

**KIDS' SAFE &
HEALTHFUL
FOODS PROJECT**

Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation

THE
PEW
CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Smart Snacks in Schools

A Road Map for Action

The Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project is a collaboration between The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that provides nonpartisan analysis and evidence-based recommendations on policies that impact the safety and healthfulness of school foods. For more information, see HealthySchoolFoodsNow.org.

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Smart Snacks in Schools: Developing a Road Map for Action from the Capitol to the Classroom

October 16–17, 2014

Overview

More than 100 stakeholders, including school food service and nutrition directors, teachers, current students, youth ambassadors, district and school administrators, and representatives of the state departments of education, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Parent Teacher Association, nonprofit organizations, and industry, attended a meeting October 16–17, 2014, in Washington, D.C., hosted by the Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project. Participants discussed the most effective policies and practices across different sectors to facilitate the successful implementation of Smart Snacks in Schools standards throughout the country. Insights gathered from the discussions will be used to develop a road map of state-, district-, and school-level strategies to support change.

During the meeting, attendees highlighted the need to create a “culture of wellness” in the education system that not only promotes healthy snack foods and beverages, but also an overall state of health and well-being. They emphasized the power of partnerships and engagement, particularly when these involve empowered youth, clear and consistent communications about policies, and dedicated resources for implementation.

“Attendees highlighted the need to create a ‘culture of wellness’ in the education system that not only promotes healthy snack foods and beverages, but also an overall state of health and well-being.”

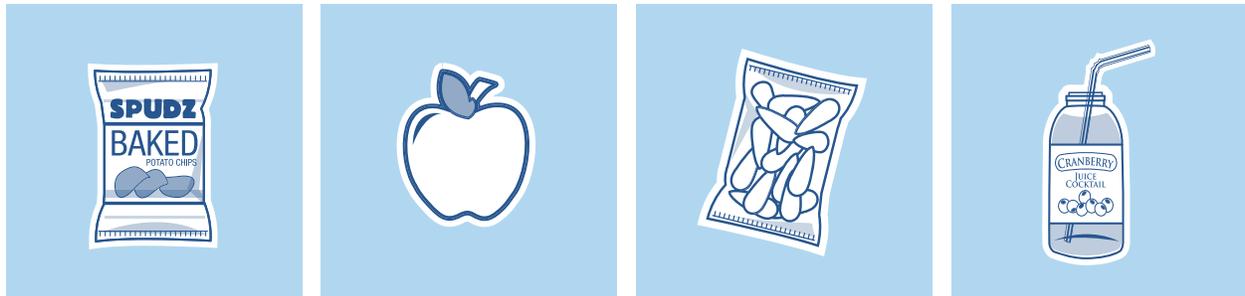
Meeting participants learned about the history of the Smart Snacks in Schools interim final rule, and available implementation resources, through the following presentations:

- Janey Thornton, Ph.D., deputy undersecretary for food, nutrition, and consumer services, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), presented the background and development of the Smart Snacks in Schools interim final rule.
- Megan Lott, Kids' Safe and Healthful Food Project, shared an analysis of the existing policies in 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- Jamie Chriqui, Ph.D., Bridging the Gap, discussed findings from research on the effect of state laws and district policies related to competitive foods.
- Shana Robinson Ahmed, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Population Health, described CDC research findings related to child health and programs focused on student health.
- Stephanie Joyce, Alliance for a Healthier Generation, provided an overview of resources available on her organization's website to support the implementation of Smart Snacks in Schools.
- Stephanie Tama-Sweet, Voices for Healthy Kids, described this joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation designed to improve health and reverse the childhood obesity epidemic.

In addition, attendees joined small group discussions about effective and successful policies and practices at the school, district, and state level pertaining to three groups of activities that catalyze efforts to meet and exceed Smart Snacks requirements:

- Accountability, enforcement, oversight, and transparency.
- Training, technical assistance, incentives, access to healthy foods, and supply chains.
- Communication and engagement.

This summary document captures the deliberations and main themes.



Summary of Discussion – October 16, 2014

Welcome

Jessica Donze Black, director of the Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project, welcomed participants and thanked them for attending the workshop. She noted that the Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project, a joint initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, was established to provide nonpartisan analysis and evidence-based recommendations on policies that affect the safety and healthfulness of school foods.

Donze Black explained the context for the meeting and clarified that the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 required the USDA to establish national standards for all foods sold in schools—not just the federally supported school meals programs. To accomplish this objective, the USDA Smart Snacks in Schools interim final rule, issued in June 2013, stated that all foods sold in schools, including snack foods and beverages (also referred to as “competitive foods”), must meet defined standards by July 1, 2014. These standards ensure that students have greater access to whole grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, and protein while limiting the foods' fat, calorie, sugar, and sodium content.*

The Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project convened this two-day meeting to bring together leaders at the national, state, district, and school levels who have successfully implemented policies and practices concerning healthy food. Meeting participants shared and discussed effective strategies, practices, and policies that would facilitate implementation of the Smart Snack rule and that could foster broader plans and action—beyond compliance with the standards—to support children's health in schools.

* U.S. Department of Agriculture, 7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, “National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010; Interim Final Rule,” Federal Register, 78, no. 125 (June 28, 2013).

Insights from USDA

Janey Thornton, Ph.D., the USDA's deputy undersecretary for food, nutrition, and consumer services, discussed the development of the Smart Snacks in Schools interim final rule, including modifications by the USDA to its initial proposal based on input that was received through the public comment period.

Thornton noted that the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act passed by Congress in 2010 called for the USDA to develop recommendations on all foods sold to students during the school day. Stemming from that legislation, the agency issued a Smart Snacks in Schools proposed rule in 2013 and then edited it to reflect significant feedback from stakeholders before issuing an interim final rule in 2013. Smart Snacks provides standards for the nutritional content of any foods and beverages sold during the school day, defined as from midnight the night before to 30 minutes after the last bell. The standards are consistent with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans, complement policies already in place in many states, and reflect the USDA's analysis of stakeholder input. Thornton indicated that the Smart Snacks in Schools rule, which builds on policies that set requirements for school breakfasts and lunches, ensures that all foods and beverages available to students during the school day are healthy. Schools were required to implement the standards beginning in July 2014, a full year after the interim final rule was released.

Thornton noted that she has seen numerous successes and innovative practices across the country related to providing healthy food in schools, including those associated with snack foods, many of which have involved students in their design and implementation. She recognized that some school districts may face challenges with implementation but said we can learn from the ones that are thriving, because these standards will ultimately help kids to eat more wholesome foods and learn healthy, lifelong habits.

Where are we with Smart Snacks implementation, and where do we want to be?

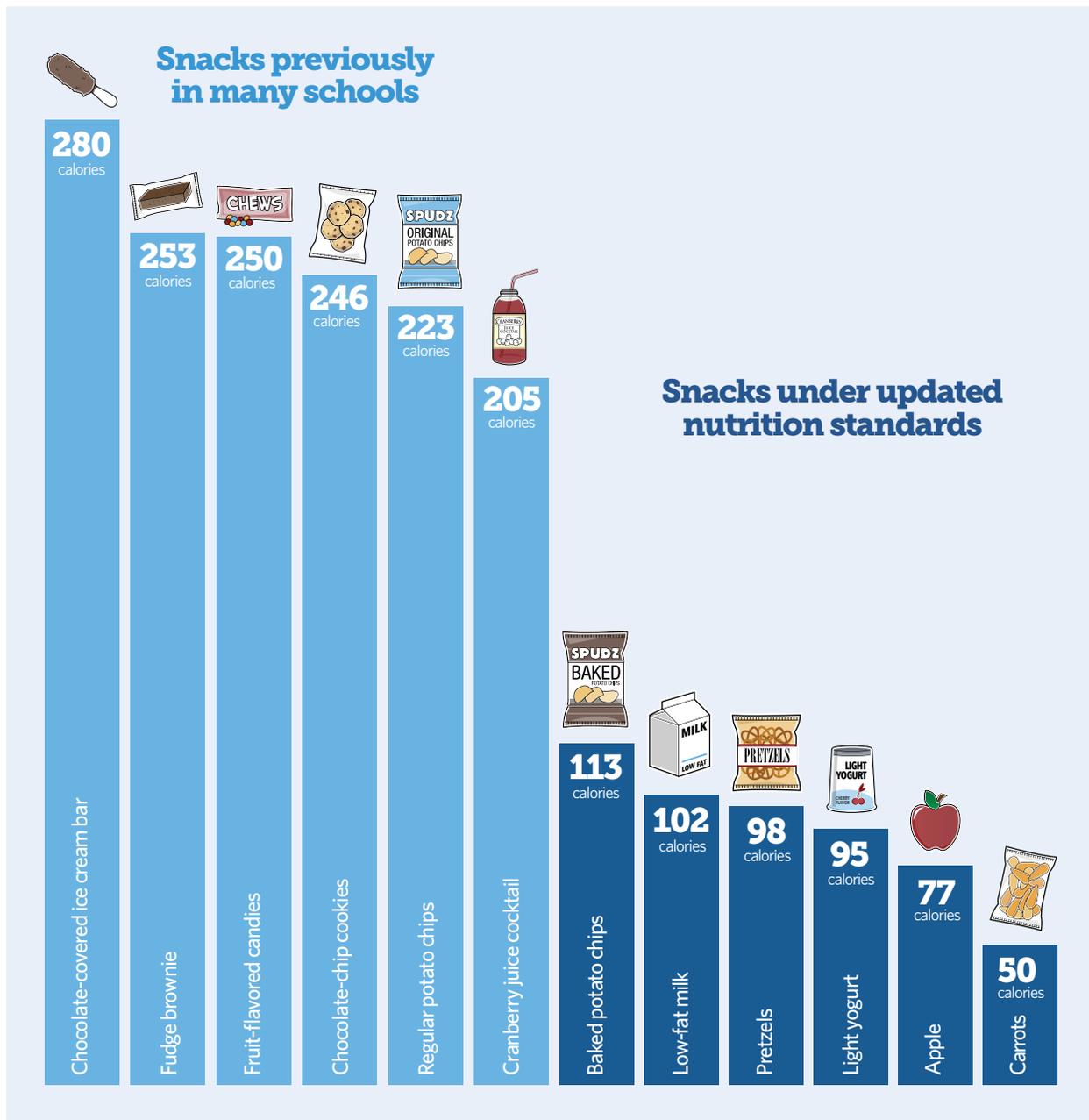
A panel of experts from a range of organizations and agencies provided an overview of different analyses, data, and programs to flesh out the context and status of implementing the Smart Snack interim final rule.

Megan Lott, Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project, provided a brief analysis of the policies for snack foods and beverages sold to students in schools, which are known as competitive foods, in 50 states and the District of Columbia. She noted that, at the time of the convening, 42 states and the District already had state-level policies about competitive foods. Of those policies, seven were voluntary and 36 were mandatory. Eight states did not have existing policies related to competitive foods in schools.

Existing state rules bearing on competitive foods varied widely. Although no state's policies were completely in sync with the USDA's interim final rule when it was unveiled, some would need only minor adjustments to align the two sets of standards; some had elements that exceeded the USDA's standards; and other states would need to make substantial changes in order to meet the USDA's baseline. For additional information, see the state fact sheets at <http://www.healthyschoolfoodsnow.org>.

Jamie Chiqui, Ph.D., Bridging the Gap, presented research findings on the impact and effectiveness of state laws and district policies, along with strategies to help facilitate compliance. Chiqui noted that school food policies at the state and district levels were increasingly comprehensive but did not tend to have strong enforcement. A literature review showed that over time, the state laws and district policies did tend to improve the school food environment; however, implementation, compliance, maintenance, training, and technical assistance remained

Figure 1
Sizing Up Snack Foods and Drinks



To ensure that all foods sold in schools are healthier, Congress directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture to update nutrition standards for snack foods and beverages and align them with the school meal guidelines. This graphic compares the nutritional value of the snack foods and beverages that had been available to students with those that meet the Smart Snacks in School standards, which went into effect at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year.

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a challenge. In states where technical assistance was provided to school districts, those districts often had more comprehensive policies. Incentives and penalties also had a positive effect. District policies were found to be more comprehensive and stronger when states provided incentives and penalties.

Bridging the Gap discovered that in elementary schools, state and district policies addressing food rewards and fundraisers— even if only for guidance—reduced their use in the classroom, though compliance was not full. In middle schools, research showed that comprehensive and consistent school food policies contributed to less weight gain and the reduction of body mass index over time among students.

Chriqui emphasized that, overall, state laws and district policies associated with competitive foods affected the school food environment. While these policies cannot change the foods available to students at home or off the school campus, a whole school approach that went beyond the cafeteria was an important component of an effective law or policy.

Shana Robinson Ahmed, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Population Health, described CDC research findings related to child health and programs focused on student health. CDC research on student health showed that many children did not have healthy habits; one-third of adolescents were overweight, 27.8 percent drank at least one regular soda per day, and only 28.7 percent ate more than a single vegetable per day. At the same time, eating habits were linked to student academic achievement. Robinson Ahmed noted that the CDC supports strategies to promote a healthy school environment, which include encouraging participation in school meal programs, providing nutritious and appealing school meals, ensuring that all foods and beverages sold or served are nutritious and appealing, marketing healthier foods and beverages, using fundraising activities and student rewards that promote health, and providing access to free drinking water.

Robinson Ahmed also shared background information on CDC funding programs related to school health. She noted that the CDC provides resources for technical assistance through a program funding state public health departments that is designed to prevent and control diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and associated risk factors and to promote school health. The funding is intended to strengthen the relationships between public health and education departments.

Robinson Ahmed suggested that states could help promote Smart Snacks in Schools by developing guidance, assisting local education agencies in implementation, providing technical assistance and professional development, educating about alternative celebrations and fundraisers, and developing implementation plans.

Stephanie Joyce, Alliance for a Healthier Generation, provided an overview of resources available on her organization's website to support the implementation of Smart Snacks in Schools. The Smart Snacks toolkit, available at www.healthiergeneration.org/smartsnacks, provides tools and resources needed to start implementing the Smart Snacks in Schools interim final rule, including a venue survey tool to assess a site, a food and beverage inventory tool, communications tools, training videos, and tools to engage students in the process of assessment and change. In addition, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation has a Smart Snacks product calculator to help users determine whether a beverage, snack, side item, or entree meets the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines, and a product navigator, updated to reflect whether included products meet the new guidelines.

Stephanie Tama-Sweet, Voices for Healthy Kids, a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, explained the initiative's goal to improve health and reverse the childhood obesity

epidemic. The program has six policy priority areas, including improving the nutritional quality of snack foods and beverages. Voices for Healthy Kids helps to provide direct technical assistance to stakeholders wishing to impact these priority areas and has financial resources to help support state and local campaigns.



Clear and consistent communication regarding snack food and beverage policies at federal, state, district, and school levels is a key component of successful implementation.”

What does successful implementation look like?

Following the panel discussion, participants worked in small groups to define successful implementation of the Smart Snacks in Schools. Those definitions included:

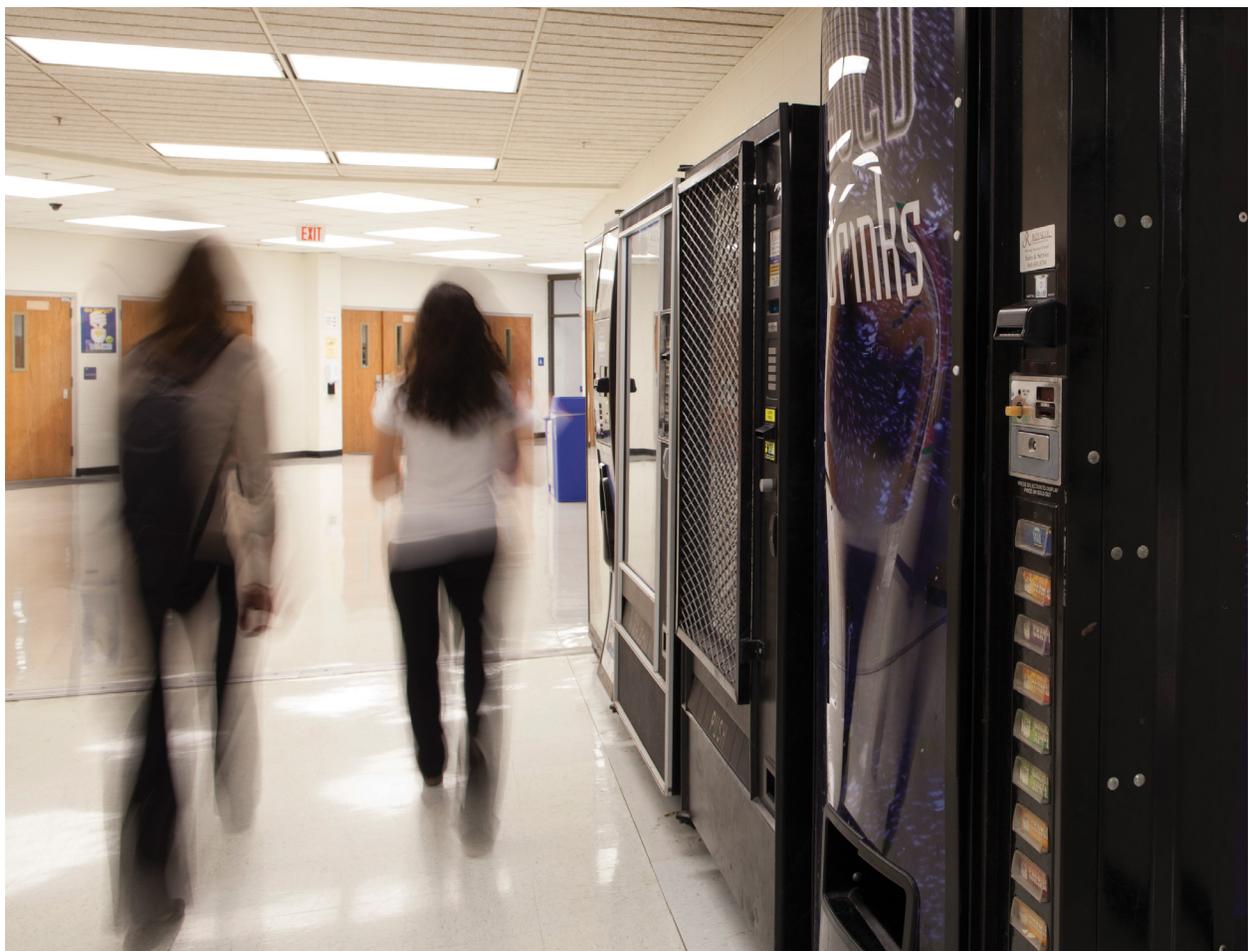
- Youth empowered, engaged, and involved in implementing Smart Snacks in Schools. Engaging and empowering youth could include giving students a meaningful role in making decisions about food and allowing them to work with the school administration and staff, as well as parents and other community leaders, to create a wellness environment for healthier students; holding taste tests with students in order to select food served at the school; allowing students to start innovative programs; and peer-to-peer motivation. The students engaged in these programs would ideally be of all ages and from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.
- A broad spectrum of partners working to collaboratively implement the standards, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Responsibility for implementing programs should be shared across school staff, involving the school nutritionist and other staff members.
- A changed food culture and relationship with food.
- A holistic focus on the whole, well child.
- More kids at a healthy weight.
- Professional standards for school food service.
- Creative implementation, integrated throughout school programs. This could include reduced barriers for farm-to-school programs, live cooking demonstrations, and consistent messaging integrated into classrooms—all of which help kids to better understand food.

Small group discussions

Participants then split into small groups for in-depth conversations about key issues related to the successful implementation of Smart Snacks in Schools. The purpose of each discussion was to identify successful policies and practices at the state, district, and school levels. Several overarching themes arose across the two sessions that took place October 16:

- Clear and consistent communication regarding snack food and beverage policies at the federal, state, district, and school levels is a key component of successful implementation. Efforts from individuals and groups responsible for implementing, enforcing, and complying with the rules at all levels would be more effective if messaging and guidance were well-defined.

- Participants also highlighted the value of developing policies with a balance of enforcement and incentive mechanisms, suggesting that a combination of incentives and enforcement is critical to creating innovative programs and achieving high levels of compliance. Financial incentives and recognition among peers can be strong motivators but may not be powerful enough to achieve 100 percent compliance.
- Complying with the standards for healthy snack and beverage programs can be encouraged by broadly communicating the link between healthy eating habits and improved academic performance and long-term health.
- A paradigm shift is needed in the culture of food and wellness in education; within five years, a culture of wellness can become the accepted norm. Such a cultural shift will take time, but once accomplished, this new culture can become pervasive in the school environment.
- Food and nutrition are often considered separate from education, but they need to be recognized as a key component of the student's education and integrated into all aspects of the curriculum.
- Students need to be willing to eat and drink the food and beverage options offered under the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines; policies will not be successful if students do not participate. Many meeting participants suggested conducting taste tests and engaging students in product selection to ensure that foods and beverages made available at the school are consumed:



Accountability, enforcement, oversight, and transparency

During the breakout discussions about policies and practices related to accountability, enforcement, oversight, and transparency, the groups discussed the following key themes:

- Individuals accountable for school food policies at the state, district, or school level need to be clear and consistent regarding implementation, enforcement, and communication of the standards and actions taken to meet them. Expectations should be clearly explained at the beginning of each school year, and guidance materials should provide clarification as needed while being streamlined as much as possible.
- Enforcement mechanisms will help ensure compliance; consequences for noncompliance should be clearly communicated to districts and schools.
- Shared responsibility for implementing policies among a multilevel network will improve accountability, oversight, and transparency. Starting during the early stages of the implementation process, networks of leaders from the school, district, and state should be created. These networks could also include a school-based leadership committee, team, or council involving food service directors, teachers, students, and parents that reports to school district leaders.
- Transparency will encourage accountability; it is important to communicate information from the state, district, and school levels to their respective audiences. Clear and accessible information is needed regarding details of food and beverage policy, the foods and beverages available in schools, the specific individuals or committee members responsible for implementing policies, levels of compliance, and any results of the policies. Information needs to be easily accessible and clearly communicated.
- Building a platform or mechanism for accountability, such as reporting on progress in achieving goals established by a wellness plan, into policies on snack foods and beverages with clearly defined oversight roles at the state, district, and school levels is a key aspect of achieving compliance and success.
- Responsibility for oversight should rest with the entity accountable (e.g., principal or superintendent) for meeting the Smart Snacks in Schools requirements.

At the federal level, meeting participants indicated that the USDA and Department of Education should collaborate to ensure a comprehensive and cohesive approach to embedding nutrition education and policy throughout their agency guidelines and programs.

Meeting participants suggested that states develop clear fundraising policies that are consistently implemented and enforced. Additionally, participants indicated that states should require reporting from school districts about policy compliance and should make that information widely available. For example, states or districts could develop a wellness “report card” showing compliance and wellness indicators and could communicate whether and which schools and/or districts are meeting them. This type of activity could support transparency and accountability in the implementation process while encouraging a level of healthy competition among districts.

At the district level, meeting participants suggested that wellness plans could be a vehicle to implement and enforce snack food and beverage standards. In many districts, the wellness council serves as a visible system for evaluating wellness plans and regularly reports progress to the school board.

Incentives, training, technical assistance, access to healthy foods, and the supply chain

Next, participants in breakout sessions discussed incentives that motivate change; important topics and effective formats for trainings; technical assistance; and approaches to addressing challenges related to access to healthy foods and the supply chain. Broadly, they suggested that training and technical assistance should be delivered

together. Participants also noted that the limited resources available for training and technical support can impact implementation; federal and state support to develop trainings and technical assistance would help administrators manage that constraint.

During the discussions, meeting participants indicated that incentives are an important and effective way to encourage schools to comply with or exceed policy requirements. Effective incentives that were highlighted during the discussion include:

- Financial incentives targeting schools (e.g., principals) and school districts (e.g., food service directors). These incentives could include qualifying for grants, training, or matching funds.
- Recognition in the form of rewards, awards, or certifications for being an exemplary school.
- Competitions involving schools, districts, or states vying against one another to develop innovative solutions to common challenges or achieve outcomes such as increased student participation in meal programs. Competitions can also be used to engage students.
- Partnerships with high-profile groups or celebrities engaged at the school or district level.
- Increased efficiency through reduced paperwork and reporting requirements. One meeting participant reported that the school district automatically waives additional reporting requirements for schools with HealthierUS School Challenge certification. The reduced administrative burden is an incentive to meet the program's requirements.



Meeting participants indicated that incentives are an important and effective way to encourage schools to comply with or exceed policy requirements.”

Participants indicated that training can focus on a number of different topics, depending upon the audience. For example:

- School and district leaders, school nutrition directors, school food service directors, or others required to lead implementation, could be trained on:
 - The motivation and theory behind changing competitive school food policies.
 - How the requirements and standards of the Smart Snacks in Schools interim final rule fits within the overall school foods policies.
 - How to comply with the new requirements (e.g., support developing new recipes, support identifying foods that meet the requirements).
 - How to make the transition to competitive foods that meet the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines financially stable.
 - How to engage students as allies.
- Leaders at the school, district, and state level and students could be provided with advocacy training, so they can bring others in to help support the Smart Snacks in Schools policies.
- Parents could benefit from education on the reasons that changes are being made and how they can engage in the decision-making process through groups such as school wellness councils. They also could be better

informed about how they can contribute to communications and outreach efforts around school nutrition issues and the identification of training needs within the school community.

- Industry needs the opportunity for training on the standards in order to develop products that fit within these guidelines.
- Training for school or district level implementers could include ideas for activities that engage students, teachers, or administrators around the new policies, such as taste testing and collaborative snack selection.
- Entities responsible for developing or overseeing school fundraisers need training on creative approaches to fundraisers that do not involve selling unhealthy foods or beverages. Many participants highlighted the successes of non-food fundraisers in their school districts.

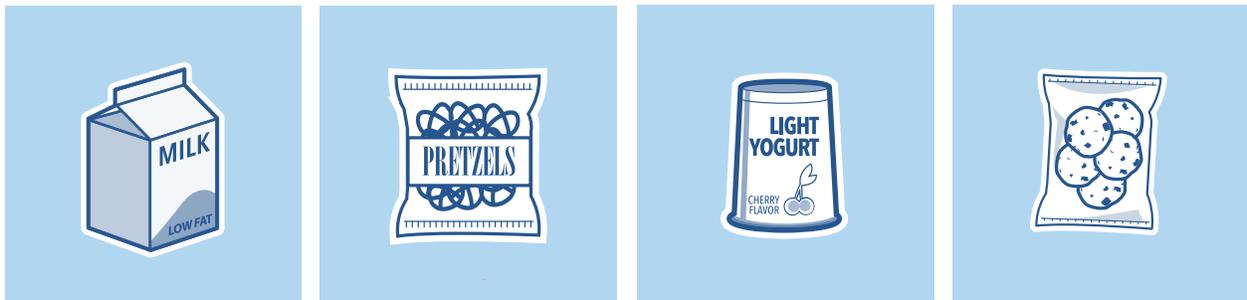
Meeting participants spoke to the usefulness of tools such as workshops, webinars, brochures, listservs, websites, blogs, and social media for providing training, technical assistance, and updates to policy guidance. Participants suggested that the success of training depended on using the appropriate blend of tools for the audience and the training goals. Additionally, participants indicated that training and technical assistance related to snack food and beverage policies can be provided in a variety of formats, depending on the audience and purpose, such as:

- Direct written guidance from decision-makers (e.g., state leadership, district and school administrators) to the implementing bodies explaining how to comply with the policies, expectations for compliance, changes needed, and benchmarks.
- Frequently Asked Questions and hotlines to address technical questions and help identify whether practices are meeting the requirements.
- Compliance reviews by the state to help identify areas in which technical assistance is needed.
- Workshops in a “train the trainer” format and subsequent peer-to-peer trainings involving students, teachers, and others not directly accountable for policy enforcement at the school level. (One state representative described a training format in which school food service directors were instructed to bring an additional person to the training who could help implement the policies and extend the reach of the training in their districts.)
- Roundtables or other systems to connect school food service directors and/or others responsible for implementing snack food and beverage policies at the school or district level to enable continued learning and collective problem solving.
- Modeling trainings in schools in support of snack food and beverage policies after the “bullying awareness” campaigns, which require administrators to demonstrate that everyone is meeting the training requirements.

Meeting participants discussed the value of materials that compare federal requirements with state requirements and highlight gaps for state- and district-level administrators. They also noted successful programs in which states identify and target trainings toward noncompliant school districts. One participant indicated that the state provides one-on-one coaching to help bring districts into compliance.

Participants also discussed access to healthy foods and the importance of the supply chain. They noted that supply chains vary among school venues, but broad access to and identification of inexpensive products that meet the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines, particularly in rural regions, can be a challenge. Participants indicated that distinctive product labeling that clearly identifies healthy snack foods would be valuable for

product procurement. Additionally, provision of compliant products, labeled as such in stores, could assist parents who want to follow similar guidelines for foods at home. Industry representatives shared the challenges of developing products that meet the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines, noting that reformulating products to meet new snack food and beverage policies can be expensive and slow. The representatives suggested that clear standards and expanded markets, including stores with “Smart Snacks” sections, could help the industry invest in changing the products available. Other participants supported the idea of broadening the market for healthy snacks and beverages, noting that increasing the accessibility of healthier foods outside schools would help students learn to recognize and choose healthier options. One recommendation to achieve this goal was for school districts to work with local stores and invite them to order foods and beverages from schools’ suppliers to make healthy food more widely available; in addition, bulk orders could help reduce the cost of products.



Summary of Discussion – October 17, 2014

Recap of findings and themes from Day 1

Participants reflected on the key themes of the previous day’s discussions. Donze Black asked meeting participants to consider the policy and practice changes needed to move everyone toward successful implementation of Smart Snacks and the types of changes needed to quickly and successfully transform schools, districts, and states. She highlighted transformational policy and practice suggestions from the previous day, such as:

- Creating state requirements for school districts to report on wellness plans and district requirements for schools to report on wellness plans.
- Requiring training modules for students, faculty, and volunteers on Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines (modeled after the anti-bullying trainings).
- Establishing a leadership team, key staff person, or “wellness coach” with a school period designated to plan and prepare activities related to implementing the snack food and beverage policies.
- Developing state programs that offer rewards and recognition for successful implementation.
- Institutionalizing student involvement in snack food and beverage decisions.
- Tying general fund payments to compliance with the new standards.
- Developing a health and wellness rating system that publicly reports the success of each school.
- Encouraging other public and private sector entities to adopt the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines to support a larger product pipeline.

As meeting participants considered these ideas, they suggested a few additional policies and practices that could help achieve the cultural shift, for example:

- Integrating food service and education (i.e., incorporating lessons about health and nutrition into curriculum).
- Institutionalizing parent and community engagement.
- Incorporating wellness into the strategic planning process that all school districts must go through for accreditation.
- Partnering with big retail stores—particularly those often utilized to stock competitive foods in schools—to support the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines with an in-store “Smart Snacks aisle.”
- Ensuring that food marketing in schools is aligned with the Smart Snacks food and beverage guidelines.
- Creating a wellness coordinator position at the school district level.
- Making change easy, so schools, districts, and states do not realize it is happening.
- Reporting on results or changed policies in multiple languages.
- Educating cafeteria managers and custodians about the policy and practice changes.



Parents could benefit from education on the reasons that changes are being made and how they can engage in the decision-making process through groups such as school wellness councils.”

Small group discussions

Communication and engagement

With an eye toward supporting changes in schools, districts, and states, meeting participants broke into small groups to discuss policies and practices related to communication and engagement. Overall, participants stressed the importance of promoting a “culture of wellness” across the entire school (rather than focusing efforts on snack foods and beverages alone), identifying and engaging nontraditional partners, developing positive messaging, and using a networked approach to engagement.

Drawing from their own experiences, participants identified a wide range of partners that contributed to successful Smart Snacks in Schools implementation. Generally, effective partners included students, parents, the PTA or other unaffiliated parent teacher organizations, teachers, family and consumer sciences classes, marketing classes, school nurses, food service employees, individuals with purchasing power at a school, operations staff, superintendents and other administrators, the private sector, the local business community, low-income communities, communities of color, and state and federal legislators. Participants cited additional successes in identifying and reaching out to partners that had not traditionally been engaged in school food or health activities, such as fathers, booster clubs and concession stands, local convenience stores, local hospitals, chefs, and preschool or university food service departments.

Many participants suggested using a district network approach, which would link leaders or “champions” at individual schools through a district-level network. Leadership may vary depending on the school and district. Participants shared examples of ways in which food service employees, health teachers, school nurses, principals,

and others have served as valuable leaders. For example, school-level leaders can engage stakeholders at the local level, such as parents or grandparents, students, food service employees, teachers, and administrators, in decision-making and outreach. At the district level, the network of leaders can engage with superintendents, school boards, and other district leadership. The network can report on activities, message successes, and results, and engage with community leaders and the private sector to promote change. Members of the network can also serve as a resource for one another and encourage peer learning.

A common theme in the discussions about communication and engagement strategies in schools and districts was the importance of conveying the purpose of the Smart Snacks in Schools guidelines and focusing on an overall culture of wellness. Participants also recommended:

- Developing positive messaging about the benefits of new school food and beverage policies.
- Using the most effective communications tools for each audience (possible tools include morning announcements, radio public service announcements, social media, or newsletters).
- Communicating in the languages most appropriate for each audience.
- Providing clear tools that help people make choices for following the guidelines.
- Working with community members, particularly individuals with marketing skills, to identify and develop communications strategies and tools.
- Using simple, consistent messaging.
- Engaging people with events such as food tastings.
- Communicating results and successes at the school and district levels.

Youth participants in the discussion sessions highlighted the success of peer-to-peer communications, and others noted the need to engage stakeholders meaningfully through dialogue. Participants also noted that communications tools, such as talking points, general communications and marketing strategies, educational and marketing materials, research, and a clearinghouse of resources, would be useful resources for those responsible for implementing and promoting new snack food and beverage policies.

At the state level, meeting participants suggested one-on-one trainings and coaching with noncompliant school districts, mentorship programs to help lagging schools improve their programs, engaging with other state agencies to tap into additional resources and skillsets, and connecting schools and districts to available resources.

Throughout the discussions, participants noted the vast number of resources available and indicated that a clearinghouse of those resources would be valuable. They highlighted the following as examples:

- Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) resources, including social media tips and financial FAQs;
- PTA Smart Snacks guide.
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation tools for successfully implementing the Smart Snacks in Schools interim final rule.
- Rudd Roots research and advocacy resources for parents.
- Fuel Up to Play 60, an in-school nutrition physical education program founded by the National Dairy Council and National Football League, in coordination with the USDA, to promote student wellness.
- USDA Smart Snacks Resources.

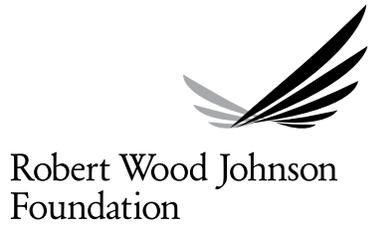
- Smarter Lunchrooms Movement, a program of the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Program to provide schools with evidence-based tools to improve students' eating behaviors.
- eOrganic and eXtension information on healthy food choices in schools.
- Shopping spreadsheets and resources for use within a district.
- Mealtalk listserv.

Concluding remarks

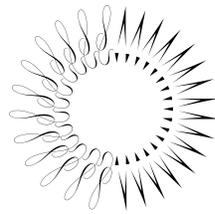
Following the small group discussion on communication and engagement, meeting participants gathered and discussed the key themes of the session. Donze Black noted that staff from the Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project would use insights from the meeting to identify the policies and practices that would help schools, districts, and states meet the Smart Snacks in Schools standards. In the meantime, she encouraged participants to share information about their programs and success stories with policymakers and the media, with a goal of demonstrating that change is possible.

Donze Black thanked participants for their thoughtful participation and contribution, and invited all to connect and communicate with the Kids' Safe and Healthful Foods Project staff and each other moving forward. She indicated that a summary of the meeting proceedings would be made available to all participants.





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