



WHAT ARE THE MICHIGAN NUTRITION STANDARDS?

Parents, families, schools, and communities are working together toward a common goal: to educate students and prepare them for successful futures. Making sure students are fit, healthy, and ready to learn is one piece of the larger puzzle.

“Healthy” can be defined in many different ways. One part of being healthy is eating nutrient-rich food and beverages to prevent chronic disease, like heart disease and diabetes, and to promote a healthy weight. Currently, there is a lot of confusion about what kids should be offered to eat at school and at home.

Nutrition Standards are a list of criteria for food and beverages that are made available to students at school and at school-related functions. The *Michigan Nutrition Standards* were created based on national standards. These standards help provide the guidance for students to make the healthiest choices possible, and to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

The *Michigan Nutrition Standards* address food and beverages offered and sold in many places in addition to the school cafeteria; such as school vending machines, a la carte/snack lines, and at classroom parties. It’s important that students get a clear and consistent message about what’s healthy, wherever food and beverages are offered at school.

The purpose of the *Michigan Nutrition Standards* is to give guidance to Michigan schools on what food and beverages should be offered and which ones should be limited.



THE MICHIGAN NUTRITION STANDARDS PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR...

- **SCHOOL MEALS**—Meals that emphasize food and beverages with specific health benefits such as: colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, beans, nuts and lean proteins.
- **A LA CARTE/SNACK LINES**—Students are offered healthy food and beverages that will help create or supplement a meal and prepare them for a day of learning.
- **VENDING MACHINES**—Students are offered healthy food and beverages, not just low-quality, calorie-dense “snack” food and beverages.
- **CLASSROOM PARTIES**—It’s recommended that classrooms aim for a balance of healthy and less healthy options during classroom parties and celebrations to help students practice moderation.
- **CLASSROOM REWARDS**—Students are offered non-food rewards to create a healthy classroom environment and foster healthy habits for a lifetime.
- **SCHOOL-DAY FUNDRAISING**—Fundraising will not take place right before or during school meals so students can fill up on healthy options during breakfast and lunch to keep them focused and energized.
- **CONCESSION STANDS**—Healthy options such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat and fat-free milk, yogurt, low-fat string cheese, and small bags of nuts and seeds, should be available for purchase to provide balanced choices for students, staff, and the community.



WHY HAVE NUTRITION STANDARDS?

Nutrition Standards are one way to improve the health and bright future of our children. Michigan is not alone in developing Nutrition Standards. Other states have laws that require all schools to follow their state specific standards. The *Michigan Nutrition Standards* were developed to create an environment that supports healthy eating as the first choice, the easy choice, for students, staff, and the community. Health and nutrition are a major priority with the rise of obesity in children as well as adults. In Michigan, more than 30% of children are considered overweight or obese⁵. This percentage has increased nearly 5 fold in the last 35 years. Experts agree that children of this generation will have a shorter life span than their parents⁶.



WHY IMPLEMENT THE MICHIGAN NUTRITION STANDARDS?

The Michigan State Board of Education recommends that school districts follow the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*. While the standards do not come with any additional funding, the benefits are plentiful. The standards ensure that when students eat at school or at school-related functions they have healthy food and beverages to choose from. Well-nourished students are healthy and ready to learn the lessons that school staff have worked so hard to develop. In addition, students that are healthy have fewer absences. Students that attend school more frequently, equates to more money for the schools in-state funding and less staff expense to assist students that are frequently absent to catch up to meet academic standards.

The health and academic success of Michigan's children is vital to the future of our state. The *Michigan Nutrition Standards* provide schools the guidance to be leaders in doing what is right for the children.

MAKING SMALL STEADY GAINS TO MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE

In Michigan, three school districts piloted the *Michigan Nutrition Standards* during the 2010-2011 school year. The pilot districts all reported that a culture shift took place not only in the school but also in the community. Districts noted that there was more awareness about health and nutrition in the community since focusing on nutrition standards in the schools. Pilot districts reported that grocery stores looked at placement of foods, and offered healthy food coupons; local food establishments offered whole grain options; and local convenience stores added fruits to purchase. Walking trails were created by community groups. All of these changes were a result of the school district implementation of the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

MICHIGAN PARENTS SUPPORT HEALTHY FOODS IN SCHOOLS

During the fall of 2010, a survey was completed to gather the opinion of Michigan parents about offering healthy food in schools. Healthy food was defined as fruits, vegetables, whole grain foods, low fat dairy and lean proteins. The telephone survey was completed with a representative sample of over 1200 parents throughout the state. The results show that Michigan parents do support a healthy food environment in schools:

- 88% of parents report that schools have a responsibility to provide healthy choices in school meals.
- 80% of parents report that schools have a responsibility to provide healthy choices in a la carte (snack lines), vending machines and school stores.
- 50% of parents report that concession stands should contain mostly or only healthy food choices.
- 50% of parents report that mostly or only healthy food choices should be offered for fundraising activities.
- 66% of parents do not think that food should be given as a reward to their children in school.
- 67% of parents support a state law for school nutrition guidelines for food and beverages offered and sold during the school day.