

Wellness Promotion in the Somerville Public Schools Food Service Department

Strategies for Success

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Somerville, Massachusetts

- Urban, industrial city of 78,000 residents, located north of Boston, MA
- Total area consists of 4.1 square miles and 3% open space with few resources
- 4,870 Students in 12 district schools
- 65% of students are eligible for free and reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program
- Greater than 50% of students are from ethnic/racial minorities and speak 27 languages
- In 2006, 48% of 4-8th graders were overweight or at risk for overweight

Somerville Food Service Department Overview

- \$2.81 million annual operating budget.
- Services 12 Somerville schools, 4 Community and Charter schools and 19 Head Start locations (6,100 students total) plus full summer service.
- Central production system with 7 satellite locations and 9 partial/full service kitchens
- 60 food service personnel
- Average daily service:
 - 1,450 universal free breakfasts
 - 3,600 lunches
 - 540 after school snacks
 - 1,415 summer lunches and 573 summer breakfast/day
- 2007-2008 food expenditures exceeded \$1.1 million

2007-2008 Self Funded Annual Operating Budget \$2.8 million/year

Annual Revenues

- Fed./State Reimbursements 70%
 - Lunch and A la carte sales 16%
 - Head Start Programs 9%
 - Summer Service Everett 2.5%
 - Catering 2.5%
- (2007-08 Annual Commodity Value \$152,000)

Challenges of Providing Healthy Food In School Food Service

- Cost - Economics Determine Menu
- Decreased Student Acceptability of Healthy Choices Resulting in Decreased Meal Participation
- Unskilled Labor Pool/Poor Recipe Execution
- Facility & Infrastructure Issues
(Schools lack space, storage equipment, computers)
- Staff Resistance to Change
- Insufficient Time for Students to Eat Lunch

How Somerville Was Able to Achieve Healthy Changes (2002-2009)

1. Focus on Improved Food/Menu Quality
2. Continuous Infrastructure/Facility Improvement
3. Increased System Sales/Controlled System Costs
4. Continuous Training, Monthly Staff Meetings
5. District Support of Wellness, Programs & Policies
6. Grant Funding (Shape Up Somerville, PEP, Growing Healthy, USDA Fruit & Vegetable Grant)
7. Student/Staff Nutrition Education (taste tests)
8. Nutrition Education & Partnerships (U-Mass Extension, Goundwork Somerville, Nutrition Outreach Coordinator)

Focus on Improved Menu and Food Quality



- Expanded lunch choices in all schools
- Introduced fresh fruit daily at breakfast & lunch
- Introduced daily fresh salad selection grades 4-12
- Continuous recipe development, use of fresh ingredients, fruits, vegetables, whole grains & olive oil
- Chef consultants - Staff culinary training
- Established purchasing system for local produce
- Staff & Student taste tests
- Recipient of USDA Healthier US School Challenge Award

Limited-A La Carte Sales while Increasing Internal and External Revenues

- All lunches were reimbursable meals-no a la carte menu items.
- A-La Carte Snack Sales in grades 3-12 were limited to the Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kid Guidelines (less than 30% of calories from fat, 10% or less from sat. fat, reduced portion size, decreased CHO) No K-2 snacks.
- Current Elementary grades 3-8 A-La-Carte snacks sold are limited to low fat milk, water, 100% juice and low fat, low calorie ice cream twice per week.
- Externally Increased Catering, Head Start & Summer Program Sites, Participation and Revenues.

Lunch participation increased from 63.5% of students in March of 2003 to 68 % of students in March 2008 as the menu became healthier.

Purchasing & Cost Control Systems

Revenues & Expenditures Need to be Monitored and Measured to Effectively Control Costs

- Established a Six School District Purchasing Cooperative with Other Large Urban Districts
- Centralized District Purchasing at All Levels
- Consolidated to a Single Production Facility
- Continuous Review of Individual School Forecasting and Production to Control Waste
- Constant Menu Review for Student Acceptability
- Recipe Development Utilizing Raw Commodities
- Established a System for Local Produce Purchases

Somerville School Wellness Policy

(implemented September, 2006)

A District wide commitment to improving the areas of nutrition, nutrition education, physical activity and physical education for all staff and students by fostering an environment in which students & staff can make healthful choices related to food & physical activity.

Objectives

- To Provide nutritious meals each day
- To Provide safe and enjoyable experiences for physical activity
- To Improve learning through better nutrition and physical activity
- To help Somerville's children develop healthy eating and physical activity habits through instruction and role modeling in a healthy environment
- To make the wellness policy available to all on the District website and in Parent and Guardian Information Guides
- To review the wellness policy annually with all District Administrators during Leadership Meetings.

Wellness Policy Highlights

School Environment

- School fundraisers involving food can only be held after school lunch is over and fundraisers are encouraged to sell foods from the recommended snack list.
- Principals are encouraged to provide recess before lunch.
- Students are encouraged to walk, bike or actively commute to school.
- Schools will continue to participate in the "Safe Routes to School Program" and distribute maps annually.
- Height and Weight data is collected annually on all children in Grades K through 8.

The Somerville School Committee approved a preference for local vendors in produce contracts to support purchase of local products and agriculture (June, 2008)

Wellness Policy Highlights

School Food Service

- Fresh fruit is served daily at school breakfast and lunch.
- A La Carte items meet the guidelines established by Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids.
- Health education training is offered annually to school food service staff.

Classroom Snacks

- A list of recommended snacks is disseminated to parents and teachers annually from Food Service for children's snacks.
- Candy is not to be used as a reward for children's accomplishments.

Physical Education and Health Services

- Physical education is required in grades K through 8.
- Fitness testing is incorporated into all PE services at all schools.

Staff Trainings & Wellness Opportunities

Professional Development and Training on nutrition education, knife skills, & food presentation.

- Programs for personal development (yoga strength training and apple picking).



New Equipment Purchases

- Combi oven, walk in freezers, refrigerators, warmers, slicers, grills, peelers, refrigerated delivery trucks, dicers, marketing and merchandising materials



Computerization of Department

Grant Funding : Student & Community Outreach

- Student Advisory Board
- Vegetable of the Month
- Cafeteria taste tests
- School gardens
- School contests
- Newsletters
- Food Service Menus/Web Info



Feature Vegetables 2008-2009

- September - Tomatoes
- October - Corn
- November - Squash
- December - Potatoes
- January - Beans
- February - Carrots
- March - Cucumbers
- April - Broccoli
- May - Spinach
- June - Garden Greens

The Vegetable of the Month is the CUCUMBER!

What Makes It All Work

- Modeling and reinforcement of department and district policies
- Collaborations and partnerships with school, after school, parents and community groups
- Constant communication about initiatives and programs
- Continuous reinvestment in program facilities, equipment and infrastructure
- Grant Funding: Shape Up Somerville, PEP, Growing Healthy, USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Grant
- Planning and a positive, proactive approach to problem solving
- Always keeping the kids first

Recommendations for Success in School Food Service

- Uniform national nutrition standards must be developed for school meal programs with the goal of disease prevention.
- Government funding and reimbursements must adequately support the costs for nutritious meals and keep pace with inflation and real food/paper/labor cost increases.
- Additional reimbursements and/or grant funding should be offered as incentives for Districts offering healthy meals.
- Commodity Foods should serve as a model for healthy foods.
- More time needs to be mandated for students to eat lunch.
- Wellness policies must be District embraced/supported.
- States must adopt policies to support local agriculture and allow for contract preference to purchase from local vendors.
- Nutrition Education and Physical Education must become a larger part of the whole school curriculum.

Somerville Resources Available Online

- School menus
- Wellness Policy
- Recommended Snack List
- Vegetable of the Month posters and recipes
- Detailed description of how to hold a taste taste
- Other nutrition outreach materials



Visit: <http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us>

- ➡ Departments ➡ Food Services