

Take Action: Answering Tough Questions

When you talk to adults and try to get them to help you or to convince them to act, they may ask some tough questions about the feasibility of your ideas. Here are some possible questions and sample answers that might be helpful to you.

Q: Students might not buy the healthy foods. How can food service take a chance on losing money?

A: First, let's ask the students which healthy foods they will buy. Then we can do a taste test to see which healthy choices the students like the most. Next, we can have a trial period. During this time, food service will sell healthy foods and promote these foods so students know they are available. We can encourage students to buy the healthy foods and track sales of the new, healthier options. There is also good information emerging that food service departments will not lose money.

Q: How can we keep the gym open after school? The school insurance won't cover this.

A: We can research to find out if we have any options regarding our coverage and the associated costs. We can ask parent and community groups to help us with this project. Finally, we can ask the school board to spend the extra money so students have a safe place to be physically active.

Q: How can we put different foods in the vending machines? That is the vending machine company's decision.

A: We can work with the vending machine company. We can tell the vending machine company that students want some healthy snacks. We'll give them our survey results, which show how many students will buy healthy snacks. We'll tell the vending machine company the types of healthy snacks we like and ask them to stock at least two of these in the vending machines. (Note: Go to the John Stalker Institute A list - <http://www.johnstalkerinstitute.org> and click on Healthy Snacks - as seen in the list, the food industry is responding with more healthy vending items).

These are only a few of the many tough questions that you may face, but you have the ability to answer any question that comes your way. As you begin to show people that you have thought out your plan and are serious about making change you will begin to gain support. You can also use a variety of tools to build support for your work including letter writing, phone calls, presentations, and working with the media.