

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action

A Best Practices Guide

1st Edition



Center for Nutrition in Schools, University of California, Davis; Department of Nutrition, University of California, Davis; University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources University of California CalFresh Nutrition Education Program

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CENTER for NUTRITION in SCHOOLS
CONNECTING FOOD, HEALTH, AND LEARNING

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Message from the UC Davis Center for Nutrition in Schools & UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program



On behalf of the Center for Nutrition in Schools in the UC Davis Department of Nutrition, I am pleased to introduce the first edition of ***The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action: A Best Practices Guide***. This tool is a valuable resource to assist local educational agencies in implementing the evidence-based, multicomponent Shaping Healthy Choices Program. The best practices and strategies included in this tool are based on the first-hand experiences of researchers and community members involved with the implementation of the program over the course of several years. I am confident that you will find this tool useful when developing your Shaping Healthy Choices Program implementation plan. I look forward to hearing the exciting results and success stories!

Sincerely,

Sheri Zidenberg-Cherr, PhD

Nutrition Science Specialist, UC Davis Department of Nutrition

In partnership with the Center for Nutrition in Schools in the UC Davis Department of Nutrition, the UC CalFresh Nutrition Education program has made the Shaping Healthy Choices Program one of the signature school-based programs. Not only does the Shaping Healthy Choices Program include high-quality, evidenced-based nutrition curriculum, but it also goes beyond the classroom to integrate a coordinated approach linking the classrooms, with gardens, the lunchroom, and school wellness policies. It provides a framework to address policy, system, and environmental strategies (PSEs) engaging students, parents, and school leadership. ***The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action: A Best Practices Guide*** is a helpful tool in introducing and implementing the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. I am pleased to provide this new resource to future Shaping Healthy Choices Program schools and implementing agencies.



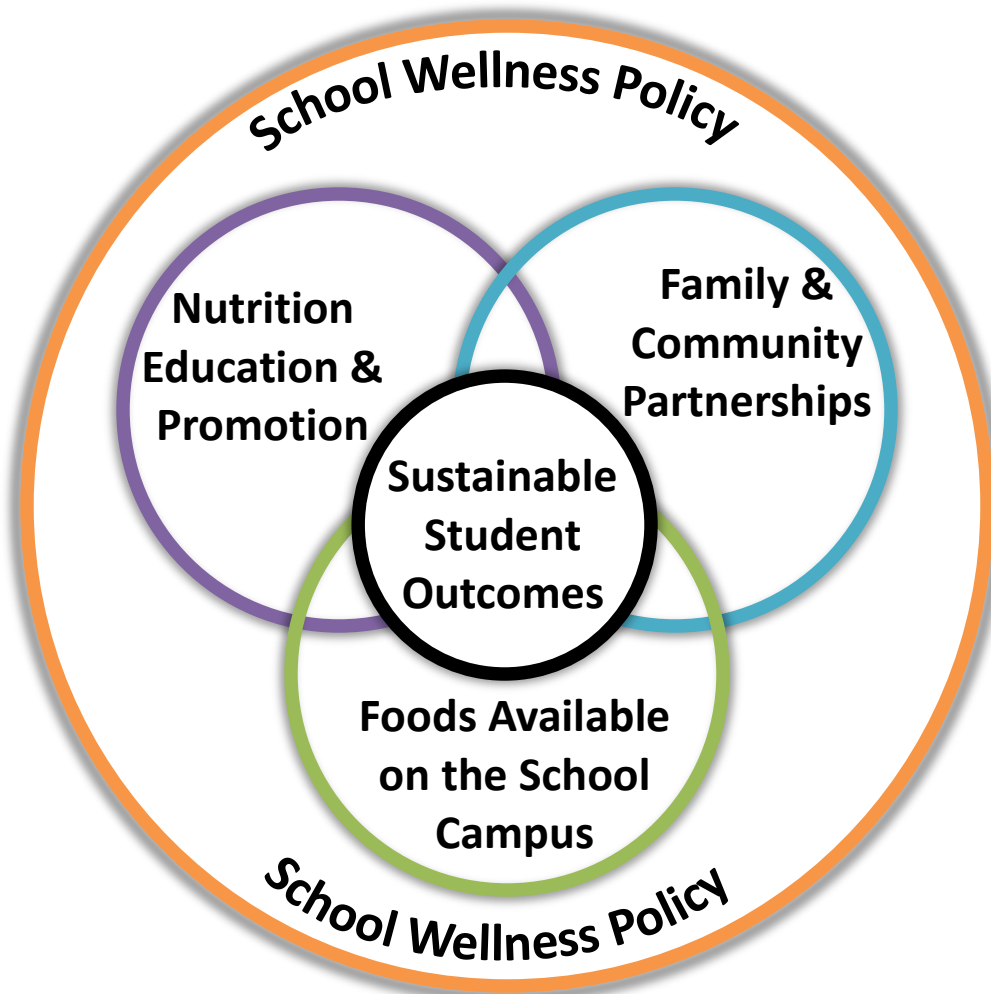
Sincerely,

David Ginsburg, MPH

Director, UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program

Center for Nutrition in Schools, University of California, Davis; Department of Nutrition, University of California, Davis; University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources University of California CalFresh Nutrition Education Program

Introduction



Shaping Healthy Choices Program Spotlight

Shaping Healthy Choices Program Background at a Glance

Facilitator Tips: How to Get the Most from this Best Practices Guide

Shaping Healthy Choices

Program Spotlight

Over the past several years, the Shaping Healthy Choices Program research team has worked closely with a variety of implementing agencies. Listed below is a collection of program highlights expressed in the words of program implementers.

“Something unique about the [Shaping Healthy Choices Program] is that it has allowed [UC CalFresh nutrition educators] to truly become members of the school community....at the end of the school year, several pages in the school yearbook were dedicated to [our UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Team].”

~ **Nutrition Educator from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties**

“The teaching style of [Discovering Healthy Choices] is very effective – students became used to the open-ended questions as the curriculum progressed, and they become more engaged over time. When they discover the knowledge, it is more impactful than just telling them. This method is a better way to gauge

understanding in the students, and I find I am using this approach in other areas”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Butte Cluster**

“Students really enjoyed [the garden], and took ownership”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Placer and Nevada Counties**

“After the garden was established, [all of the teachers, students, parents, and garden volunteers] painted rocks and used them to decorate the garden. It was a fun and creative process to do after the accomplishing work of pulling the garden together”

~ **Nutrition Program Manager from Butte Cluster**

“Students and teachers [Choices] recipes! Some home and cook them

~ **Nutrition Educator**

“Kids were engaged garden in the cooking using kale and any their countries”



loved the [Cooking Up Healthy students would take the recipes with their families. ”

from Butte Cluster

when using produce from the demonstrations. They really liked vegetable that connected with



~ *Nutrition Educator from Butte Cluster*

Shaping Healthy Choices Program Spotlight



“Building on existing partnerships was important. The school was already getting seedlings from a certain farm, so we were able to strengthen the relationship with them [through the Shaping Healthy Choices Program].”

~ *Youth, Families, and Communities Advisor from Placer County*

“We talked with the food service director about going in and setting up a time that worked for her. We met with her and she explained what she wanted. We validated all of the work she had already put into the lunch program and tried to implement some of her new ideas.”

~ *Community Education Supervisor from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara*

“For our community event, we hosted a farmers market. This was done in partnership with the food bank three separate times. They donated hundreds of pounds of produce – each student was able to take home 10lbs! Also, students from the Shaping Healthy Choices Program were involved in doing the food demos from Shaping Healthy booth.”

~ *Nutrition Educator from*

“The health fair was very successful – major successes were the community donations of gifts and gift cards, but having BelAir come to the fair and dedicate their time. They wore their BelAir shirts, which helped show students that the larger community cares about their health.”

~ *Nutrition Educator from Placer and Nevada Counties*



Butte Cluster

successful – major successes were the community donations of gifts and gift cards, but having BelAir come to the fair and dedicate their time. They wore their BelAir shirts, which helped show students that the larger community



“A large majority of the sixth-grade students that received the *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum were excited to devote their lunch period to start a wellness committee. They assessed their schools using the SHC² assessment tool to help generate ideas. For example, they helped create lunchroom signage. This was an effective way to get the younger students excited about school wellness since they really look up to the sixth-graders. Next steps include connecting them with the district-level wellness policy committee.

~ ***Program Supervisor from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties***

Shaping Healthy Choices Program

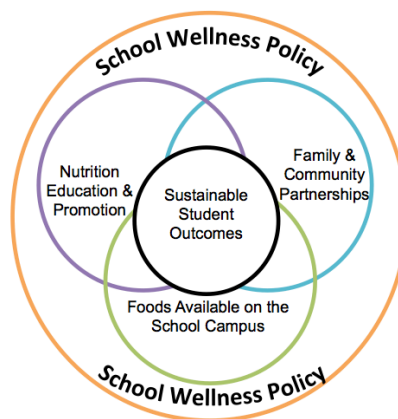
Background at a Glance

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program is designed to improve children's health through a multi-component, school-based approach.

Program Components

This program integrates activities within four overlapping components (listed below), all working together to sustain positive health outcomes.

1. Nutrition Education & Promotion
2. Family & Community Partnerships
3. Foods Available on the School Campus
4. School Wellness Policy



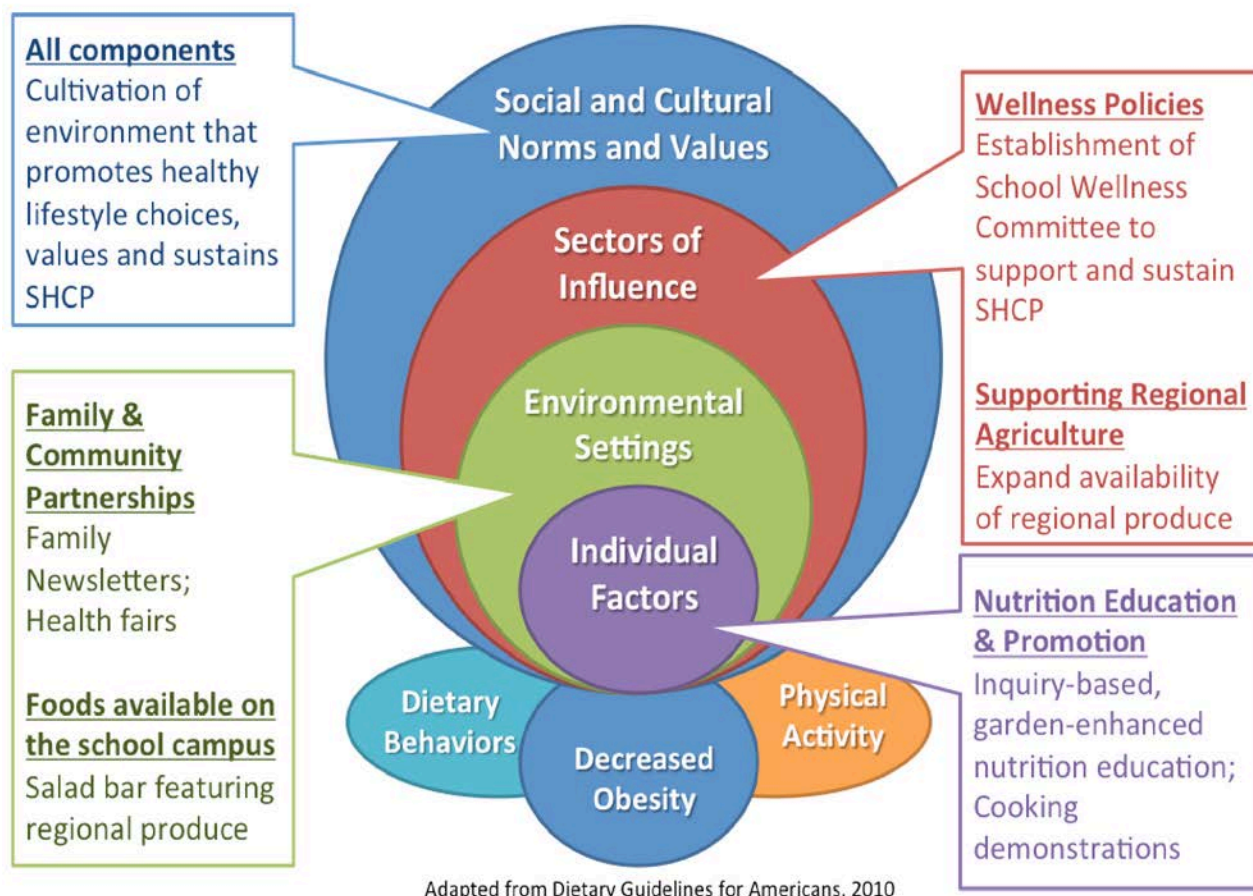
Program Activities

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities (listed below) were designed to reinforce one another.

1. Nutrition education (***Discovering Healthy Choices***)
2. Cooking demonstrations (***Cooking Up Healthy Choices***)
3. Family newsletters (***Team Up for Families***)
4. Instructional school garden
5. Salad bar
6. Regionally procured produce
7. School-site wellness committees
8. Community health fair

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The Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities were designed to target each level of the Social Ecological Model shown below (adapted from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010).



Student individual factors like knowledge and skills are addressed through classroom education using a learner-centered, inquiry-based curriculum that features garden-enhanced activities, and cooking demonstrations.

Changes to environmental settings are accomplished through family newsletters that feature positive nutrition-related parenting practices, connections to the classroom lessons, and recipes from the cooking demonstrations. This program also recommends the use of community health fairs to bring together community partners like local farmers, 4-H, and other local organizations.

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program also includes activities aimed at changing the school food environment, such as the installation of salad bars in the lunchroom.

Sectors of influence was addressed by increasing regional produce available in the salad bar to improve community relationships with regional farmers, and by establishing a school wellness committee at each intervention site to support and sustain the Shaping Healthy Choices Program.

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Finally, all of these intervention activities integrate to influence social and cultural norms by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and values.

Program Evaluation

An extensive evaluation of the impact of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program on a number of student outcomes was conducted in several schools. Data analyses showed an increase in student nutrition knowledge and physical activity, improvement in student dietary behaviors, and a decrease in Body Mass Index Percentile.¹

Potential Benefits for Students

- ❖ Increases nutrition knowledge and use of critical thinking skills
- ❖ Improves dietary patterns and physical activity
- ❖ Improves overall health

Potential Benefits for Schools

- ❖ Helps fulfill federally mandated district wellness policies
- ❖ Adheres to Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards
- ❖ Assists with the fulfillment of HealthierUS School Challenge requirements

References

1. Scherr RE, Linnell JD, Smith MH, et al. The Shaping Healthy Choices Program: Design and Implementation Methodologies for a Multicomponent, School-Based Nutrition Education Intervention. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*. 2014;46(6):e13-e21.

Facilitator Tips: How to Get the Most from this Best Practices Guide

Purpose

The program development team worked closely with principals, teachers, food and nutrition services, and other school community partners to identify barriers and facilitators experienced during program implementation. ***The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action: A Best Practices Guide*** provides evidence-based best practices and strategies developed through the first-hand experiences of researchers and community members involved with the implementation of the program over the course of several years.

Audience

This best practices guide was designed to reach a wide variety of audiences interested in implementing the Shaping Healthy Choices Program at a school or other organization.

Potential implementing stakeholders and agencies include:

- ❖ Teachers
- ❖ School administrators
- ❖ Nurses
- ❖ Cooperative Extension Programs
- ❖ Public Health Departments and additional Local Implementing Agencies
- ❖ Members of a community organization
 - Girl or Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, 4-H, or other youth group

Regardless of level of experience working in communities, this best practices guide will provide useful information for successful program implementation.

Best Practices Layout

Activity Title. The activity title introduces the reader to the Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity that will be addressed in the section.

Background Information. This introductory section, separated from the rest of the chapter by a shaded box, provides a brief research-based background addressing why the activity was included as a part of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program.

Introduction. This section includes more specific information about the Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity.

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Program Connections. A hallmark of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program is the comprehensive nature of the program. The “Program Connections” section of each chapter explains how each activity overlaps with the other program activities. While the program may be initiated with any activity, all program activities were designed to overlap.

Materials and Preparation. Depending on the activity, a section with recommended materials needed to prepare for each activity may be provided.

Implementing the Activity. This section also varies depending on the activity. It may focus on tips regarding the facilitation of the curriculum, the building of the garden, or the action steps for wellness committee meetings.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Best practices tips from researchers and community members will be provided in each section of this guide. These tips are simply evidenced-based recommendations to consider when implementing each program activity.

Additional Resources. This section includes any useful website links or appendices such as funding request templates, sample open-ended questions, and other useful resources.

References. This section provides a list of references cited in the background section of each chapter.

Bringing it all Together



Key Findings to Consider for Future Implementation of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program

Bringing it all Together: Key Findings to Consider for Future Implementation

The implementation of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program in a number of school sites through the years have resulted in positive outcomes, and these results varied based on several factors. The following are the key findings to consider for future implementation of this program.

Emphasize fidelity of the curriculum

Variation in student outcomes between Shaping Healthy Choices Program schools is tied to the level of fidelity of implementation of *Discovering Healthy Choices* (i.e., the extent to which nutrition educators followed curriculum procedures). Fidelity to curriculum procedures is a critical component to the success of this program. Training and professional development should emphasize the importance of adherence to curriculum procedures.

Focus on a multi-component strategy

Variation in student outcomes between counties is consistent with the level of program implementation. For example, when cooking demonstrations were not implemented as part of the nutrition education, vegetable identification did not improve. This indicates that cooking demonstrations are an important component of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program to cultivate student recognition of vegetables. Additionally, it is important that the implementation focuses not only on direct nutrition education, but also places an emphasis on enhancing foods available on the school campus, establishing family and community partnerships, and empowering school stakeholders to apply the school district's wellness policies through the formation of school-site wellness committees. Training and ongoing support should underscore the importance that when implemented together, all program activities form an infrastructure that promotes healthy diet and lifestyle choices while fostering a healthy school environment.

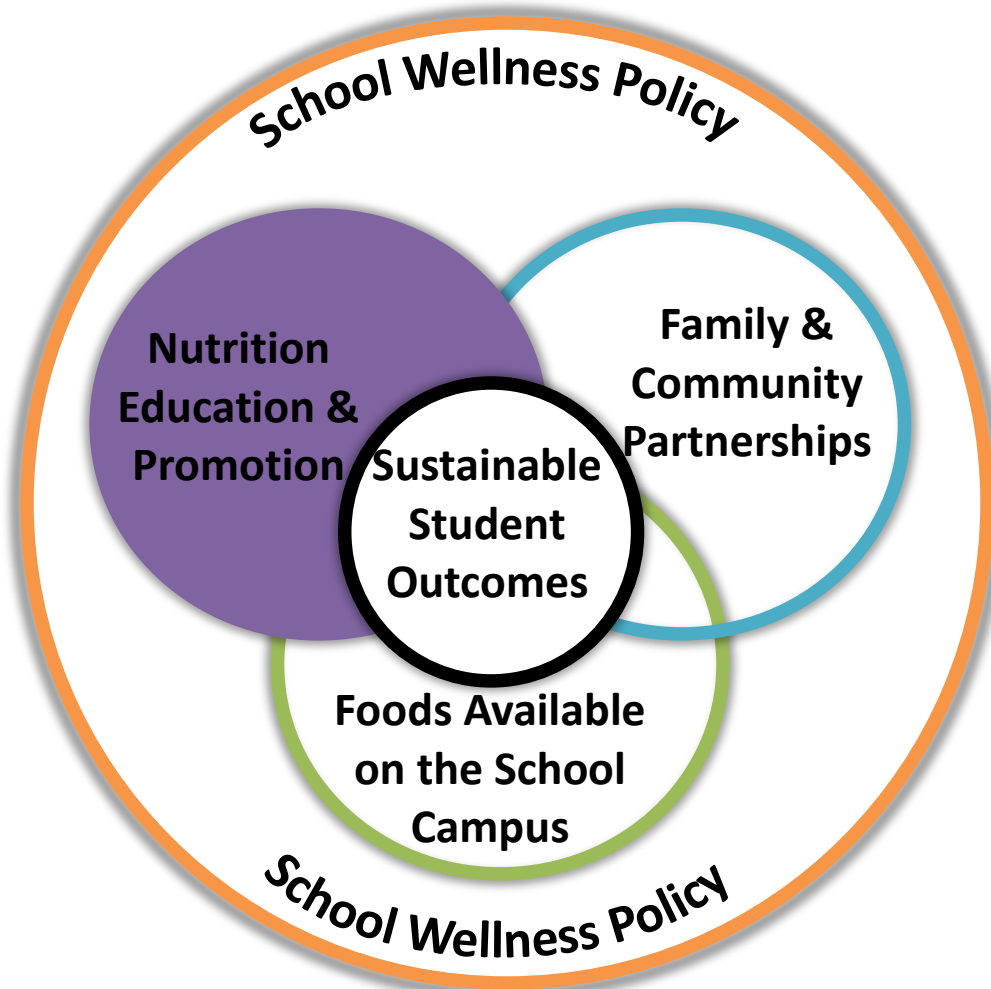
Build strong relationships

Greater improvements in student outcomes are linked to the existence of strong relationships between program staff and multiple school stakeholders including administrators, food and nutrition services personnel, teachers, and other members of the school community. Establishing these partnerships is critical so that participating school community members can support and participate in the implementation of program activities. As a result, they are more likely to engage in improving the social norms and cultural values to support a healthy school environment.



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Nutrition Education & Promotion



Implementing *Discovering Healthy Choices* Curriculum
Building an Instructional Garden
Implementing *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* Curriculum

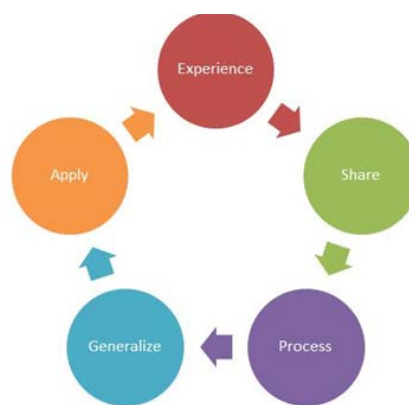
Implementing *Discovering Healthy Choices* Curriculum

Why *Discovering Healthy Choices*? Students who participate in garden-enhanced nutrition education have demonstrated an improvement in knowledge about nutrition, increased preferences for vegetables, and increased willingness to taste and eat vegetables.¹⁻³ *Discovering Healthy Choices* uses inquiry-based education and experiential learning approaches.⁴ This curriculum utilizes these two learning strategies to facilitate understanding of nutrition concepts and development of problem-solving skills so youth can make evidence-based decisions about the foods they eat.

Introduction

Discovering Healthy Choices allows students to explore a comprehensive set of nutrition concepts, including roles of nutrients, MyPlate recommendations, physical activity, reading food labels, understanding how food companies market their products, and making healthy snacks. Concepts for this curriculum were identified from Nutrition to Grow On; Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010; and USDA MyPlate.

All activities are structured around a five-step experiential learning cycle.⁵ In the Experience phase, students carry out the procedures of an activity. In the Share, Process, and Generalize phases, students participate in discussion about their observations and experiences, make inferences about them, and generalize these findings to real-world settings. In the Application phase, students use what they have learned and practice it in authentic settings. This is accomplished in *Discovering Healthy Choices* through garden-enhanced activities, and take-home activities that they can complete with their families.



5-Step Experiential Learning Cycle
Pfeiffer and Jones, 1985

The curriculum is organized into eight sequential modules that begin with foundational skills and build to more complex skills.

☒ Download a copy of the curriculum

Discovering Healthy Choices is available as a free download through the UC Davis Center for Nutrition in Schools (<http://cns.ucdavis.edu>).

Program Connections

☑ **Coordinate with *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* curriculum and *Team Up for Families* Newsletters**

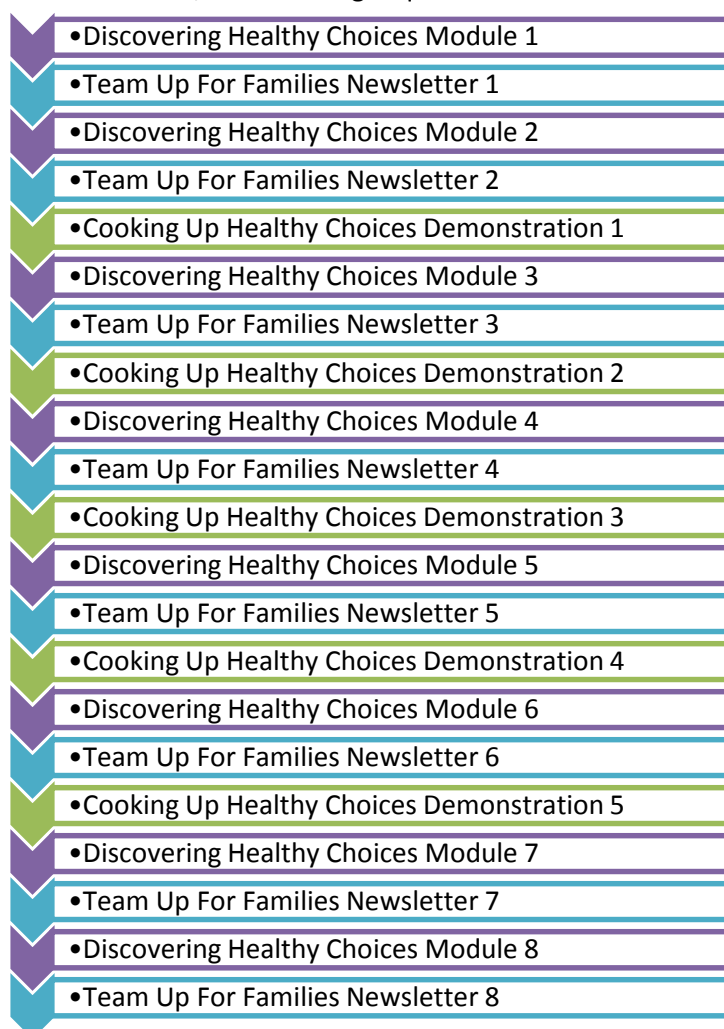
Discovering Healthy Choices was designed to be implemented in conjunction with the cooking demonstrations from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*, and the family newsletters (*Team Up for Families*).

The vegetables that are recommended for growing in the instructional garden as part of the lessons are integrated in *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* and recipes in the *Team Up for Families* newsletters. The cooking demonstrations reinforce concepts students learn in *Discovering Healthy Choices*.

Finally, family newsletters include information for parents about the ideas their children are learning as part of this program, contain interactive quizzes that reinforce concepts, and contain recipes from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! In order to maximize the connections built into the curricula and newsletters, the following sequence is recommended:



☑ **Coordinate with those planning, designing, and building the garden**

Every module has a garden-enhanced activity and there are specific requirements for the garden. Communicate with those planning, designing, and building the garden to ensure the instructional garden will accommodate these activities.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! If gardening inexperience is a concern, consider reaching out to the community for assistance. Good places to start are parent volunteers with experience gardening, master gardeners in the area, as well as interested teachers. These individuals can provide their expertise and time to ensure the garden is a success.

Activities in *Discovering Healthy Choices* encourage the students to choose and grow their own vegetables. A list of recommended vegetables and herbs are listed in *Discovering Healthy Choices* Appendix 1C.



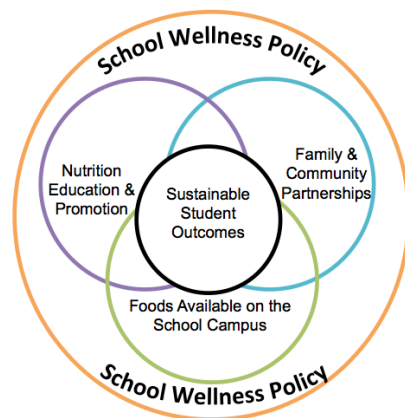
Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Consider allowing each student group to plant and harvest their own plot within the garden. This will allow the development of ownership of their own agricultural plot and provide an opportunity to more deeply engage in growing their own vegetables.

☑ **Coordinate with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities**

While the *Discovering Healthy Choices* nutrition curriculum is a cornerstone of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program, it is important to make sure that the other activities of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program are incorporated alongside the curriculum. Remember, the more connections you make between the program activities, the stronger the infrastructure of the program as a whole.

Ideas for this include:

- **Connecting with the lunchroom:** Consider displaying student art projects to decorate and enhance the atmosphere of the school lunchroom. If possible, consider asking lunchroom staff if they can use vegetables grown in the garden on the salad bar. Even just a few heads of lettuce, grown by the students mixed in with the other salad greens can generate a lot of student interest and pride.
- **Connecting with community health fairs:** Recruit student volunteers to help set up a booth at a health fair that applies the knowledge they have been learning through the curriculum.
- **Connecting with the nutrition promotion efforts:** Post a “Veggie Forecast” in the school office or in the *Team Up for Families* newsletter to keep families informed about the progress of the produce being grown in the garden.
- **Connecting with the school wellness committee:** Consider having your school-site wellness committee present success stories of the curriculum to the district-level wellness policy committee.



Facilitating *Discovering Healthy Choices*

✓ **Read the Facilitator Tips in the *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum**

This section in the *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum is intended to provide the facilitator with information needed to get the most out of activities in *Discovering Healthy Choices*. It also provides a guide for how to use the curriculum.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! If *Discovering Healthy Choices* will be facilitated by someone other than the classroom educator, it may be important to communicate with teachers about how to best facilitate the activities in their classrooms. The inquiry-based education strategy and group work may differ from how the classroom educator expects his/her classroom to function. The group discussions can appear chaotic so it is recommended that teachers are informed and are aware that classroom noise levels may be higher than normal. Ask if there are any students that need extra help, how they would like to address classroom management, and how they might like to participate in the activities themselves.

✓ **Connect with other subject areas**

Discovering Healthy Choices supports Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English Language-Arts, Next Generation Science Standards, and California Nutrition Education Competencies. Please see the curriculum for a guide to which standards are supported in *Discovering Healthy Choices*.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! *Discovering Healthy Choices* can be paired with other concepts in other subject areas to make connections within a variety of subject areas. Here are a few examples:

- After discussing agriculture and climates around the world (Activity 1.1), extend the discussion of agriculture and climate within your state. In California, a fourth-grade content standard is to learn about geography, climate, and agricultural history and there is an opportunity to further reinforce these concepts.
- Before planting (Activity 2.3), grow seeds in cups to explore germination.
- Before discussing how plants attract pollinators (Activity 7.3), explore what pollinators are and how they are necessary for growing our food.
- Extend the interaction with the garden to include an activity to investigate the soil and decomposers.

✓ **If curriculum is being implemented by educators other than the classroom teacher, communicate regularly with the teacher**

It is important to keep the line of communicate open with teachers. Collaborating with classroom teachers can strengthen the delivery of the curriculum. Some examples of how you may consider involving the classroom teachers in this process include:

- **Provide the curriculum to the teachers.** This will help them better understand the process and be prepared for participation in the activities.
- **Keep them up to date on assigned homework and home participation requirements.** Ask the teacher if he/she is willing to assign and collect the homework. This is a great way to ensure communication lines remain open.

Time Management

- ☑ **Limit the opening questions to 10 minutes!** The opening questions phase of the activities is intended for the educator to gauge prior knowledge of the students and for the students to get oriented to and thinking about the subject matter. It is normal to want to spend more time on this section, but this is not where the learning happens.

- ☑ **Ensure enough time so that students can engage in all phases of each activity**
For students to develop deep understanding of the concepts, it is critical that the students participate in all phases of each activity including Experiencing and Sharing, Processing, and Generalizing. Students learn by making observations and by discussing them with one another. The Sharing, Processing, and Generalizing phase is essential for students to make sense of what they observed and consider it within real-world contexts.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! It is common for an instructor to be unsure if the students understand the concepts and want to offer direct answers as a result. It is important to give the students a chance to come to conclusions on their own. Although students may not understand the concepts at first, by experiencing learning through the inquiry-based method they will ultimately learn and have a deeper understanding of what is being taught as a result.

- ☑ **Include travel time for garden visits.** If you are enhancing the implementation of the *Discovering Healthy Choices* with the use of an instructional garden, it is important to plan for sufficient time to get the students out into the garden. Often the garden is across campus and it takes the class a long time to move from one activity to the next so keep that in mind when planning out your time.

Materials and Preparation

- ☑ **Enlist help for purchase and preparation of materials**
There are materials that will be needed for activities, like measuring cups, tape measures, and food items. Enlist help from parent volunteers or other community members to acquire supplies and prepare foods. Many lower income schools may qualify to receive low/no cost produce from their local food bank or the school's food and nutrition services may be able to order some items for recipe preparation.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Many local businesses may be willing to donate supplies and/or time to assist in the development of the garden and preparation of foods for cooking demonstrations.

☒ **Purchase seeds & seedlings**

Planting seedlings is an important part of *Discovering Healthy Choices* activities. In activity 1.2, students are asked to select fruits and vegetables they want to plant. Record the plants they choose in this activity in order to prepare for planting in 2.3. Allowing students to choose the plants they want to grow fosters engagement with their garden.

The plants on this list were chosen because they are vegetables that are grown in the countries explored in activity 1.1. Additionally, they are used in the recipes from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*, which are included in the *Team Up for Families* newsletters so that parents can cook them at home.

Seeds and seedlings can be purchased from a variety of places: grocery stores, nurseries, seed companies, and hardware stores. If funding for seedlings is a challenge, consider asking local stores for donations. Some seed companies have donation programs for schools.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! When preparing to plant seeds and seedlings in Activity 2.3, separate the seeds and put them into individual sealable bags for easy distribution to student groups. This will help students avoid accidentally pouring all the seeds from one seed packet into one hole, and ensure that all students get a few seeds to plant.

☒ **Purchase garden tools for student use**

Students will need tools to work in their garden throughout the *Discovering Healthy Choices* activities. In Activity 2.3, students participate in preparation and planting to learn about physical activity. The following basic garden supplies are recommended:

- Shovels
- Hoes
- Trowels
- Clip boards
- Clippers/pruners
- Labels to mark vegetables
- Zip-lock bags or other container for students to bring home harvested produce.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! It may be helpful to have a few pairs of gardening gloves on-hand if there are students who prefer not to work in the dirt. However, youth really like to feel the soil and may not want to use the gloves.

✓ **Consider storage**

It is helpful to have storage that is near the instructional garden. Consider purchasing or building outdoor storage for garden materials to provide easy access to tools and materials for students working in the garden.

✓ **Take advantage of planting mistakes as learning opportunities**

Students will not plant seeds or seedlings perfectly and you may or may not be familiar with how to plant and care for all the plants you will be growing. That's OK! The experience provides further opportunities for learning. For example, if students accidentally plant all of their seeds in one hole, encourage the students to predict what will happen to the growth of the seeds, make observations as they grow, and discover what happens when plants grow under this condition compared to other plants that were planted one per hole or as directed on the package. You can also go back later with the students and "thin out" or remove some of the excess sprouts to make room for the healthiest plants. These mistakes provide great opportunities for rich discussion and discovery.

✓ **Harvest the vegetables**

Giving students the opportunity to harvest produce and take it home to their families is important. This not only provides a reward to students for their work in caring for the garden, it also provides an opportunity for them to share with their families and further reinforce concepts at home. If there are not enough vegetables at harvest available for the cooking demonstration, it is acceptable to supplement the harvested amount with store-bought produce.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! During harvesting, engage in discussion about how to prepare or cook the produce. Students are excited to share these ideas with their families. If students want ideas, the *Team Up for Families* newsletters provide recipes from the cooking demonstrations that highlight produce that may be grown in the garden.

Additional Resources

1. Discovering Healthy Choices Curriculum available for download:
<http://cns.ucdavis.edu/programs/shcp/discovering-healthy-choices.html>
2. **Appendix 1: Sample Open-ended Questions for Facilitators.** This resource includes some sample phrases to assist facilitators when constructing open-ended questions during the activity and discussion phases of the curriculum. This document contains two half sheets.
3. **Appendix 2: Plus Delta Reflection Form.** This form may be used to help facilitate reflection after lesson implementation.
4. **Center for Nutrition in Schools Website:** For more information on nutrition education curriculum for all grade levels, visit the Center for Nutrition in Schools Website:
<http://cns.ucdavis.edu/resources/curriculum-classroom.html>

References

1. Morris JL, Zidenberg-Cherr S. Garden-enhanced nutrition curriculum improves fourth-grade school children's knowledge of nutrition and preferences for some vegetables. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2002;102(1):91-93.
2. McAleese JD, Rankin LL. Garden-based nutrition education affects fruit and vegetable consumption in sixth-grade adolescents. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2007;107(4):662-665.
3. Robinson-O'Brien R, Story M, Heim S. Impact of garden-based youth nutrition intervention programs: a review. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2009;109(2):273-280.
4. Colburn A. An Inquiry Primer. *Science Scope.* Mar 2000;23(6):42-44.
5. Pfeiffer JW, Jones, J. E. *Reference guide to handbooks and annuals (revised)*. San Diego: University Associates Publishers; 1985.

Appendix 1

Sample Open-Ended Questions for Facilitators

Observing

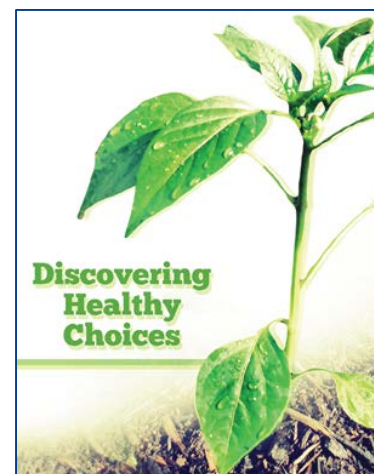
- Describe what you know about...
- Explain what you observed when...
- Tell me what happened when...
- What did you notice about...
- Tell me more about that...
- What do you mean by...

Making Sense of what happened

- Based on what you observed, what do you think about...
- How did you decide to go about...
- Using what you know, explain...
- Explain your thoughts about...
- What do you mean by...
- Would you tell me more about...
- What do you already know about...

Reasoning

- Imagine...
- Suppose...
- Predict...
- If..., then...
- How might...
- Can you create...
- What are some of the possible consequences...
- What if...
- What do you think would happen if...
- Is there another way to...
- How might you do that differently...



Sample Open-Ended Questions for Facilitators

Observing

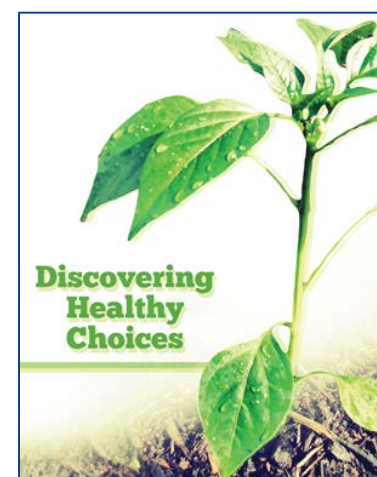
- Describe what you know about...
- Explain what you observed when...
- Tell me what happened when...
- What did you notice about...
- Tell me more about that...
- What do you mean by...

Making Sense of what happened

- Based on what you observed, what do you think about...
- How did you decide to go about...
- Using what you know, explain...
- Explain your thoughts about...
- What do you mean by...
- Would you tell me more about...
- What do you already know about...

Reasoning

- Imagine...
- Suppose...
- Predict...
- If..., then...
- How might...
- Can you create...
- What are some of the possible consequences...
- What if...
- What do you think would happen if...
- Is there another way to...
- How might you do that differently...



Appendix 2: Plus/Delta Reflections

<p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Things that worked well</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Δ</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Things to be improved</p>

Things to consider

- Questioning: Open-ended or closed?
- Learner-centeredness: Who is doing the bulk of the work?
- Constructivism: Are the students figuring it out?
- Materials: Are they appropriate?
- Room set-up
- Time management
- Other

Building an Instructional Garden

Why instructional school gardens? Garden-enhanced nutrition education has been shown to improve children's knowledge of nutrition, as well as the core academic subject areas of math, language arts, science, and history.^{1,2} In addition to enhancing a student's learning environment, research shows that children are more likely to taste and eat vegetables that they have grown themselves.²⁻⁴

Introduction

The instructional garden serves as an authentic setting in which students can learn and apply nutrition-related concepts and problem solving skills. *Discovering Healthy Choices* integrates a garden-enhanced activity into every module.

Program Connections

Coordinate with *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum

The garden-enhanced activities within *Discovering Healthy Choices* are intended to serve as an authentic setting for students to learn about nutrition while also giving them opportunities to be physically active and to grow and harvest their own vegetables. It is important for there to be coordination between those facilitating *Discovering Healthy Choices* and those building or maintaining the instructional garden. This is because activities require specific interactions between students and the garden and these should be considered during the planning, designing, building, and maintenance of the garden.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Be sure to communicate with those facilitating the *Discovering Healthy Choices* activities to strengthen the garden and the classroom connection and ensure adequate time is allotted for the incorporation of the garden as a learning environment.

Activities in *Discovering Healthy Choices* encourage the students to choose and grow their own vegetables. A list of recommended vegetables and herbs are listed in *Discovering Healthy Choices* Appendix 1C.

Start gardening and implementing your school garden program. Let the community know about it every step of the way, from planning to building to planting and harvesting. Get the word out by sharing pictures and videos of your experiences with colleagues, friends and family to inspire other community gardens. Over time, revisit the plan and make any needed changes based on lessons learned or feedback from partners and neighbors.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Consider allowing each student group to plant and harvest their own plot within the garden. This will allow the development of ownership of their own agricultural plot, and provide an opportunity to more deeply engage in growing their own vegetables.

✓ **Connect with *Cooking Up Healthy Choices***

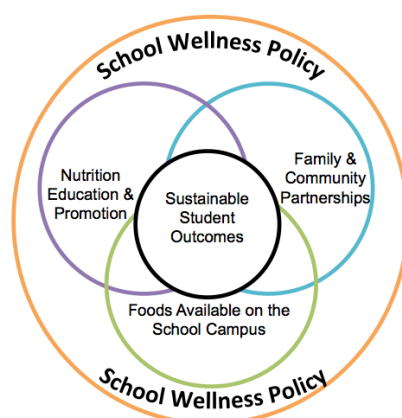
The vegetables that are being grown in the school garden may be harvested and used in *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* cooking demonstrations. Even just a few ingredients from the garden can get students excited about eating their vegetables.

✓ **Coordinate with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities**

While an instructional school garden is a crucial Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity, it is important to make sure that the other activities of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program are tied back to the garden. Remember, the more connections you make between the program activities, the stronger the infrastructure of the program as a whole.

Ideas for this include:

- **Connecting with the lunchroom:** Consider coordinating with the food and nutrition services director to incorporate foods being grown in the garden into the lunchroom.
- **Connecting with community health fairs:** Recruit student volunteers to help set up a booth at the health fair that shows off what they have been doing in their garden.
- **Connecting with the nutrition promotion efforts:** Coordinate with administrators to display photos of garden activities in the office or in the school newsletter.
- **Connecting with the school wellness committee:** Getting the school wellness committee involved with the garden is a great way to ensure the garden is maintained through the years.
- It is important to make sure that other aspects of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program are integrated while the garden is being utilized. In addition to using the produce that is grown for *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*, consider creating a poster with photos of students harvesting vegetables and working in the garden, or lead tours of the garden during the health fair.
- Consider hosting *Garden Open House Days* or *Lunchtime in the Garden* where students and teachers can spend some free time learning about their garden while watering, weeding, reading a story, or relaxing.



Materials and Preparation

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☑ **Plan and design your garden**

An instructional garden can take many forms, from a traditional in-ground or raised-bed garden to container gardens using wheelbarrows or buckets. Depending upon the budget and available space, there are many different ways to give students experience growing and harvesting their own vegetables.

The following resources may help with the planning and design of an instructional garden:

- California School Garden Network. Gardens for Learning, a guide for creating and sustaining your school garden. Available for free download <http://www.csgn.org/steps>
- Center for Eco Literacy. Getting Started, A Guide for Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms. Available for free download <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/downloads/getting-started>
- Sunset Western Garden Book. (2007). 8th Edition.

☑ **Obtain materials**

Once the garden has been designed, the next step is to compile a list of materials needed in order to build the garden.

California Fertilizer Foundation awards grants of \$1,200 to California K-12 school garden programs.

- Awards include educational materials. Applications reviewed in January and June. <http://www.calfertilizer.org/grant.htm>

National Gardening Association. Offers a variety of grant programs with awards of up to \$500 <http://www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp>

Orchard Supply Hardware (OSH) School Garden Project. Grants of up to \$1,000 in materials, plus support from an OSH Garden Coordinator. Preference for schools that have never had a garden before. Watch site for grant cycles. <http://www.osh.com>

Western Growers Foundation (WGA). From WGA Homepage, click on School Garden Programs. WGA offers grants of \$1,000 and \$1,500 plus garden start-up supplies. Applications due November 15 and June 1 of each year. <http://www.wga.com>

☑ **Enlist help**

Form a diverse network of partnerships to help leverage resources and gain access to materials, tools, funding, volunteers, and technical assistance. For example, offering teachers the curriculum not only keeps them informed but also allows them to participate in the activities with their class. Brainstorm about who can be a resource for your garden program, how you will involve them initially, and most importantly, how you will keep them involved over the long term. Ideas for potential partners are the following:

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Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Organizing a community garden build can increase helping hands to lessen the load of building and maintaining the school garden. See the chapter appendix for a sample “garden build” flyer.

- **Custodial Engineer.** This person may be your greatest ally and asset in the school community to support ongoing site maintenance and can provide enthusiasm the garden. Keep the line of communication open with this stakeholder during the planning phases of the garden build.
- **School Community Partners.** Students, principals, teachers, parents, the parent teacher organization/association (PTA/PTO), and family members can be great resources during the planning, building, and/or maintenance of the garden. Typically there will be a few green thumbs in this group.
- **Master Gardeners.** The USDA’s national educational network includes Cooperative Extension offices in communities across the country where Extension Master Gardeners help with gardening challenges and give advice on what grows best in each area. Master Gardeners can be a valuable resource for teams consisting mostly of first time gardeners, or for teams looking for more guidance on how to address challenges such as how to incorporate irrigation in the garden.

Planning for Planting in the Garden

☒ Choosing and planting seeds & seedlings

Choosing and planting seedlings (young plants) is a key component of the experiential learning process employed in *Discovering Healthy Choices* activities. In Activity 1.2, students are asked to select fruits, vegetables, and habitat plants they want to plant. The habitat plants are herbs and flowers that attract beneficial insects and are important for carrying out Activity 7.3. Allowing students to choose the plants they want to grow fosters engagement with their garden.

The plants on this list were chosen because they are vegetables that are grown in the countries explored in Activity 1.1. Additionally, they are used in the recipes from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*, which are included in the *Team Up for Families* newsletters so that parents can cook them at home.

Seeds and seedlings can be purchased from a variety of places: grocery stores, nurseries, seed companies, and hardware stores. If funding for seedlings is a challenge, consider asking local stores for donations. Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners may be able to point you in the direction of some seed companies that have donation programs for schools, as well as local universities that can help assist in getting materials and building the garden.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! When preparing to plant seeds and seedlings in Activity 2.3, separate the seeds and put them into individual sealable bags for easy distribution to student groups. This will help students avoid accidentally pouring all the

seeds from one seed packet into one hole, and ensure that all students get a few seeds to plant.

☑ **Purchase garden tools for student use**

Students will need tools to work in their garden throughout the *Discovering Healthy Choices* activities. In activity 2.3, students participate in preparation and planting to learn about physical activity. The following basic garden supplies are recommended:

- Shovels
- Hoes
- Trowels
- Clip boards
- Clippers/pruners
- Labels to mark vegetables
- Zip-lock bags or other container for students to bring home harvested produce.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! It may be helpful to have a few pairs of gardening gloves on-hand if there are students who prefer not to get their hands dirty. However, youth may also want to feel the soil and gloves may not be necessary.

Establish a Plan for Maintenance and Sustainability

A common barrier for a school community's willingness to build an instructional garden is concern that the garden will not be maintained over time. This can be avoided if a plan for sustainability is in place. Consider the following questions when establishing this plan:

1. **Who will take lead/oversee the garden?** Ideally two individuals are responsible for coordinating the garden backed by an active committee that includes classroom teachers and food and nutrition services staff. If possible, provide a stipend for volunteer garden coordinators.
2. **Do you have a long-term plan for funding?** Funding can come from a variety of sources. Funds may be available through the school or PTA/PTO budget. There are also national and local grants available. Local organizations are often willing to donate garden materials for schools.
3. **Who will maintain the garden?** Garden maintenance involves tasks such as weeding, watering, and planting new seeds/seedlings. Enlisting the help of other school community members is a great way to ensure that the school garden is maintained for years to come.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! There are many community members that can contribute to the maintenance of the garden. Consider the following stakeholders as potential garden leaders:

- Wellness committee members
- PTA/PTOs

- Enthusiastic teacher(s)
- Nutrition educator(s) implementing the *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum
- Student leaders that show an interest in the garden can also assist with the watering and care of the garden.

Additional Resources

1. **Extension Master Gardeners:** Find a state extension mater gardener program near you. <http://articles.extension.org/pages/9925/state-and-provincial-master-gardener-programs:-extension-and-affiliated-program-listings>
2. **USDA Gardening Resources:** This website houses a series of informative webinars and workshop opportunities. http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=GARDEN_RT3&parentnav=PEOPLES_GARDEN&navtype=RT
3. **Center for Nutrition in Schools Website:** For more gardening resources visit the Center for Nutrition in Schools Website: <http://cns.ucdavis.edu/resources/garden.html>

References

1. Graham H, Zidenberg-Cherr S. California teachers perceive school gardens as an effective nutritional tool to promote healthful eating habits. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2005;105(11):1797-1800.
2. Morris JL, Zidenberg-Cherr S. Garden-enhanced nutrition curriculum improves fourth-grade school children's knowledge of nutrition and preferences for some vegetables. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2002;102(1):91-93.
3. McAleese JD, Rankin LL. Garden-based nutrition education affects fruit and vegetable consumption in sixth-grade adolescents. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2007;107(4):662-665.
4. Robinson-O'Brien R, Story M, Heim S. Impact of garden-based youth nutrition intervention programs: a review. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2009;109(2):273-280.

Facilitating *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* Curriculum

Why Cooking Demonstrations? Research shows that school-based nutrition interventions that feature cooking demonstrations enhance students' self-efficacy, improve preferences for and consumption of the vegetables featured in demonstrations, and increase involvement in cooking at home.^{1,2}

Introduction

Cooking Up Healthy Choices is a learner-centered, cooking demonstration-based nutrition curriculum that was developed for the Nutrition Education & Promotion component of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. The objective of this curriculum is to facilitate understanding of nutrition concepts and exploration of cooking so youth can make connections to food and how food is prepared, as well as make evidence-based decisions about the foods they eat.

☒ Download a copy of the curriculum

Cooking Up Healthy Choices is available as a free download through the UC Davis Center for Nutrition in Schools (<http://cns.ucdavis.edu>).

Program Connections

☒ Coordinate with *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum and *Team Up for Families* newsletters.

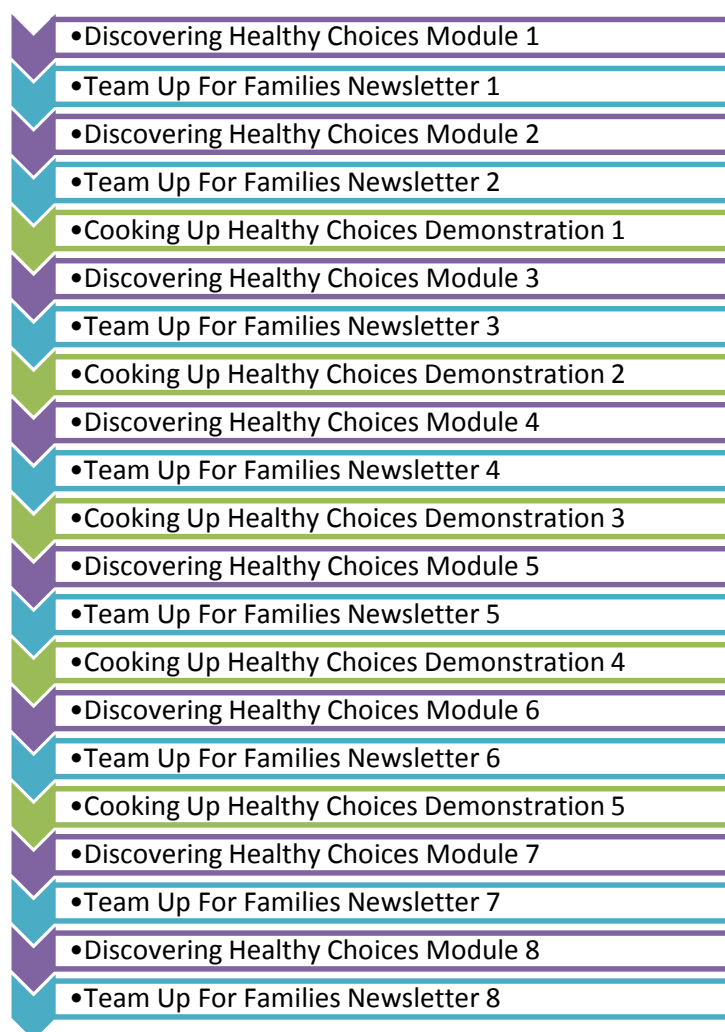
Cooking Up Healthy Choices was designed to be implemented in conjunction with *Discovering Healthy Choices* and *Team Up for Families* newsletters.

The vegetables that are used in *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* are recommended to be grown as part of the garden-enhanced activities.

The cooking demonstrations reinforce concepts students learn in *Discovering Healthy Choices*. Finally, family newsletters include information for parents about the ideas their children are learning as part of this program, contain interactive quizzes that reinforce concepts, and contain recipes from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! In order to maximize the connections built into the curricula and newsletters, the following sequence is recommended:



☒ **Coordinate with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities**

While the cooking demonstrations are a critical Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity, it is important to make sure that the other activities of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program are tied back to the cooking demonstrations. Remember, the more connections you make between the program activities, the stronger the infrastructure of the program as a whole.

Ideas for this include:

- **Connecting with the lunchroom:** Consider featuring recipes from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* as menu items.

- **Connecting with the instructional garden:** Using produce grown in the garden in the recipes is a great way to establish a connection between program activities.
- **Connecting with community health fairs:** Featuring cooking demonstrations from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* during a community event can be a fun way to engage guests.
- **Connecting with the nutrition promotion efforts:** Coordinate with administrators to display photos in the office of children enjoying the recipes.

Facilitating Discovering Healthy Choices

☒ **Read the Facilitators Tips in *Cooking Up Healthy Choices***

This section in the *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* curriculum is intended to provide the facilitator with information needed to get the most out of activities in *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*. It also provides a guide for how to use the curriculum.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! If *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* will be facilitated by someone other than the classroom educator, it may be important to communicate with teachers about how to best facilitate the activities in their classrooms. This can be done by providing the curriculum to teachers or educators and being available when questions arise. Offering these resources will help them better understand the process and be prepared for participation in the activities.

Materials and Preparation

☒ **Purchase equipment**

The following is a list of the basic equipment recommended to conduct cooking demonstrations from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*.

- Portable burner--Check with schools about restrictions with open flames in the classroom (you may need to use an induction burner and pan).
- Skillet
- Cooking pot
- Measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Cutting board
- Chef's knife
- Can opener
- Large spoon
- Spatula
- Food processor or blender
- Kitchen rags
- Trash bags
- Small disposable plates and bowls
- Disposable forks and spoons
- Napkins



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! A rolling cart is a great addition to your supplies list. It is a convenient way to store and transport equipment and ingredients while also functioning as additional counter space to hold prepped ingredients and tools if space in the classroom is limited.

☒ **Enlist help for purchase and preparation of materials**

If time and/or funding are limited, enlist help from parent volunteers or other community members to purchase or donate supplies and prepare ingredients ahead of time.

☒ **Harvest vegetables from the garden**

Giving students the opportunity to harvest produce for use in the cooking demonstrations is a great way for them to make connections with the food they are growing in the garden. If the yield from the garden is too low for the lesson, you can also supplement with store-bought vegetables.

☒ **Whether novice or expert, get cooking!**

These recipes are designed for anyone of any skill level to prepare. Many different people may conduct the cooking demonstrations for youth, including school educators, community members, parents, Cooperative Extension educators (master food preservers), nurses, chefs, and farmers, amongst many others.

The emphasis is for students to explore cooking new foods and using different cooking techniques using all five senses, and not on the facilitator conducting a perfect demonstration.

If something goes wrong, turn those unplanned events into learning opportunities. For example, if your burner stops working, borrow a microwave from the teacher's lounge to steam the vegetables instead of sauté to demonstrate problem-solving skills in the kitchen.

☒ **Encourage students to try everything at least once**

Positively encourage youth to try new foods they are exposed to in the recipes. Cooking in front of the children and involving them in the experience by letting them touch, smell, and observe what you are doing is a great way to get them interested and excited to try new foods. Many youth are often surprised to find they enjoy a new vegetable they thought they would not like.

☒ **Be seasonal**

Recipes were designed to represent a wide variety of seasonal produce. Conduct cooking demonstrations in timing with the produce that is seasonally available. For example, the Fresh Fall Salad may be conducted in the fall, and the Veg-Out Chilean Stew may be conducted in the winter, and the Stir Fry contains vegetables available in the spring.

☒ **Connect with other subjects**

Consider incorporating concepts from other subject areas including food science and food safety. You can engage students with something as simple as asking them to be sure to observe you following safe kitchen habits like proper knife handling and washing your hands.

☑ **Project the cooking demonstration**

Many classrooms now have digital projectors. By using the digital projector, all of the students will be able to see how the food is being prepared.

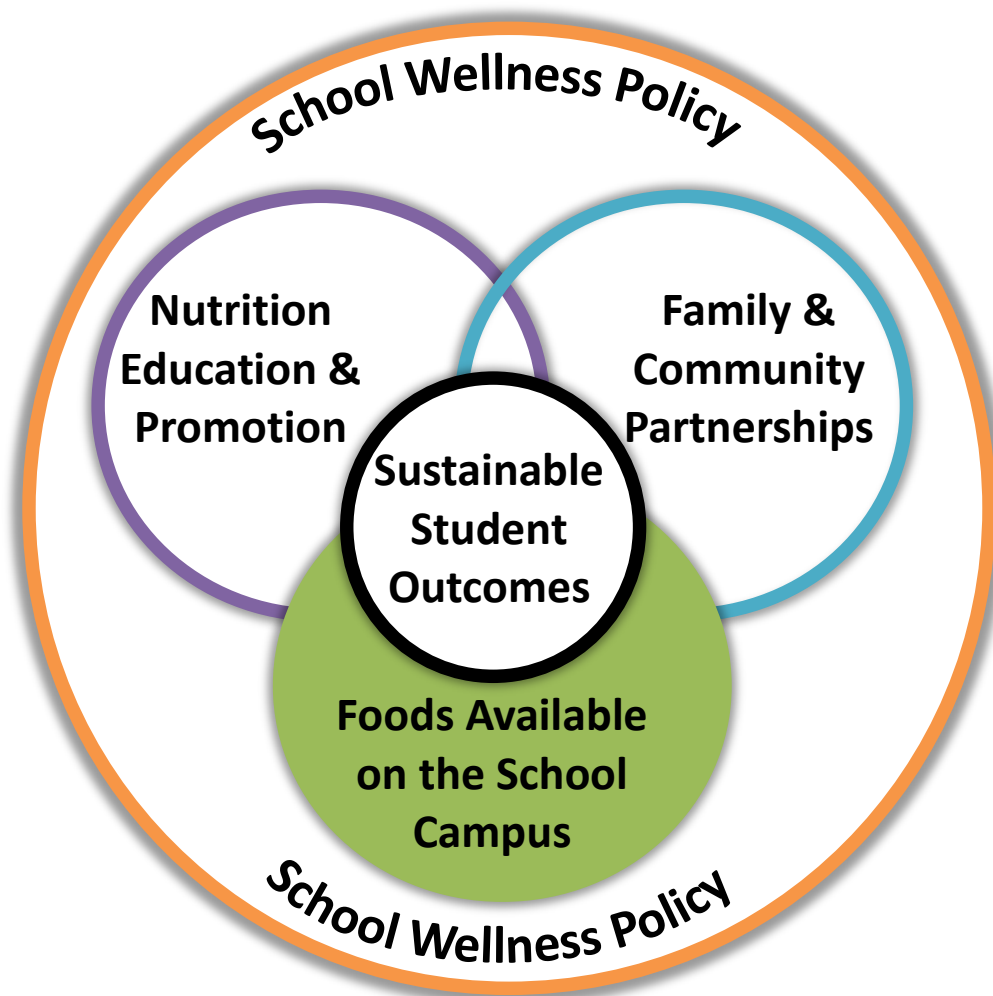
Additional Resources

1. **Center for Nutrition in Schools Website:** For more information on curriculum for all grade levels, visit the Center for Nutrition in Schools Website:
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References

1. Chen Q, Goto K, Wolff C, Bianco-Simeral S, Gruneisen K, Gray K. Cooking up diversity. Impact of a multicomponent, multicultural, experiential intervention on food and cooking behaviors among elementary-school students from low-income ethnically diverse families. *Appetite*. 2014;80:114-122.
2. Cunningham-Sabo L, Lohse B. Cooking with Kids positively affects fourth graders' vegetable preferences and attitudes and self-efficacy for food and cooking. *Child Obes*. 2013;9(6):549-55

Foods Available on the School Campus



Enhancing the School Lunchroom with Salad Bars, Regionally Procured Foods, and Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Principles

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Enhancing the Lunchroom with Salad Bars, Regional Foods, and Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Principles

Why install a salad bar and offer regional foods? Researchers have found that the presence of salad bars in the lunchroom is associated with children's increased fruit and vegetable intake.^{1,2} From food systems and economic perspectives, procuring local and regional produce for school meals provides an opportunity to connect small and mid-size farmers to the large, stable markets created by the National School Lunch Program.³ Not only can farmers benefit from increased sales; children benefit from greater access to fresh, locally produced foods in school meals. As children are increasingly exposed to local, seasonal, and sometimes new foods, they gain an appreciation of the farm to table cycle and their place in the food system.

Why use Smarter Lunchrooms Movement principles? The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement is a popular program that helps children make better food choices by changing the environment within the school to encourage healthier choices. Many food and nutrition services directors may already be incorporating Smarter Lunchrooms Movement principles into their lunch program, so it may be helpful to leverage these efforts to help enhance the school lunchroom, an integral part of the Shaping Healthy Choice Program.

Introduction

Salad Bars and Regional Foods. The installation of the salad bar and increase in regional produce supports the Foods Available on the School Campus component of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. While regionally procured foods are often featured in a salad bar, they can also be incorporated into entrees or grain salads and vegetable sides. Furthermore, this is an opportunity to match foods grown in an instructional garden to those offered in the lunchroom from regional sources.

Smarter Lunchrooms Movement. There are two main principles behind the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement. The first is that when we force someone into doing something (like taking a certain vegetable), they will often react by resisting it. The second is that when a student feels like they have freely made a choice, they are more likely to eat that food. Instead of forcing students to take certain foods, Smarter Lunchrooms Movement techniques nudge them to make choices by making healthier options more appealing or more convenient. The use of Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Principles can help to further enhance lunchroom salad bars, regional foods, and other changes in the lunchroom.

For more information on the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement visit <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/>

Connect with Your Food and Nutrition Services Director

In order to enhance the school lunchroom with sustainable changes, it is important to establish a good rapport with your school's food and nutrition services personnel, including the director and any site-

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specific food and nutrition services employees. Work with the food and nutrition services personnel to assess strengths and areas of improvement in their lunchroom and meal program. It is important to recognize and celebrate the strengths of the meal program and lunchroom before making plans to advance areas of improvement. This is a great opportunity to ask the food and nutrition services director what *you* can do to *help them* achieve their goals.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Food and nutrition services professionals are experienced at ordering, preparing, and distributing food to thousands of children with limited resources and within the constraints of their facility and staff, and they have the children's best interests in mind. Whatever suggestions are made, be respectful of their expertise and experience.

Implement or Enhance a Lunchroom Salad Bar

It is important to work very closely with your food and nutrition services director in order to bring a salad bar to your Shaping Healthy Choices Program site. Oftentimes funding and time are the major limitations to implementing a salad bar. Work with the food and nutrition services director to assess how you might be able to assist with achieving this goal.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! If time permits, offer to assist your food and nutrition services director in writing a grant to help bring a salad bar to your Shaping Healthy Choices Program site.

If your site already offers a salad bar, brainstorm ways you can enhance the salad bar through additions such as signage or the inclusion of regional produce. See the sections below for best practices tips for implementing regional foods into the lunchroom.

There is a wealth of resources available online to help assist with this goal. A few great websites to review are:

<http://www.saladbars2schools.org/>

<http://www.thelunchbox.org/programs/salad-bars/>

http://www.californiahealthykids.org/fm_saladbars

Conduct Assessments of Regional Procurement

The first step in procuring regional foods is to find out what the food and nutrition services director is already doing and has the capacity to do.

A food and nutrition services director may be interested in taking time to assess their current expenditures if they plan to make changes. Then, their efforts to procure more local, seasonal food can be measured and used to advertise their progress. It is important to start establishing contact early to allow the food and nutrition services team time for assessment, as well as ensure adequate time for relationship building with local farmers and sources in the community.

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☑ **Explore Current Purchasing Practices**

Each school district does procurement differently. It is important to note the number and types of distributors (including USDA Foods and Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh), regional farms, aggregators, and local produce distributors. Find out how the school district records purchases for each type of vendor and how this information can be accessed (invoices from vendors, district or school purchasing summary sheets, other).

☑ **Establish Definition of “Regional”**

Each district will define regional differently. Request a clear definition from the food and nutrition services director in order to measure progress. For example, many districts in California define local produce as food that is grown (not just aggregated) 250-300 miles from the district. Some have a tiered plan in which they try to purchase as much as possible from 50-100 miles, then 250-300 miles, then statewide.

☑ **Estimate Percent Regional Produce Purchased**

In order to obtain an accurate picture of how much local produce the district purchases in a year, identify and record all regional purchases and total purchases (usually by month). To have comparability between schools or districts that are different sizes (and therefore buy more or less depending on number of meals served), it is common to create a percentage for reporting progress, i.e., “X% of total fresh, canned, and frozen produce is purchased from local farmers.”

Procure Local Produce

☑ **Find Regional Producers**

There are many ways to find local growers, depending on resources and networks available. Many food and nutrition services directors talk to their colleagues to learn about what others are doing. Nonprofit organizations that work with small and mid-sized growers may be another source of information. Some agricultural commissioners are aware of and supportive of farm to school efforts and may be able to help identify potential farmer vendors or those that aggregate for several farmers. In some regions, online services can provide streamlined ordering and delivery from regional farms.

If a farmer cooperative or aggregator (with multiple farmers in a region) is willing to work with food and nutrition services, this may provide a more secure and varied source of fresh produce from local farms. In some areas, businesses or entities called “food hubs” that aggregate, process and/or distribute food may be another option for sourcing from local farms.

☑ **Use a forward contract**

From the farmers’ perspective, setting up a contract with the school district for a specified amount/type of produce at a specific price, for a given time period may be preferable to weekly or monthly calls and sales.

For more information, view the USDA webinar on Using a Forward Contract:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf-y6S3v6UI&list=UUNnBe12n6q4QT39Fz2y7BPg>

☒ **Determine what distributors currently offer**

Determine whether distributors offer a regional line of produce and if this can be identified on invoices. Many distributors can and will do this if asked. Be sure they know the school's definition of regional produce and are willing to identify where each produce item was grown, not simply processed or packed.

Whether or not a distributor can identify which produce is regional can be built into bid language and vendor requirements. More and more school districts are using bid specifications and requirements to ensure that distributors provide a certain percentage of regional produce. Creating the new bid language involves adding criteria for how the bid is awarded. In addition to the USDA webinar, School Food FOCUS has helpful resources for creating bids that can help increase local procurement. Individual school districts may also share their bid language (Saint Paul Public Schools, Oakland Unified School District, San Diego School District).

☒ **Purchasing regional produce through USDA foods and DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program**

In some school districts, it may be possible to access local foods through USDA Foods and DoD Fresh. The USDA webinars on these topics discuss each of the programs and how some states have leveraged them to increase local procurement. Be aware of USDA's and DoD Fresh's definition of local and how this will fit with the district's definition.

Whether or not USDA Foods or DoD Fresh are local, they do offer significant price savings for school districts that can be utilized. Regional produce can be combined with produce from USDA to create delicious and cost-effective entrees or grain salads. Using these resources helps districts stretch their budgets so they have more to spend on regional foods.

Use Geographic Preference

The USDA has prepared fact sheets about what "Geographic Preference" is and how to use it in creating bids and purchasing regional foods.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/geographic-preference-option>

☒ **Use school gardens or farms to purchase regional**

Schools are increasingly interested in gardens so students can grow the produce and eat it in the school lunchroom. Alaska and Nevada both have food safety resources for their school gardens. In Davis, California, schools have "Garden to Cafeteria" guidelines for districts. Resources from these guidelines include those for food safety, rules and regulations, and examples from other districts. The Department of Environmental Health in Alameda County, California, has a "Culinary Garden Agreement" and "School Garden Guidelines" that may also be useful.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Seeds and seedlings can be acquired from a farm from where you are already procuring produce. Local farms may be interested in assisting with the development of the school garden as well as being a partner in produce!

☒ **Use regional foods in school menus**

In addition to fresh garden bars or salad bars, many food and nutrition services staff are cooking with fresh, regional ingredients, incorporating them into entrees or prepared salads. Cooking classes for food and nutrition services staff allow them to bring to the forefront many of their own cultural and family traditions. Using flavor profiles from around the world, new recipes can highlight fresh, regional produce and introduce children to tasty new lunch choices. Several guidebooks in California have been developed to encourage food and nutrition services staff to try new flavor combinations, and can also be adapted widely (see resources below).

Conduct Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Assessment

While featuring a salad bar and regional produce in the lunchroom are evidence-based methods to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables among school-aged children, the integration of Smarter Lunchrooms Movement principles in the lunchroom is another way to get children excited about healthy food offerings.

If you are not quite sure where to begin, work with your food and nutrition services director to complete a Smarter Lunchrooms Movement assessment using the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Self-Assessment Score Card. The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement Self-Assessment Score Card is available in the appendix of this chapter, or on the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement website <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/>



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! It is helpful to assure food and nutrition services personnel that the goal of this assessment is not to get 100 points, but rather to assess strengths and areas of potential improvement in their lunchroom. Disclosing the average score (under 50 points) can also be helpful in making the assessment phase a positive experience.

Program Connections

☒ **Coordinate with *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum and *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* curriculum**

To strengthen the connection between program components, choose regionally procured vegetables that are also grown in the school garden as part of the *Discovering Healthy Choices* activities and featured in the *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* cooking demonstrations.

☒ **Coordinate with *Team Up For Families* newsletters**

Additional information can be sent home within the *Team Up For Families* newsletters to inform parents which regional farmers are providing produce to the school.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Consider marketing techniques in the lunchroom such as including the farmer's logo, a description about where the farmer grows the produce, how long they have been providing produce to the area, and how long it will be available in the school lunchroom. Additionally, include a list of key nutrients that are found in the fruit or vegetable being offered.

☒ **Advertise Regional growers in the salad bar**

Make placards for display in the salad bar to advertise the regional grower that is supplying the produce. This further reinforces the connection between food and where it comes from, in addition to fostering community support for regional agriculture. To further extend opportunities to reinforce concepts from *Discovering Healthy Choices*, consider including information about which key nutrients are provided by selected fruits and vegetables.



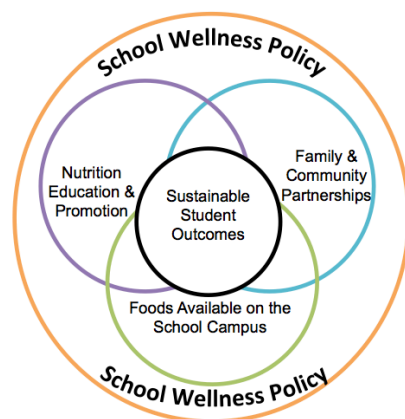
Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Have students who are participating in the Student Nutrition Action Committee help make signs for the new produce being introduced in the lunchroom. Also consider appointing student salad bar ambassadors where they teach other students & encourage them to use salad bars.

☒ **Coordinate with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities**

While enhancing the school lunchroom through incorporating salad bars, regional foods, and Smarter Lunchrooms Movement principles is an important Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity, it is essential to make sure that the other activities of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program are tied back to the lunchroom. Remember, the more connections you make between program activities, the stronger the infrastructure of the program as a whole.

Ideas for coordinating with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program Activities this include:

- **Get your school-site wellness committee involved with enhancing school lunchroom efforts:** A key requirement of a district wellness policy is to include support for healthy foods available on campus. You may consider including members of the school-site wellness committee in the planning and implementing of lunchroom enhancements as a means to meet district wellness policy requirements.



- **Feature changes you are making in the lunchroom at a community health fair:** Get the whole community excited about any enhancements being made to the foods being offered in your program by featuring your enhancements at a community health fair.
- **Have teachers, parents, administrators, or other role models sit with students during lunchtime.** Bringing school community role models into the lunchroom will help enhance the school lunchroom environment by positive role modeling in addition to strengthen the family and community partnerships component of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program.

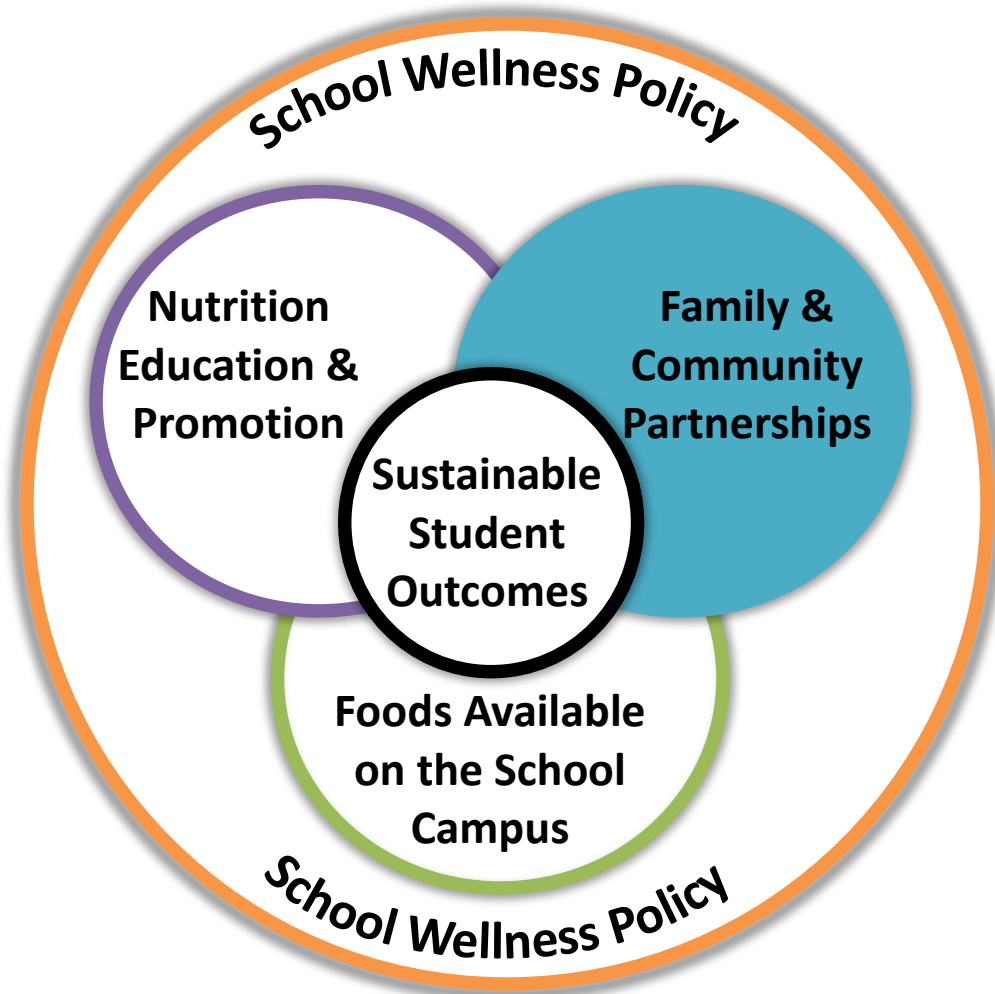
Other Resources

1. **Farm to School Conferences.** If time permits, consider attending the national Farm to Cafeteria Conference for more inspiring ideas to enhance your lunchroom.
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/farm-to-school-cafeteria-conference>
2. **Center for Nutrition in Schools Website:** For more information on professional development opportunities , informative webinars, and other resources for food and nutrition services personnel, visit the Center for Nutrition in Schools Website:
<http://cns.ucdavis.edu/resources/curriculum-classroom.html>

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2. Terry-McElrath YM, O'Malley PM, Johnston LD. Accessibility over availability: associations between the school food environment and student fruit and green vegetable consumption. *Child Obes*. 2014;10(3):241-250.
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Family and Community Partnerships



Distributing *Team Up for Families* Newsletters
Organizing a Community Health Fair

Distributing *Team Up for Families* Newsletters

Why Family Newsletters?—The nature of parent and child interactions may be connected to a child’s eating behavior.¹ Furthermore, nutrition programs that include family involvement can improve children’s health, dietary patterns, and levels of physical activity.²

Introduction

Team Up for Families is a newsletter series designed to provide resources to parents of children participating in the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. It is composed of eight newsletters to support parents in promoting healthy eating habits and environments for their school-aged children. Newsletters include content related to nutrition recommendations for school-aged children, parenting skills to promote quality interactions with children, and relevant developmental milestones for this age group.

- Family Newsletter 1: Winning Mealtime Battles
- Family Newsletter 2: Movin’ On Up
- Family Newsletter 3: What’s in Your Drink
- Family Newsletter 4: The Real Happy Meal
- Family Newsletter 5: A Garden Party
- Family Newsletter 6: So You Think You Can Shop?
- Family Newsletter 7: What’s Growin’ On
- Family Newsletter 8: Snackdown

☒ Download the newsletters

Team Up for Families newsletters are available in both English and Spanish. A free download can be found through the UC Davis Center for Nutrition in Schools (<http://cns.ucdavis.edu>).

Program Connections

☒ Connections to *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum

The theme of each newsletter is related to content that children are learning in each of the eight modules of *Discovering Healthy Choices*. Additionally, each newsletter contains a “school connections” section, which includes information to parents about what their child is learning as part of the *Discovering Healthy Choices* activities.

With the completion of each module in *Discovering Healthy Choices*, the matching *Team Up for Families* newsletter should be sent home. If time permits, review the activity for the newsletter at the end of the lesson so the students have an opportunity to ask questions. See the recommended schedule of implementation for when to send home newsletters in order to further extend opportunities for parents to reinforce the concepts being learned.

☑ **Linking to *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* curriculum**

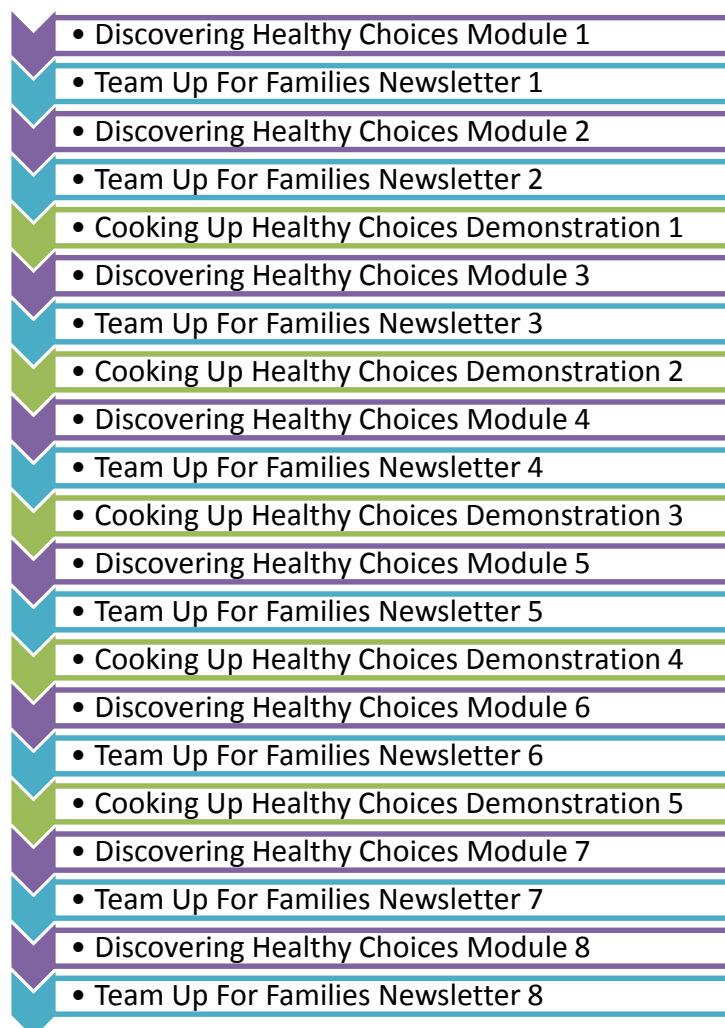
The recipes conducted as part of the *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* are featured in the “school connections” section of five of the *Team Up for Families* newsletters. This is to promote involvement in cooking at home using recipes that children have already tasted.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Send the parent newsletters with recipes from *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* immediately following cooking demonstrations to reinforce excitement for students’ involvement in cooking at home. See the recommended schedule of implementation for when to send home newsletters to maximize these opportunities.

☑ **Maximize Connections with *Discovering Healthy Choices* and *Cooking Up Healthy Choices***

In order to maximize the integration of *Discovering Healthy Choices*, *Cooking Up Healthy Choices*, and *Team Up for Families*, the following sequence is recommended:



☑ **Coordinate with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities**

While the family newsletters are an important Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity, it is important to make sure that the other activities of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program are tied back to the newsletters. Remember, the more connections you make between the program activities, the stronger the infrastructure of the program as a whole.

As an example, **Reinforce connections to lunchroom produce and the instructional garden:** In addition to the content already in the newsletters, additional information can be added that feature

what fruits and vegetables are currently being offered in the salad bar. Also consider showcasing a regional farmer to reinforce connections with local community members and regional agriculture.

Distributing the newsletters

☑ **Consider the format for distribution**

These newsletters can be printed and sent home to parents through the classroom or emailed.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Ask the teacher how he/she usually sends home information to parents and make sure to follow up periodically throughout the program to make sure the newsletters are being sent according to schedule. Teachers have experience in this area and often know how to best reach the parents of their students.

References

1. Ventura AK, Birch LL. Does parenting affect children's eating and weight status? *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act.* 2008;5(15):1479-5868.
2. Lindsay AC, Sussner KM, Kim J, Gortmaker S. The role of parents in preventing childhood obesity. *Future Child.* 2006;16(1):169-186.



Organizing a Community Health Fair

Why a community health fair? Organizing a community health fair is a great way to promote good health, provide screening services for the school and community, provide the community with a variety of health education information and resources, emphasize the practice of good health habits, and connect with community health organizations and agencies. It is also an effective way to showcase what the school is doing to help promote a healthy school environment.

Introduction

A community health fair can be another way to reinforce concepts of school health, especially those set forth by the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. A health fair can take on many shapes depending on the goals of the school and surrounding community. Showcasing strides made towards health goals, featuring the instructional garden, and partnering with local youth and 4-H are all ways to bolster attendance and school/community support.

Program Connections

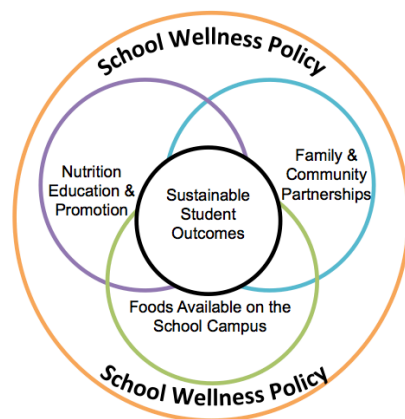
- ☒ **Coordinate with Shaping Healthy Choices Program Wellness Committee**
One of the goals of the wellness committee can be to promote the district wellness policy as well as the Shaping Healthy Choices Program; this can be done through a health fair. Enlisting the committee's help will assist them in achieving their goals as well as lighten the health fair planning load.
- ☒ **Reinforce nutrition education lessons at the event**
Be sure to contact the facilitators of nutrition education to ensure nutrition messaging at the health fair is consistent with that being covered in the classrooms.
-  **Shaping Healthy Choices Tip!** Nutrition education facilitators may work with their students to develop a booth, display, or game at the fair that reinforces what they are learning in the classroom. One of the *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* cooking demonstrations can also be featured at the event.
- ☒ **Showcase local and regional produce**
Contacting the food and nutrition services director to brainstorm ideas to help showcase local farmers is another way to foster interaction of Shaping Healthy Choices Program components/overall school health.
-  **Shaping Healthy Choices Tip!** A small farmer's market is an interactive way to bring local produce into families' homes. Consider building on existing partnerships between the

food and nutrition services director and local farms that are supplying the school with local and regional produce by using their produce for the farmer's market. Food Banks also often have produce that they can donate for free to locations that meet their qualifications.

☑ **Coordinate with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities**

Listed above are some specific ways to establish program connections when planning your community health fair. Feel free to get creative in establishing program connections beyond those listed. Remember, the more connections you make between program activities, the stronger the infrastructure of the program as a whole. More ideas for coordinating with other Sharing Healthy Choices Program Activities include:

- **Promoting the school-site wellness committee:** A community health fair is an excellent place to recruit members for your school-site wellness committee. Consider bringing a sign-up sheet to collect information from those interested.



Planning the event

☑ **Select a date**

It is essential to coordinate with school and district administration to find a time and date that will work best for the school. After school, evening, or weekend events may increase attendance and parental involvement.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! The school may already hold a community function such as a harvest party, field day, or spring event. Combining health and wellness activities with existing events may help ease the planning load. Even small changes can help change the community culture to a healthier one. For example, instead of hosting a “cake-walk,” consider a fresh fruit and vegetable walk.

☑ **Plan event**

Work with a school nurse or other health professionals to come up with a list of possible presenters at the fair. Invite people from the local community to give presentations and set up tables with information about healthy eating or physical activity opportunities. Some possible guests might be county Cooperative Extension representatives, personnel from the local hospital or a local pediatrician, a local celebrity (such as a health news broadcaster) or a local chef.

Make sure to budget plenty of time to get individuals and businesses in the community involved. It can be very effective to discuss involvement with the event in-person, rather than over the phone or via email.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Contact information for County Cooperative Extension offices can be found on the United States Department of Agriculture Website (<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/>).

☒ **Enlist help**

It may be helpful to utilize the school wellness committee and other existing school committees for help with planning, advertising, and implementing a school health fair. Other local community resources that may be interested in helping can include county Cooperative Extension representatives, local 4-H, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, high school students, parents, and more. Students are usually enthusiastic helpers. Contact the student council to get students involved.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Local businesses and the community can get involved with your event in a variety of ways. Some examples include having a table at your event, donating necessary supplies, or providing volunteers. Consider displaying contributing business names at your event to incentivize participation.

☒ **Advertise for your event**

Advertising can be done in many ways. Many schools have a marquis that can be used to advertise the date of the health fair, as well as school newsletters, flyers sent home, and phone calls from the principal. Consider contacting local news stations for media coverage and provide a teacher, nutrition educator, or principal as a person of contact for interviews. Local newspapers may be willing to advertise the event too. Social Media can also be a useful tool in getting the word out to your community. Consider advertising for your event on Twitter or Facebook.

Additional Resources

1. **Appendix 3: Sample Donation Form with Tax Deduction Information.** You may use this template to request donation from local organizations.

Appendix 3: Sample Donation Form with Tax Deduction Information

DATE

To Whom It May Concern:

The University of California Cooperative Extension Nutrition Education Program in _____ County is sponsoring a (name of event) at (name of school) on (date). The (name of event) is designed for families to learn about healthy eating habits and physical activity in a fun, engaging environment. Hundreds of families attend the event every year.

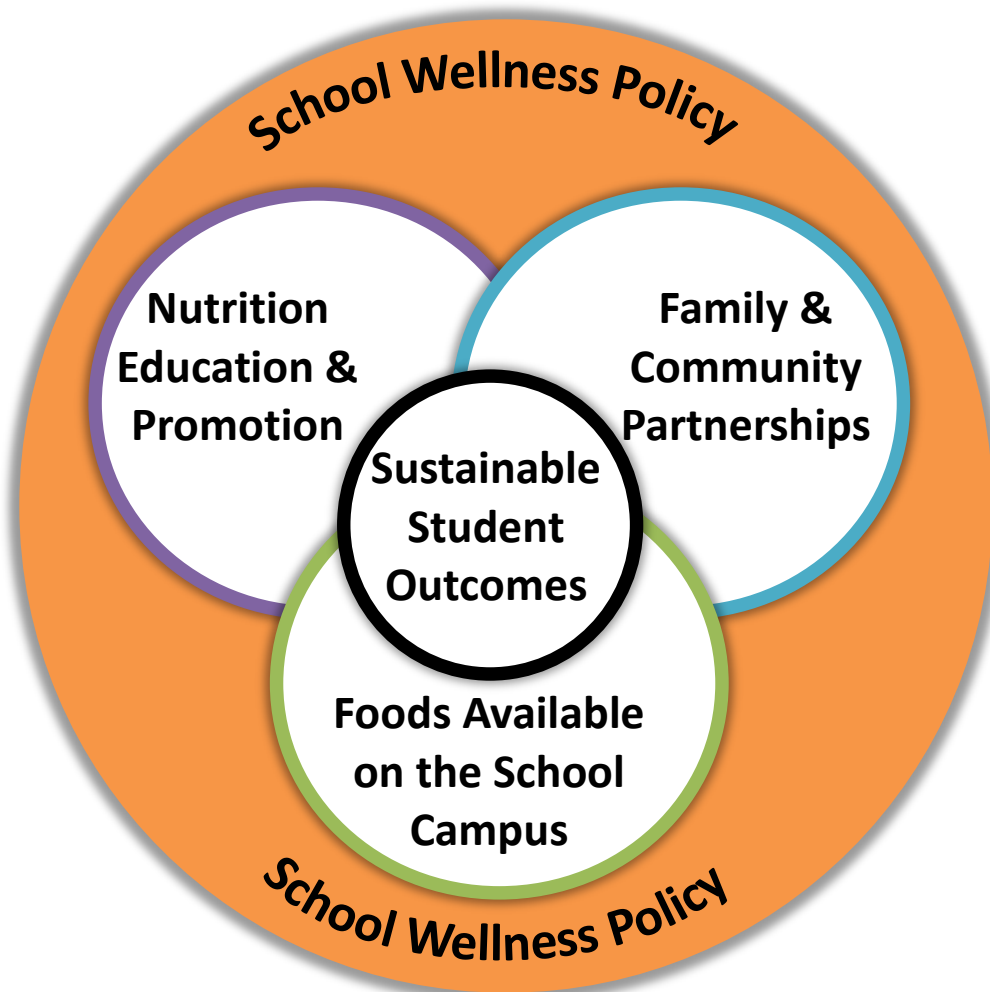
The University of California Cooperative Extension Nutrition Education Program is seeking in-kind donations, including gift cards, for this event. These donations will be used for nutrition, fitness, and garden related activities, as well as prizes and drawings. Food donations will be used for such things as food demonstrations/tastings, melon weight lifting, bowling, bell pepper toss, etc. Our Federal Tax ID number is _____. Your tax-deductible donation will be acknowledged by the University of California Cooperative Extension.

We appreciate your consideration and time in this matter. If you can make a donation or have any questions, please contact (name) at ([phone](#) number) or (email).

Sincerely,

Name & Contact Information

School Wellness Policy



Forming a School-Site Wellness Policy Committee

Forming a School-Site Wellness Policy Committee

Why a school-site wellness committee? Federal mandates require districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program to develop and implement a district wellness policy that specifically addresses healthy eating, physical activity and other school-based wellness initiatives that promote a healthy school environment.¹ Translating district wellness policy initiatives to the school-site level can be challenging.²⁻⁵

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, School Nutrition Association, and Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior recommend wellness committees as a means to successfully translate federally mandated district wellness policies to the school-site level by developing culturally and context-appropriate initiatives. They also identify wellness committees as an avenue through which community stakeholder's may share their experiences, as well as their challenges, within the school community, and, when relevant, with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies and policy makers.⁶

Introduction

The primary goals of the school-site wellness policy committee are to **implement, evaluate, disseminate, and maintain** culturally-appropriate school-site wellness policies that support the district-level wellness policy. This is achieved through a community-based approach (see diagram).

First, community engagement is achieved through the establishment of partnerships and other collaborations. Next, community priorities are identified through a community assessment. After areas of need and strengths are identified, action planning and implementation of goals are established based on strengths and areas of need.

It is important to understand that this process takes time. One food and nutrition services director once said, "While you can achieve some goals *fast* alone, you can get *much further* with the help of others." Celebrate achievements at each step of this worth-while process!



Elements of a cyclical, community-based approach, Israel et al., 1995

Becoming Familiar with the School District Wellness Policy

Many school site wellness committees form for different reasons and have different goals that often include supporting the wellness policies in some fashion. A great place to start is to look into the district wellness policies.

☑ **Nominate/cultivate a School-Site Wellness Committee Leader**

It often takes a lot of time, patience, and expertise to prepare for the formation of a school-site wellness committee. It is recommended that one person take the lead in spearheading the wellness committee.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Consider appointing a member of the agency responsible for implementing the Shaping Healthy Choices Program as lead of these preparatory efforts during the beginning phases. However, to increase school support and committee sustainability, consider nominating a vice-chair that is either a parent or teacher who will take over the lead position after a set time. Keep in mind that in order to ensure these changes being made in the community are sustainable, the person that is appointed lead should be prepared to serve this role for an extended amount of time, or eventually hand off the responsibilities to a more established member of the community.

☑ **Review the School Districts Wellness Policy**

It is important to do your “homework” on existing district wellness policies in order to prepare for the formation of a fully functional and efficient school-site wellness committee. School district wellness policies should be available for download on the school district’s website. If you have trouble locating it, there should be contact information for assistance. A good place to look is on the nutrition services tab or page.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! District wellness policies are often quite lengthy. Consider consolidating main points in a smaller document for easy review.

☑ **Attend/Become a Member of a District Wellness Policy Committee**

The government mandates that all school districts and agencies form a wellness policy committee at the district level. The activity level of each wellness committee varies from agency to agency or district to district. It is recommended that you review the district or agency’s website to find out meeting times. Depending on the culture of the district wellness policy, they may welcome you as a regular member of the committee, which is ideal. Make sure to share your successes at the district level. Other schools may want to follow your lead and develop their own site-level committees.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! If it seems appropriate, consider requesting that you have a few moments on the agenda to present the goals of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program and how they align with those of the district wellness policy. Include plans for implementing the program at the school-site level.

Forming a School-Site Wellness Committee

Once you have become familiarized with the district wellness policy, you are ready to start the process of translating the district policy at the school-site level. See the tips below to help you do so successfully.

✓ **Gather input from administrators**

Before formally starting a school committee, be sure to get approval and input from the school principal. Set-up a meeting and ask what his/her goals are for school health and wellness. Are there chronic problem areas that distract from student learning? Bring a list of questions including when and where the committee could meet and who should be included.

Consider scheduling a brief meeting with the school-site principal or food and nutrition services director in order to assess whether or not a school-site wellness policy exists. Next, it is helpful to get his/her input regarding the best way to proceed with recruitment.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Consider bringing a list of school-site wellness committee goals to help facilitate discussion.

✓ **Recruit committee members**

The composition of a school wellness committee may vary depending on the needs of the school community. Committee members may include parents, teachers, students, food and nutrition services directors, local farmers, or other community stakeholders (such as Cooperative Extension representatives). It is recommended that the school principal or food and nutrition services director inform the composition of the school wellness committee. Listed below are some considerations for recruiting committee members:

Represent the diversity of your community. As members are invited to the school wellness committee, consider the diversity of the school and surrounding community.

Include key players in the school and community. Reach out to those in the school community that have the greatest ability to network and recruit members. There often exists a school champion who is willing to take on this component of the program. Key committee members may include Cooperative Extension representatives, local farmers, physical education (PE) teacher, the local public health department, and others.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! For a well-rounded wellness committee, consider inviting the following key stakeholders: principal, food and nutrition services director, district nutrition educator, nutrition education facilitator, garden coordinator, PTA/Site council member, parents, student council members, PE teachers and other community members such as Cooperative Extension representatives.

Include people who can commit the time. Many school staff members and community members are asked to sit on multiple committees. It is important to be clear about how much time the wellness committee meetings and activities will take. Time is often seen as the biggest barrier to

getting things accomplished. It might be helpful to reach out to those that other committees may not have thought to include.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Consider assigning one person who has enough time, dedication, and passion for the subject matter to help lead the committee. This most often is a member of the agency that is in charge of implementing the Shaping Healthy Choices Program.

Build upon existing committees. Many schools have strong PTA/PTOs or Student Council groups. Creating a sub-committee within these existing committees, or even transforming the goals of the committees to be more health-oriented may be considered. The California PTA has a job description for a Health Chair. Consider presenting this position at a PTA/PTO meeting to see if they are interested in creating a new chairperson to represent health and wellness.
<http://downloads.capta.org/toolkit/print/JobDescriptions.pdf>

Facilitate Committee Meetings

For best results, it is recommended that the committee identify and meet several objectives over the course of one academic year. Depending on need and preference, a school-site wellness committee may choose to meet as frequently as once per month, or it may be more realistic to only meet three times a year. This can be determined by the individual committee. Below is a list of objectives to consider.

☒ **Objective 1: Introduce the Shaping Healthy Choices Program**

It is helpful to begin with receiving buy-in for the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. In order to do so, you may present the goals and activities of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program and how they align with the district levels wellness policy goals.

☒ **Objective 2: Familiarize committee members with district wellness policy**

Here is where a consolidated version of the district wellness policy may come in handy.

☒ **Objective 3: Assess district wellness policy**

This assessment can take the form of a discussion. One tip is to provide a consolidated version of the wellness policy to each member and have them read it independently or as a “homework assignment,” followed by a group discussion.

☒ **Objective 4: Attend a meeting /become a member of the district wellness policy committee**

Ideally, at least one member of the school-site wellness committee can become a member of the district-level wellness committee. This way, they can report back to the school-site committee any changes or interesting developments and take the opportunity to share their site-level successes and advocate for changes to the District Policy identified by the group.

Oftentimes, school-site committee members may already be district wellness committee members.

✓ **Objective 5: Assess school-site environment**

Assessing the school-site with an established assessment tool is a helpful way to identify strengths and areas of improvement. There are many tools available. Consider using the Shaping Healthy Choices Self-Health Check (SHC²) available for download from the Center for Nutrition in Schools website (<http://cns.ucdavis.edu>).

✓ **Objective 6: Assign goals and establish a timeline to complete goals**

Consider your discussion about the district wellness policy, the Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities, and the results of the school-site assessment. Starting with small, achievable goals helps increase the likelihood of success. Make sure you recognize and celebrate completion of goal #1: Establishing a school site wellness committee!

✓ **Objective 7: Establish a mechanism for checking in on progress**

Decide whether there will be another meeting as the whole group or if it will be done in small groups. Decide how the group will follow-up on progress. This can be done through email or phone calls.

✓ **Objective 8: End of the year assessment and communication of results**

In order to track progress with respect to wellness committee goals, use the same assessment tool that was used previously. See if you can identify any improvements that were made at the school site as a result of the committee's efforts. This will help validate the achievements of the wellness committee members, as well as provide a way to help monitor the wellness policy annually.



Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Create a one-page flyer or press release that details the committee's accomplishments. Make sure to share at the PTA/PTO meeting and District Wellness Policy Committee.

Program Connections

Several goals of the site-specific wellness committee can be fulfilled through the implementation of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. Bringing all aspects together takes strong relationships between school administrators, teachers, food service, parents, students, and outside agency partners. Be sure to recognize the unique contributions and needs of each of these partners. No single person or agency can do it all.

✓ **Coordinate with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities**

While The Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities themselves help to fulfill the wellness policy requirements, feel free to get creative and use the wellness committee in order to establish even more connections between activities. Remember, the more connections you make between program

activities, the stronger the infrastructure of the program as a whole. Some ideas for coordinating with other Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities include:

- **Host a booth at the community health fair:** This is a great way to recruit more members for the school-site wellness committee.
- **Recruit student representatives from your *Discovering Healthy Choices* classes:** It is always good to have multiple student representatives so they don't feel as intimidated by all the adults in the room.
- **Discuss Smarter Lunchrooms concepts with your Wellness Committee members:** There may be a subgroup that is interested in promoting healthy foods in the lunchroom.
- **Bring the *Team Up for Families* newsletters to the Wellness Committee meetings:** Discuss with parents what their children are learning in class and how they can support the program at home.
- **Demonstrate a recipe from the *Cooking Up Healthy Choices* curriculum:** Everyone loves food! Providing a healthy sample at the start of the meeting will reinforce the message of wellness, connect with what is being taught in class, and it's fun!
- **Take the committee out to the garden or host a garden work day:** When the weather is nice, take the committee out to tour the school garden to see what the students are growing. Have the students lead the tour and discuss what is growing. If possible, start one of your meetings with some physical activity in the garden. Pull weeds for 10 minutes, water, plant a tree – it doesn't take long and it creates a sense of community and accomplishment.

Other Resources

1. **Appendix 4. Steps to Working with Parent Teacher Organizations.** A Shaping Healthy Choices Program implementer developed this resource based on her experience working in the field. It provides tips on how to successfully develop a relationship with Parent Teacher Organizations.

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Appendix 4. Steps to Working with Parent Teacher Organizations

Steps to Working with Parent Teacher Organizations:

1. Contact school to find out when meetings take place.
2. Introduce yourself and explain why you want to begin attending the meetings.
Example: I want to hear about the events taking place at your school and see how I can be involved and help.
3. They may ask if you want to be on the Agenda. Simply ask to be introduced.
Most school type meetings already have a packed Agenda; they do not necessarily want to listen to you but eventually they will.
4. Attend all meetings consistently. Be on time. Be an excellent listener. It is better to sit back and take it all in, if asked for an opinion keep it brief. It is also ok to not have an immediate response and ask if you can get back to the group with an answer.
5. Build your relationship with parents, teachers and all faculty at the school site including custodians.
6. As the relationship builds and becomes more comfortable begin to offer alternate ideas and suggestions for foods being served at events and fundraising activities at the school. Encourage the group to begin thinking “healthier” in terms of non-food fundraisers and rewards for students. Try not to become frustrated when the suggestions you make are not implemented immediately.
7. Remember, encourage small changes, even if the group is extremely receptive. Sometimes one or two members of the group may want to implement major changes. Your role is to remind them that “baby steps” are better than no steps at all.
8. Every school, even within the same school district, will be different and needs to be treated as an individual site. A one size fits all approach with Parent Teacher Organizations will not work.
9. Maintain confidentiality – Always! Any issues that take place at these meetings should not be discussed with others.
10. Regression, even with your best Parent Teacher Groups, will take place. When an unhealthy food is offered to students at an event that you may not have been aware of or approved **DO NOT** address this issue at the event. Everyone makes mistakes and by now you have worked hard to create and build a strong working relationship. Take a deep breath, walk away, consider your response, and voice your concern at the next meeting constructively and without criticism. Suggest to the group healthier alternatives for the next event . . . educate them.

