

INFLUENCES ON NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES AND WELLNESS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Psychological, Cultural and Social Influences on Food Choices

Grade Levels: 9-12

Concept: Legislation and regulations

Comprehensive Standard: 6.1 Analyze the factors that influence nutritional practices and wellness across the lifespan

Technical Standard: 6.1.4 Examine legislation and regulations related to nutrition and wellness issues

LESSON COMPETENCIES:

- ? Explore legislation and regulation related to nutrition and wellness issues
- ? Discuss the role of school in providing healthy food choices

ANTICIPATED BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES:

- ? Students assist in nutrition education of other students related to school lunches and school vending machines
- ? Students promote a healthy school nutrition environment

Resources Needed:

- Copies of handouts for all students
- Copies of Food Guide Pyramid and Dietary Guidelines (or posters)
- Possible Internet access

References for teachers and students:

Team Nutrition, a program developed by the USDA to promote healthy eating and physical activity has several resources appropriate for middle school students. These include a Student Activity Guide and Teacher's Guide with several activities called yoursSELF. In addition, information about Team Nutrition and research statistics on the status of child nutrition in the United States is available. Several items can be downloaded for free at their website or ordered at the site. The address is www.fns.usda.gov/tn

Information about federal Child Nutrition Programs including the National School Lunch Program can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Default.htm For specific information about school lunch, click on National School Lunch Program; click on Program Fact Sheet. Information about other federal programs is available and links to other government sites. There is also information about government policies governing the sale of competitive foods (i.e. vending machines) in schools. Click on FAQs; click on Competitive Foods. For information on meal planning guidelines at this site, click on National School Lunch Program; click on meal planning.

Lots of information can be accessed at the South Dakota site for Child and Nutrition Services including information related to each of the nutrition programs it is responsible for. It also includes links to sites related to teen nutrition and for teachers. www.state.sd.us/deca/CSCF/CANS

A list of foods available for USDA Food Distribution Programs is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/default.htm> The list is an estimate for commodities expected to be available for schools and institutions during the school/fiscal year. This could be used for meal planning activities.

Background Information:

Policies and regulations that directly or indirectly affect the supply or prices of food products, their safety and nutritional composition, or the information consumers receive about food all influence the food choices consumers make and ultimately, the quality of their diets. (Ralston, K. (1999) *How Government Policies and Regulations Can Affect Dietary Choices*, in America's Eating Habits: Changes and Consequences; the entire publication is available to download at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aib750/aib750q.PDF>

The federal government is responsible for a multitude of programs including food safety regulations – including inspections of processing plant and food products, approval of food additives, and restrictions on pesticide use and animal drugs. These regulations can impact food prices or availability, and their implied assurance of safety is information that can also affect the demand for food.

The government is also responsible for information regulations – including labeling requirements and advertising restrictions, standards of identity and product grades. These directly influence the kind of information consumers receive about foods, and therefore, the demand for foods.

In addition, other government programs are responsible for food assistance programs and school lunch programs. Every school day, more than 25 million children in 93,000 schools across the country eat a lunch provided through the National School Lunch Program (NLSP). More than half of these children receive the meal at a free or at a reduced price. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recognizes the program's national health responsibility to provide school meals that meet nutrition objectives. USDA updated the policy in the 1997 school year so that school meals would comply with the Dietary Guidelines. (National School Lunch Program information at www.state.sd.us/deca/CSCF/CANS/

In South Dakota, the Child and Nutrition Services (CANS) is responsible for administering the USDA's Food and Consumer Services (FCS) nutrition programs. These programs furnish resources to eligible local agencies who provide food in meals or commodities to participants including National School Lunch, School Breakfast, Special Milk, Summer Food Service, Child and Adult Care Food, Nutrition Education and Training and Commodity Distribution for child nutrition programs, charitable institutions, emergency feeding programs, soup kitchens and food banks. (CANS web site, see reference list).

The National School Lunch Act mandates that school meals “safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children.” Participating schools must serve lunches that are consistent with the applicable recommendations of the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The current Team Nutrition project is a collaborative effort with 16 organizations to develop and promote healthy eating in the nation's schools. USDA has launched the

effort to foster healthy school nutrition environments that support healthy eating and physical activity. Nutrition education is a vital component of the program.

Learning Activities:

High School Level

- ? Ask students to consider the question - How is the government involved in the food industry? Ask them to brainstorm all of the ways that the government is involved (i.e. food labeling, inspection of packing plants, etc.)
- ? Brainstorm the benefits to the consumer of government regulations and policies (safe food supply, guidelines for healthy eating – Dietary Guidelines, etc.)
- ? Use the transparency master, *What Happens Now?* to start a discussion related to the impact of policies and regulations on consumers and their food choices.
- ? Ask students to plan school lunch menus considering the Dietary Guidelines, likes and dislikes of students, commodities provided to the schools and the regulations of the school lunch program (see reference list). Use the Team Nutrition and Child Nutrition Program websites as resources. Recipes can be found at these sites as well.
- ? Hold a debate on the contents of vending machines in schools. Should vending machines be banned? Should the contents of vending machines be restricted to food choices that are healthier choices for students?

Extended Learning Activities:

- ? **Team Nutrition** – Become a Team Nutrition School and develop activities to teach younger children about nutrition and healthy food choices.
- ? **After School Fitness** – Start a program with after school fitness activities in your school. Plan activities for a variety of age groups. The goal is to increase physical activity in your school.
- ? **FCCLA Snack Store** – As part of an entrepreneurial project or fund raiser, open a Snack Attack Shop that features healthy snack choices from the Food Guide Pyramid such as pretzels, cheese sticks, cheese & crackers, single-serve fruit or pudding cups, ice cream bars, etc.
- ? **Cafeteria Collaboration** – Work with your school food service staff as a team to develop menu plans that meet the guidelines for healthy meals required by government regulations and Team Nutrition. Post attractive menus around the school with nutrition information to promote school lunch in your school.