

Wellness in Nebraska Schools



Supports for Healthy Eating within Nebraska's Public Middle and High Schools

INTRODUCTION

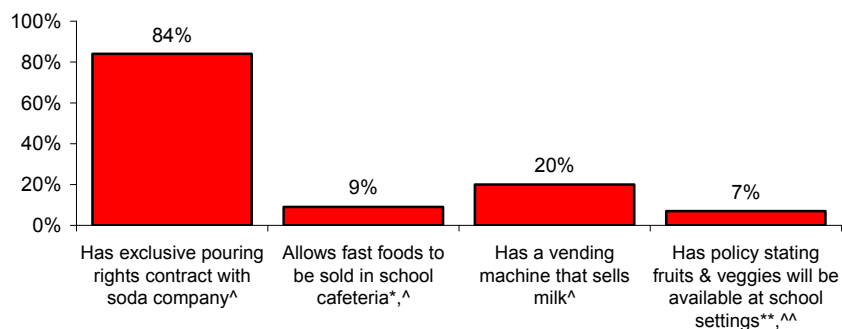
The eating habits of Nebraska youth need improvement¹. As a result, healthy eating must be encouraged through a variety of different settings where youth spend large amounts of time. Schools can establish environments that promote healthy eating skills and behaviors necessary for lifelong healthy eating. This mini-report describes the environmental supports for healthy eating within Nebraska's middle and high schools.

FINDINGS, reported by administrators (primarily principals) within Nebraska's middle and high schools

➤ Policies, Practices, Recommendations:

- Just 1 in every 14 schools (7%) had a policy stating fruits and vegetables will be offered at school settings (such as parties, after school programs, staff meetings, parent meetings, and concessions) during 2004. However, this percentage did increase slightly from 4 percent during 2002.²
- Less than half of schools (43%) had a written policy establishing nutrition standards for a la carte items sold during the lunch period in 2005. Furthermore, just 10 percent of schools had a written policy for vending machines, while all other settings (including student parties, after-school programs, staff meetings, parent meetings, school snack shops, concession stands, and other areas) had a percentage below 10 percent.³
- 4 in every 5 schools (78%) either required or recommended that fruits and vegetables always be included as la carte items sold during school lunch periods in 2005. The percentage for all other settings was 21 percent or less.³
- Half of all schools (50%) either required or recommended that "junk foods" always be prohibited from a la carte items sold during school lunch periods in 2005. The percentage for all other settings was 14 percent or less.³
- More than 4 in every 5 schools (84%) had an exclusive pouring rights contract with a soft drink company in 2005, giving the company exclusive rights to sell their product within the school.³
- Nearly 1 in every 10 schools (9%) allowed fast food to be sold either as a school meal or la carte item in 2005. The percentage was highest in high schools (24%), followed by middle (7%) and combined middle/high schools (3%).³

Figure 1: Support of Healthy and Less Healthy Food and Drink Options Within Nebraska Public Middle and High Schools



^{*}Includes foods sold as school meals or a la carte items

^{**}Includes settings such as parties, after school programs, staff meetings, parent meetings, and concession stands

Note: questions were asked independently of each other, sum of bars does not equal 100%

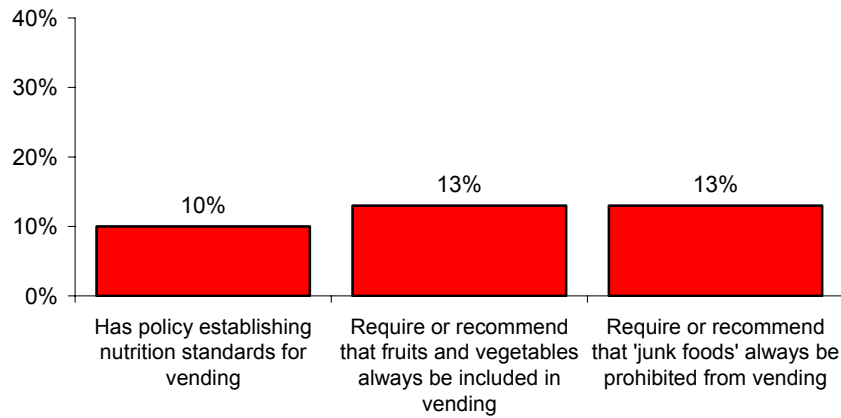
[^]Source: 2005 Nebraska School Administrator Survey

^{^^}Source: 2004 School Health Education Profile Survey

➤ Vending options and access:

- 4 in every 5 schools (84%) sold snack foods or beverages through vending services (such as vending machines or a school store, canteen, or snack bar) during 2004.²
- 68% allowed students to purchase unhealthy foods (such as candy; high-fat snacks; and soft drinks, sports drinks, or non-100% fruit drinks) through vending before class, 52% allowed this during school hours when meals were not being served, and 22% allowed this during school lunch periods; among schools with vending services in 2004.²
- Nearly all schools with vending sold water (94%) and 100% fruit juice (84%), however less schools sold low-fat salty snacks (62%), low-fat baked goods (53%), and fruits and vegetables (25%) during 2004.² However, all of these percentages did increase between 2002 and 2004, with water increasing significantly from 85 to 94 percent.²
- Roughly 1 in every 5 schools (20%) had a vending machine that sold milk during 2005.³

Figure 2: Nebraska Public Middle and High School Vending Policies, Among Schools With Vending Machines, 2005



Note: questions were asked independently of each other, sum of bars does not equal 100%
Source: 2005 Nebraska School Administrator Survey

CONCLUSION

Many public middle and high schools in Nebraska do not have policies or environments that encourage healthy eating. To create sustainable behavior change among Nebraska youth, schools should offer healthy foods and beverages in a variety of different settings (such as cafeterias, vending machines, concessions, meetings, and other school functions). Having these healthy options available could both improve the health of students within the school and community members who use the school. We realize that schools have many priorities, and therefore encourage schools to work with parents and public and private organizations to find feasible solutions to improve the eating behaviors of Nebraska's youth.

METHODS

Findings in this fact sheet came from two data sources: School Health Education Profile Surveys (SHEPS) and the 2005 Nebraska School Administrator Survey. Both of these surveys (conducted by mail) were targeted at principals of public middle and high schools in Nebraska, and results were weighted to reflect all public middle and high schools within Nebraska. SHEPS is conducted every even calendar year and coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Data from the 2005 Nebraska School Administrator Survey were collected by the Nebraska Health and Human Services System between December 2004 and March 2005.

Fact sheet was prepared by the Nebraska Cardiovascular Health (CVH) Program, March 2006. For additional results, methodology, or other information about these data or the Nebraska CVH Program, please visit the CVH Program website www.hhss.ne.gov/CVH or call 402-471-2101.



¹ 2005 Nebraska Youth Risk Behavior Survey
² Nebraska School Health Education Profile Survey
³ 2005 Nebraska School Administrator Survey