfortable using them.
Crock-pot or roaster	Keep chicken breast warm during concession hours and "rushes"	X		50	Someone may be willing to donate this item.
Display holders	Display prices and promote healthy products	X		6-12	Colorful signs for healthy products can promote sales.

Apple Corer - Slicer	Section apples and remove the core	X		10	Having a corer-slicer will allow for apples to be cut as ordered during non-rush times to prevent product waste and browning of already sliced apples. A knife can be used instead, but a corer-slicer is generally safer for volunteers to operate during concession hours.
Blender	Prepare smoothies	X		15-100	Smoothies are difficult to make in large batches. If smoothies would be on the menu 2-3 kitchen size blenders would be needed to help with service speeds.

Obtaining New Products

When identifying new products for purchase it is a good idea to make a nutritional standard for your concession stand. The Eat Smart Move More campaign in NC suggests using “less than or equal to 200 Calories per serving” as a guideline.

Working with distributors to obtain healthy products has been found to be more difficult than concession organizers have anticipated. Sales people for distributors often do not have easy access to or know how to obtain nutritional information because they are often not used to such requests. When the brand names of items you would like to sell are known, then a search of the internet often helps obtain the nutritional information. Some healthier items require special orders which must be placed farther in advance than other items and some have minimum order sizes which may be more than you need. Minimum orders are a particular problem in the beginning of the concession’s healthy change process because the group is unsure of the quantities which will actually sell. The majority of the products needed in reasonable quantities and prices can be purchased through Sam’s club as the concession begins to change. Negotiations can also be made with some of the local supermarkets for some other items. Some distributors who already provide supplies to the schools may be able to obtain healthier options. For example the current provider of the popcorn popping oil which is likely a high saturated fat coconut oil can provide canola popping oil instead. Once you have a better idea of the quantities needed you may be able to use distributors for further supplies of some products, eliminating trips to Sam’s Club. Ordering through the schools using their supplier also removes barriers such as minimum orders. Another challenge is to minimize the different sources for products which may be a gradual process into the second half of the concession year.

Displaying New Products

The products that are most visible and have nice presentation sell better. Placing some yogurts in a clear bowl ice-bath on the counter will improve sales compared to leaving all of the yogurts in the refrigerator. Fruits and vegetables with dip should have samples of the cut item in a paper basket with the dip options displayed on the counter. When promoting the new healthy choices remember, “out of sight means out of mind.”

Storage

Making changes to some concession items will not affect storage. For example choosing baked chips, baked potatoes, nuts, trail mixes, hard pretzels, graham crackers, and granola bars will require the same dry storage needs as currently sold dry goods. Providing V8 juice and other 100% juices will also require no different room temperature storage than soda pop and a need to refrigerate before sale. Yogurts, string cheese, chocolate milk, salsa, dips such as light ranch and unused nacho cheese will require refrigeration between events. Apples, citrus fruits and vegetables, such as carrots and celery, will require refrigeration between events to increase shelf-life. If refrigeration space is limited individually packaged fruit cups in light syrup or applesauce is an alternative. Shanley high school partners with food service to coordinate the use of produce nearing the end of its shelf-life.

Volunteer Inertia

New equipment and menu items disrupt familiar routines of volunteers who work the concession stand. It will be necessary to have someone familiar with these changes present at events during the first few weeks of the changes. In addition clear written instructions and placards to place throughout the concession stand will help with the transition.

Consider developing a policy for all groups who plan to sell concessions. "Each group that plans to sell food items must become "certified" to do so on a yearly basis. Each group can become "certified" by having a representative read the district fundraising/concessions policy and sign at the bottom guaranteeing the compliance of the group represented. A list of "certified" groups will be kept in the Central Office." Valley City High School Wellness Policy

Service Speed

Smoothies may require the most work and slow the speed of service during rush times. Other healthy choices would not significantly affect service speed once they become familiar. Some choices may require more time for prep work prior to the event, like baking potatoes, washing fruits and vegetables, sectioning or slicing oranges, cutting vegetables, and putting small amounts of dips in a condiment cup. Dips such as low-fat ranch and peanut butter may be available in individual portions to cut down on preparation, but individual packaging tends to increase price.

Preservation

Like fried chips and candy, some healthier choices have a long shelf-life such as baked chips, hard pretzels, granola bars, graham crackers, pickles, and individual fruit cups. Bananas are a popular concession choice but are more difficult to preserve. One school system in Iowa sells bananas only on weekend morning games or tournaments to help ensure that at least the entire bunch is sold.

Produce item	Average shelf-life without refrigeration	Shelf-life with refrigeration	Comments
Bananas	7-14 days		Ripens quickly and bruises easily - good option for weekend tournaments
Apples	1 week	3 -6 weeks	
Citrus fruits	3-4 days	1-2 weeks	
Grapes	1 week	1-3 weeks	
Carrots		2-4 weeks	
Potatoes	3-5 weeks		Needs a cool dry place

Assessing Customer Preferences

Switching to healthier popcorn oil is an easy switch and most people don't notice the difference. If you are concerned about the healthier nacho cheese taste and leery of purchasing the necessary warmer, consider having a group like the student council or PTA taste test the healthier nacho cheese to determine if people would like it. Consumer involvement in taste tests of potential new products may reduce student and parental resistance to concession changes. Popular items in other school districts with healthy concessions include 100% juice, chocolate milk, cheese sticks, pickles, apples, grapes, cheese and whole grain crackers, popcorn, soft pretzels with cheese, low fat chewy granola bars, and grilled chicken sandwiches.

Increasing Availability and Visibility of Healthy Foods

New healthy items can be promoted through advertisements in the local newspaper sports insert, the sports brochure handed out at games, announcements over the PA system during games, flyers distributed at the winter sports pre-season rally and signs near the concession stand. Inexpensive display holders can be used to make some products more visible. The pretzel warmer can also serve as a display case to highlight this new option. Laminated signs can also be used to advertise products. Products with high visibility on the concession counter or table will sell better.

Pricing Strategies

Sales of new healthy items can be encouraged by strategic pricing. If soda and sports drinks are allowed at all, the prices should be raised an additional \$.50 to \$1 higher than the current sale price. Healthier drinks should be cheaper such as 100% juice, V8, and water should be priced from \$.75 - \$1. Whole fresh fruits, cheese sticks, 1 oz nut packages, and pickles should be priced

at \$.50. Produce with dips, yogurts, chocolate milks, and cheese and crackers should be priced at \$.75-\$1.

Pricing Examples- based on school districts with healthy concessions around the US.

Product	Price
Whole fresh fruit	\$.50
Individual fruit cups	\$.50
Cheese sticks	\$.50
1 oz nut packages	\$.50
Dill pickles	\$.50
Fruit with dip	\$.75-\$1
Vegetables with dip	\$.75-\$1
Yogurts	\$.75-\$1
Flavored milks	\$.75-\$1
Cheese and crackers	\$.75-\$1
V8 juice	\$.75-\$1
100% fruit juice	\$.75-\$1
Water	\$.75-\$1
Pop (if available at all)	\$1.50-\$2

Lessons Learned by Other Healthy Concession Organizers

1. Motivated community partners are the key to success. If Boosters are enthusiastic and supportive it can help make changes possible.
2. The food industry, their marketers and distributors are not used to change and may be somewhat threatened by a new emphasis on healthy foods. This may be particularly so in markets where they have previously made the majority of their profits on high fat, high sugar, unhealthy foods such as concessions. They need to be approached carefully keeping their interests and goals in mind (see barriers above). Several programs have reported that sales people were not used to questions regarding nutrition and manufacturers did not always make nutritional information easy to obtain. However, in the future we will be able to clearly show that we can sell and thus consistently purchase these healthier products that the response will change.
3. Working with volunteer groups- Concession stands are staffed by volunteers who change

constantly and may not have any experience previously in the concession stand. Therefore changes need to be laid in easy to read formats and conveyed through concession group leaders to as many volunteers as possible.

4. The internet is a good source for some nutrition information. All you need from the distributors is the full name of the product. This is easier than asking them to give you nutrition information they do not have.
5. Ordering food products in conjunction with the school through their distributors can save groups from minimum order limits and other charges.
6. Wholesale clubs such as Sam’s club and Cosco are good sources for products especially in the beginning when groups do not know how much will sell and want to buy smaller amounts.
7. Local suppliers can also be an option. You may able to negotiate prices with local supermarkets.
8. The concession customer is part of a captive audience and they will choose something from whatever you provide as choices. By offering healthy choices and limiting unhealthy choices you can positively impact their health.
9. Stay somewhat flexible when making product choices, but do not sacrifice the overall goal. This is when having nutritional standards like <200 calories/serving helps.

Success Stories

Many places around the United States schools are positively impacting the health of youth and their greater communities.

Location	Organization	Outcomes/Comments	Link
Evansville, IN	Christ the King School & EVSC School-Community Council	<p>Increased profits were seen in the first year following the healthy concession implementation.</p> <p>When kids would ask for candy and workers said they didn’t have candy, the question was always, “Well what do you have?” and a healthy option was chosen.</p>	http://www.evscschools.com/Uploads/Files/2bf42617-6041-47e7-b959-9324e0410ec5.pdf
Manawa, WI	Manawa School District Nutrition Committee	<p>The most recently held concession made over \$600 profit</p> <p>Most of the foods were purchased from Sam’s Club. Although they take a lot of time, smoothies were a hit.</p>	http://www.manawa.k12.wi.us/Staff/Administration/Holly%20Bauer/healthy_concession_st_and_ideas.htm

Nicholasville/ Jessamine County, KY	Nicholasville/ Jessamine County Parks and Recreation	<p>Profits for the first year of the healthy concessions were \$997.68</p> <p>Profits for the second year of the healthy concessions were \$2,353.10</p> <p>Some parents complained about the choices, but many thanked them for the healthy choices.</p> <p>Used only a plug in popcorn machine and a stand up refrigerator.</p>	<p>http://www.fitky.org/ViewDocument.aspx?id=113</p> <p>A power point used to persuade other parks and recs to step-up and make policy changes.</p>
Duplin, County, NC	Duplin county schools	<p>Have a policy that governs what foods can be sold at concession stands.</p>	<p>http://www.nutritionnc.com/ResourcesForSchools/pdf/esmm/AdvocacyTools/ActionTools/Concessions.pdf</p>
Iowa City, IA	University of Iowa lead pilot study for healthy school concession changes	<p>Received grant money to start and adapt a healthy concession stand and eventually create a start-up guide and recommendations for making changes to healthier concessions.</p> <p>*This study provided much of the equipment information in this report. In addition the head researcher for the project is willing to share specifications and brand names of products purchased for the healthy concession.</p> <p>This group even purchased a carrot costume for someone to wear to promote carrot sales. The contact also reported that carrots without dip did not sell at all.</p>	<p>http://www.wellmark.com/foundation/news/20080708_uofiowa.htm</p>
NE and IA	NE Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative	<p>200+ people in one school district were surveyed regarding the likelihood to purchase healthy foods at a concession stand and what they would be willing to pay.</p> <p>*Price example table was based partially on results from this small</p>	

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Policy examples

Organization	Policy	Link
National Association of State Boards of Education	<p>Nutritious and appealing foods, such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy foods, and low-fat grain products, shall be available wherever and whenever food is sold or otherwise offered at school. Schools shall take efforts to encourage students to make nutritious food choices. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - à la carte offerings in the food service program; - food and beverage choices in vending machines, snack bars, school stores, and concession stands; - food and beverages sold as part of school-sponsored fundraising activities; - refreshments served at parties, celebrations, and meetings. 	www.nasbe.org/index.php/shs/78-model-policies/122-policies-to-encourage-healthy-eating
Texas Department of Agriculture	The Texas Department of Agriculture and several other organizations offer suggestions for alternative fundraising activities on their Web sites.	www.agr.state.tx.us/agr/media/media_render/0,1460,1848_17066_8750_0,00.html
CanDo (Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity)	Guidelines for fund-raisers and concessions help the district send a consistent wellness message to students, staff, families, and community members.	www.candoonline.org/school/
Eat Smart Move More North Carolina	All concession stands and other events where food is sold at after-school activities will make available at least one Winner Circle* or healthy snack alternative and at least one beverage that is a healthy choice. Suggested items meeting these criteria will be made available to the schools.	www.nchealthyschools.org www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com