



## On Banning Foods

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Healthy eating policies currently being developed by the Healthy Eating Alliance for all three school districts aim to improve healthy eating environments in schools. **A key principle underlying these policies is to emphasize healthy choices for foods sold or offered at school through school food programs while limiting the availability of less healthy choices for the following reasons:**

1. Dietitians have long maintained that all foods and beverages can fit in a healthy eating pattern. However, some foods which are high in fat, salt and low in other nutrients should be consumed less often to avoid health problems in children and later in life. It is very important that healthy eating policies emphasize healthy choices on a daily and weekly basis- because it is **regular food use** that makes a difference in children's health now and later in life, and in their ability to learn in school.
2. Research suggests that when adults (parents, educators) "push" or enforce the consumption of healthy foods exclusively and eliminate or overly restrict all foods considered to be non-healthy, it can backfire in that children's liking for the less healthy foods actually increases. When less healthy foods become available to children, they are less able to control what they eat, and they tend to consume too much. There is some evidence that overzealous "banning" of less healthy choices can actually lead to a decrease in liking for healthy foods.
3. Research indicates that the amount of soft drinks consumed by children has increased significantly over the past several decades while milk consumption has decreased. There is also convincing evidence that excess soft drinks contribute significantly to overweight in children. Therefore, only 100% juice, water and milk will be sold in vending machines.
4. We recognize that "treat days", parties and celebrations which feature food are part of our culture. Schools need and appreciate flexibility for these special days, and we recommend that as long as they offer some healthy choices, it is acceptable to also provide less healthy choices once in a while (e.g. monthly or less often). For example, although we do not want to see soft drinks in vending machines, it is acceptable to offer soft drinks once in a while as part of a celebration.