

**Massachusetts  
A La Carte  
Food & Beverage  
Standards to  
Promote a  
Healthier School  
Environment**

**Massachusetts**



**Action for Healthy Kids™**

## Action for Healthy Kids

**Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)** is a nationwide initiative dedicated to creating healthy school environments by advancing sound nutrition and physical activity practices in schools across the country. This effort represents a response to our nation's epidemic of overweight and undernourished children and adolescents. AFHK is an outgrowth of the 2002 Healthy Schools Summit, for which Mrs. Laura Bush served as honorary chair, and former Surgeon General David Satcher, MD, PhD was chair of the Summit and served as chair of AFHK in 2003. Bill Potts-Datema, MS from Harvard School of Public Health is chair of AFHK in 2004.

AFHK is composed of 51 state teams and a national coordinating and resource group. Guidance is provided by more than 40 national education, fitness, health and nutrition organizations and government agencies. AFHK operates under the umbrella of "Healthy Schools, Inc.," a non-profit, non-member organization established to further the goals of the Healthy Schools Summit.

**Getting Involved:** You can help bring about change in your state by adding your expertise to this vital effort. Visit the AFHK website to learn more about how to get involved, and to submit a State Team application. You also can sign up for initiative updates, access relevant articles and resources, and browse the AFHK database of "What's Working?" model programs.

**For more information, visit** <http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org>.

## Massachusetts



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# Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids (Mass AFHK)

## Mission and Goals

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**Mission:** Mass AFHK is dedicated to improving children’s nutrition and physical activity in schools by collaborating with diverse stakeholders in advocating, promoting and implementing state initiatives to enhance the school health environment, so children can learn and participate in positive lifestyle behaviors.

### **Goals:**

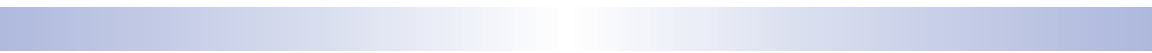
- Ensure that healthy snacks and foods are provided in vending machines, school stores and other venues within the school’s control.
- Adopt policies ensuring that all foods and beverages available on school campuses and at school events contribute toward eating patterns that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Provide students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 with behavior-focused nutrition education integrated into the curriculum that is interactive and teaches the skills they need to adopt healthy eating habits.
- Provide adequate co-curricular physical activity programs, including fully inclusive intramural programs and physical activity clubs.

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# Introduction to Massachusetts A La Carte Food & Beverage Standards to Promote a Healthier School Environment

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While the federal government has established nutrition standards for school breakfast and lunch, there are no effective standards for competitive foods. Competitive foods are those foods and beverages sold a la carte, in vending machines, in school stores or as part of school fundraisers that compete with the USDA's National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP).


Typically, competitive foods are relatively low in nutrient density and high in fat, added sugar and calories. Over the past few decades, school foodservice and other school organizations have increased the availability of these competitive foods. Unfortunately, there has also been an increase in childhood overweight and obesity; the prevalence has almost tripled in the past 3 decades. According to the 2001 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, approximately one in four 9th - 12th graders are either at risk or already overweight.

When children replace school meals with these less nutritious competitive foods, they are at risk for inadequate nutrient intake and excess calorie intake. When competitive foods are purchased in addition to the school meal, there is the risk of over-consumption that may contribute to overweight and obesity. Furthermore, competitive foods contribute to the misconception that participation in the school meals program is restricted to low-income students.

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Schools play an important role in promoting and supporting children in the development of healthy eating habits. It is time to provide solid guidelines to help ensure the health of our youth. The following guidelines are recommended when schools participate in a la carte/competitive food sales:

- Schools should provide students with healthy foods consistent with recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Schools should reinforce healthy messages by teaching healthy eating habits in the classroom.
- If schools participate in fundraising involving food, the fundraiser should support a healthy school environment and be free from solicitation of foods that do not meet the specifications of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- A healthy diet can include all foods, as long as snacks, desserts, side dishes, and entrées are appropriately portioned. Competitive foods should not take the place of a nutritionally balanced meal.
- The school environment should be a place where students can learn to make healthy choices. Intense marketing aimed at children that promotes consumption of foods of low nutritional quality (high calorie/high saturated and/or trans fat) should be eliminated throughout the school environment.
- Schools should promote health and nutrition messages consistent with those taught by parents, teachers, nurses and nutritionists.

Schools have the additional incentive to promote a healthy school environment because a healthy, well-nourished student will be ready to learn.

## **A La Carte Food & Beverage Standards to Promote a Healthier School Environment**

All schools are encouraged to serve reimbursable meals. The following recommendations apply to any a la carte items offered for sale anywhere on the school campus during the school day.

### **Explanation of Terms:**

School Day – The school day begins with the arrival of the first student at school and ends after the last scheduled instructional period.

Portion Size - Schools are encouraged to gradually reduce portion sizes offered in all areas from vending to a la carte to sporting events. It is crucial that food service personnel, children and their parents are educated on USDA standard portion sizes (see ready reference).

A La Carte Food Sales – The sale involving any food or beverage that students purchase in addition to or in place of the USDA reimbursable school breakfast or lunch. This would be from sources such as vending machines, a la carte lines or kiosks, school stores or snack bars located anywhere on the entire school campus, including in the cafeteria and at athletic events. Sometimes referred to as competitive foods - competing with USDA school meals.

Foods of High Nutritional Value - Foods of high nutritional value will naturally have a significant amount (greater than 10% of RDA) of at least one of the following: calcium, vitamin C, vitamin A, iron or fiber. These foods include complex carbohydrates and/or lean protein sources that are low in total fat and saturated fat. Water is a nutrient on its own that should be included as an essential part of a healthy diet.

These recommendations may be phased in over a two-year period. Changes should be phased in after a formal vacation or school break. An example of phasing in the recommendations is under the competitive beverages section.

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## Elementary School Guidelines (K-5) A La Carte or Competitive Foods

### Recommendation

- Eliminate, during the school day, foods that are sold outside of the school meals program that do not meet a la carte standards. The school day begins with the arrival of the first child at school and ends after the last scheduled instructional period.
- If the school offers a morning or afternoon break/snack, individual items sold should meet the standards for a la carte foods. The school snack or break should occur at least 1.5 hours before the lunch meal.

### Rationale

- The school environment should model a healthy lifestyle from the cafeteria to the classroom.
- Children should be given the opportunity to learn healthy eating practices during young ages without being influenced by unhealthy food options.

## Secondary School Guidelines Competitive Beverages

### Recommendation Soft Drinks and Sports Drinks

- Phase out the sale of soft drinks and sports drinks anywhere on the school campus from the beginning of the school day to the end of the last instructional period.
- Phase in healthier options like water or flavored water without added sugar, artificial sweeteners or caffeine.
- Phase in juice (as in page 6), low-fat milk and flavored milk.
- Work with vending suppliers to transition to healthier vending choices.
- Strive to offer beverage portions in sizes no larger than 12 oz. (except water and milk).
- Transition to smaller portion sizes, as products become available.

### Rationale

- Many soft and sports drinks are high in calories. Some are fortified with unnecessary and potentially harmful additives that children do not need at any time. They should not be allowed on the school campus at any time.
- Sports drinks are only recommended for times of vigorous physical activity that last 60-90 minutes (Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook, Third Edition).
- Diet drinks, while not a source of calories, should be excluded, as they may displace consumption of healthier beverages.
- Potential health problems associated with high intake of sweetened drinks are 1) overweight or obesity attributable to additional calories in the diet; 2) displacement of milk consumption, resulting in calcium deficiency with an attendant risk of osteoporosis and fractures; and 3) dental caries and potential enamel erosion (American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on Soft Drinks in Schools, January 2004).

## Secondary School Guidelines Grains

### Recommendation

Total Fat: No more than 30% of total calories from fat or 7 grams maximum per serving.

Saturated Fat and Trans Fat: No more than 10% of total calories from saturated and/or trans fat or 2 grams maximum per serving.

Total Carbohydrate: No more than 30 grams of total carbohydrate per serving (includes natural and added sugar).

Portion Size - strive for a small portion of no more than:

Chips, crackers, popcorn = 1.25 oz.

Cookies, cereal bars = 2 oz.

Bakery items (e.g., pastries, muffins) = 3 oz.

### Rationale

- The Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage consumption of a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains:
- Whole grains will have at least 1 gram of fiber per serving.
- A moderate fiber food will have 2-4 grams of fiber per serving (AAP)
- A high fiber food will have >5 grams of fiber per serving (AAP)

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Trans fatty acids are found in food products in the form of hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils. They tend to raise total blood cholesterol and LDL cholesterol similar to saturated fats; therefore, these should be limited in the diet.

Note: Trans fatty acids may be listed as **Trans Fat** on food labels.

## Secondary School Guidelines

### Fruits and Vegetables

#### Recommendation

- Make "quality" fruits and vegetables available at any place a la carte foods are sold. For example, dried fruit in vending, fresh fruit like pineapple slices or melon cubes and fresh vegetables like baby carrots in a la carte lines and school stores.
- Quality = fruits and vegetables that are fresh, frozen, dried or canned without added fat, sugar, or excessive sodium. Serve quality fruits and vegetables instead of fruit leather and French fries.

Total Fat: No more than 30% of total calories from fat or 7 grams maximum per serving. Phase out fryers over the next two years.

Saturated Fat and Trans Fat: No more than 10% of total calories from saturated and/or trans fat or 2 grams maximum per serving.

Total Carbohydrate: No more than 30 grams of total carbohydrate per serving (includes natural and added sugar).

Portion Size: Strive to meet USDA portions: 1/2 cup minimum.

#### Rationale

- The Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage consumption of a variety of fruits and vegetables daily - current recommendations are 5-9 servings per day.
- As suggested by the Dietary Guidelines and the National Cancer Institute's 5 A Day Program, fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber and other substances that may protect against many chronic diseases.

## Secondary School Guidelines

### Juice

#### Recommendations

- 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice will be the only juice or juice-type beverage that is allowed on the school campus (see competitive beverage guidelines).

Portion Size: Strive to serve no more than 12 oz.

#### Rationale

- Eliminates the sale of fruit juice drinks, which provide little nutritional value and usually replace more healthful options.

## Secondary School Guidelines

### Dairy: Milk, Yogurt and Cheese

#### Recommendation

- Serve low-fat dairy products (skim and 1% milk, low-fat yogurt, and low-fat cheeses) and phase out whole milk over several months.
- An 8-12 oz. serving of milk is the ultimate goal for serving sizes, ideally in a variety of low-fat flavors in plastic, resealable containers.

#### Maximum Portion Size:

Yogurt – 8 oz.                      Milk – 16 oz.  
Ice cream – 3 oz.                  Cheese – 2 oz.

Total Fat: No more than 30% of total calories from fat or 7 grams maximum per serving.

Saturated Fat and Trans Fat: No more than 10% of total calories from saturated and/or trans fat or 2 grams maximum per serving.

Total Carbohydrate: No more than 32 grams total carbohydrate per 8 oz. serving for skim and 1% flavored milks (4g/oz of total carbohydrate includes added sugar and natural milk sugar, lactose).

#### Rationale

- Low calcium intake is one of the most significant nutrient deficiencies identified in Healthy People 2010. Milk and milk products are high in nutritional value and provide calcium, protein and vitamin D for bone growth and development.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Policy Statement on Calcium Requirements of Infants, Children and Adolescents recognizes children's low calcium intake. The AAP urges pediatricians to recommend the daily consumption of milk, cheese and yogurt and other calcium-rich foods for children to help build bone mass in all growing children and adolescents.

## Secondary School Guidelines Meat, Beans and Nuts

### Recommendation

Total Fat: No more than 30% of total calories from fat or 7 grams maximum per serving, with the exception of nuts, seeds and non-hydrogenated nut butters served with the portion guidelines below.

Saturated Fat and Trans Fat: No more than 10% of total calories from saturated and/or trans fat or 2 grams maximum per serving.

Portion Size: Entrée items or other protein sources – no larger than the maximum requirements for age/grade groups under the USDA meal pattern.

- Trail mix, nuts, seeds and jerky – no larger than 1.25 oz.
- Non-hydrogenated nut butters – no more than 4 Tbsp.

### Rationale

- Meats, beans and nuts offer protein and other valuable nutrients such as zinc, iron and B vitamins.
- Protein supplies amino acids that build, repair and maintain body tissues.
- Non-hydrogenated nut butters like all-natural peanut butter or almond butter will have no trans fats and minimal saturated fat and will provide healthy unsaturated fats.

## **Reference List for A La Carte Food & Beverage Standards to Promote a Healthier School Environment**

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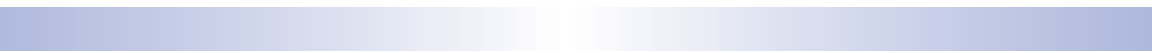
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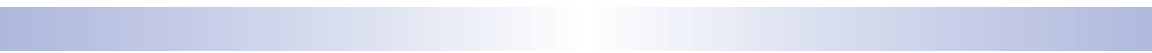


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