



Modeling the Way: Healthy Beverage Policies in Schools

Over 50% of youth, 55% of adult males, and 40% adult females consume sugary beverages on a given day.¹ Sugary beverages have been linked to type II diabetes, heart disease, and obesity and yet the availability of these beverages is high with over 50% of schools in the United States offering sugary beverages.^{2,3,4,5} In recent years, school wellness policies have gained momentum as a strategy to promote healthy food and beverage consumption among students and staff. Staff wellness policies ensure that school staff and faculty serve as role models for students and are an integral part of creating a culture of wellness within the school community.

With support from Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools, the Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative (BANPAC), a regional collaborative of over 500 members, expanded the *Pledge the Practice! Pass the Policy!* campaign to focus on school staff wellness for the year 2014. The goal of *Pledge the Practice! Pass the Policy!* is to encourage Bay Area residents to reduce or eliminate sugar sweetened beverage consumption, choose healthier options, and participate in changing organizational policies and practices to support healthy choices.

During 2014, BANPAC provided training and technical assistance to 10 schools to develop, pass, and implement staff healthy beverage policies that reduce access to sugary beverages, such as sodas, sweetened coffees and teas, etc., and increase access to healthy beverages, such as water, and unsweetened tea and coffee. Over 3,980 school staff, students, and parent volunteers were impacted by the 10 policies. BANPAC evaluated the Thriving Schools Pledge the Practice! Pass the Policy! work with 8 of the 10 schools. The evaluation methods used included: reviewing policy elements, analyzing self-reported assessments of beverage availability before and after the policy was adopted, and interviewing school representatives about the policy adoption process.

Participating Schools

- Bryant Elementary
- ER Taylor Elementary
- International Community
- Manzanita SEED Elementary
- Mission Education Center Elementary
- Rise Community
- Sheridan Elementary
- Sequoia Elementary

Healthy Beverage Policy Criteria

100% of schools adopted a healthy beverage policy that met the following criteria:

- Public Health Institute's **100% Healthy Beverage Standards**.
- Applies to all adults working at the school, including administrators, school staff, teachers and paraprofessionals, afterschool staff, and community based organization personnel.
- Covers all beverages offered/sold at all of the following locations/circumstances: staff vending machines, staff meetings, staff celebrations, staff potlucks, sold for fundraising by school staff before, during and after school.
- Assures access to free, safe drinking water wherever beverages are offered and/or sold.

http://www.banpac.org/banpac_resources_to_olkit_beverage.htm

Evaluation Findings

The Policy Provided Motivation for Change and Created a Consistent Wellness Environment

The Staff were motivated to adopt the policy as they perceived that the policy would guide staff in modeling healthy behaviors for students. All schools worked to implement the staff wellness policy as soon as it was adopted. One school described their immediate policy implementation:

- **“We had a vending machine in the cafeteria that sold sugar[y and] caffeinated coffee drinks, so we decided to buy a regular coffee pot and keep it in the staff lounge. I called the vending company and had the guy come pick up the vending machine as soon as we signed the MOU.”**

Another school described how the policy provided consistency.

- **“We have teacher and staff that turnover, we want to instill a culture of health and wellness that exists regardless of staff turnover.”**

Beverage Availability

Few schools offered sugar sweetened beverages before policy adoption and no schools added sugar sweetened beverages during this project. There were seven schools that provided access to plain water at the start of the project and all schools provided access to plain water after the staff wellness policies were adopted. Overall, there was a decrease in sweetened coffee and tea drinks, 100% juice or fruit smoothies, and sweetened juice/fruit drinks after the policy adoption. While many schools already offered healthy beverages and had a limited number of sugar sweetened beverages, the number of sugar sweetened beverages offered was further decreased after the policy adoption.

The Policy Changed Staff Behavior

Schools reported that staff stopped drinking soda during school and replaced soda with water from refillable bottles that staff use in meetings and in the classroom and that very few staff eat unhealthy foods at school.

- **“Once the policy passed, people started bringing in items like fruit and vegetables and stopped bringing in things that were high in salt, fat and sugar.”**

Lessons Learned

- Identify a well-liked staff member as a champion for the policy.
- Engage all staff in wellness discussions on a regular basis at staff meetings to build and maintain buy-in for and awareness of the policy.
- Use data to convey the importance of wellness to staff and students.
- Assure the staff that the policy is easy to implement.
- Remind staff that wellness starts with staff and trickles down to students.
- Take advantage of the school district wellness policy for students to develop, adopt and implement a staff wellness policy.

Conclusion

BANPAC's experience working with 10 schools to implement staff beverage policies shows that it is feasible for other schools and organizations to adopt similar policies. There was overwhelming support for the wellness policies from school staff. Many of the schools were already offering healthy beverages and the policy served to sustain a culture of wellness. For resources to develop and implement a healthy beverage policy, go to www.banpac.org.

Sources:

1. Ogden, C., et al. (2011). Consumption of sugar drinks in the United States, 2005-2008. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db71.pdf>
2. Vartanian, L., et al. (2007). Effects of Soft Drink Consumption on Nutrition and Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Am J Public Health*. 97(4), 667-675. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1829363/>
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5. Centers for Disease Control (2011). Children's food environment state indicator report, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/ChildrensFoodEnvironment.pdf>