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# TEAM UP WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

No one would wish poor health on anyone, let alone a child! With the rise in childhood obesity in the last 30 years, children are dealing with adult-related health conditions such as high blood pressure, high blood fats, asthma, depression, and type 2 diabetes.

Children, no matter their shape or size, do not deserve or need the added responsibilities that come with having poor health. The good news is most of these health conditions are preventable. Choosing to eat nutrient-rich healthy food, being physically active daily and maintaining a healthy weight are the keys to a healthy lifestyle. The school environment plays a large role in determining if it is easy for children to make these healthy choices. To help reverse the trend of childhood obesity, families need to work together with schools, community members, and community organizations to make healthy the easy choice by implementing the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

### READ ON FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- It Takes a Village: Involving Families and Communities ..... 117-119
- Are We on Target? A *Michigan Nutrition Standards* Checklist ..... 121-123
- School Meals 101: What Families Should Know ..... 125-126
- Communities Can! Gaining Support for the Standards ..... 127-128
- GO! Family Resource Sheet ..... 129
- The *Michigan Nutrition Standards* Families and Communities Training ..... 131
- GO! for Healthy Snacks with Grandparents ..... **POCKET**
- GO! for School Birthday Celebrations ..... **POCKET**
- GO! for School Parties ..... **POCKET**
- GO! for Rewards ..... **POCKET**
- GO! for Healthy Fundraising ..... **POCKET**
- GO! for Concessions ..... **POCKET**
- Fuel Up to Play 60—Who Can Help & How: Parents ..... **POCKET**
- Fuel Up to Play 60—Who Can Help & How: Community Members ..... **POCKET**







## IT TAKES A VILLAGE: INVOLVING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Families want their children to have the best possible foundation for a bright future. Healthy food and beverages are the building blocks for healthy bodies and brains. Many parents choose to play an active role in their child's education at home and at school. Children spend a significant amount of time at school and it reinforces a parent's message when healthy habits are consistent in both locations.

There is a movement nationally and in Michigan to improve the food and beverage offerings in schools. In October 2010, the Michigan State Board of Education approved the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*: Michigan Department of Education Recommendations for Food and Beverage Offerings in Michigan Schools gives schools guidance on healthy offerings available to students. The *Michigan Nutrition Standards* address all the places where food and beverages are offered and sold in schools. Schools are under tremendous pressure to meet rigorous academic standards. They may be very interested in impacting the health environment but may have equally important competing priorities. Be prepared to offer your help. Below are some ideas on how to get involved.

### FAMILIES CAN...

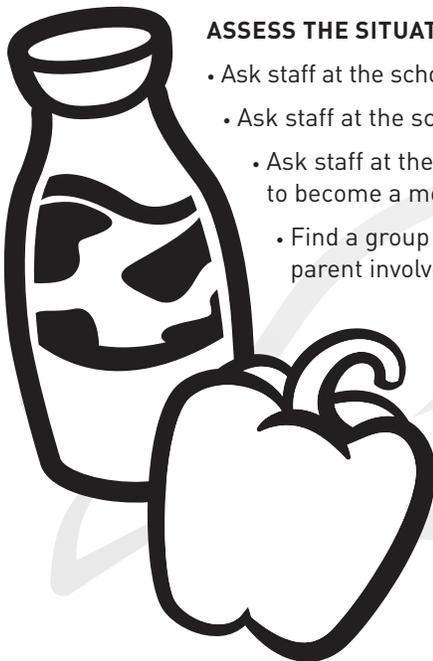
- Learn why nutrition standards are important
- Become familiar with the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*
- Role model healthy behaviors

For links to the underlined resources, go to the online toolkit at [www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards](http://www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards)



### ASSESS THE SITUATION AT THE SCHOOL

- Ask staff at the school/district if they are working to implement the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.
- Ask staff at the school/district about their Local Wellness Policy.
- Ask staff at the school/district if they have a Coordinated School Health Team and if so, ask to become a member of the team.
- Find a group of families that are interested in nutrition and wellness. Check out your local parent involvement group like the Parent Teacher Association/Organization (PTA/PTO).



**INVESTIGATE**

- Become familiar with the district's [Local Wellness Policy](#) and how the policy is being implemented.
- Learn about the school and district vision, philosophies and high priority areas.
- Evaluate the food and beverage options students have in all of the areas. Figure 1 shows different areas where food and beverages are found in schools.
- Use the [checklist](#) to see how the different areas are meeting the standards.
- Review the school menu and talk to your child about the different options available.
- Go to school and eat a meal with your child. School meals have changed since you were a student. See [School Meals 101](#) for more information.
- Schedule a meeting with the Food Service Director. Keep the message positive. Ask what you can do to help and then enlist the help of others.
- If you have a concern about an area outside of the cafeteria, schedule a meeting with the principal. State the concern in a positive manner and offer potential solutions and assistance.
- Check out what [other schools](#) are doing around the state.

**FIGURE 1: FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN SCHOOLS****ACT**

- Use the [GO! Family Resources](#) and model the behaviors you want to see at home.
- Get other parents, friends and neighbors involved.
- Work with or help start a [Fuel Up to Play 60](#) team at your school.
- Go to PTA/PTO or other parent group meetings to gather support and help in implementing the standards.
- Use the [Michigan Nutrition Standards](#) training to educate others about why implementing the standards is important.

**KEEP IT UP**

- Change takes time. Don't get discouraged if things are not going as you planned. Be patient and persistent.



## TIPS FOR FAMILIES ON WAYS TO SUPPORT THE MICHIGAN NUTRITION STANDARDS

### AROUND THE SCHOOL

- Send your student to school with healthy snacks.
- If the classroom has group snacks, offer to plan the snack calendar and make assignments.
- Organize a school-wide healthy snack challenge. Solicit healthy prize donations for the winning classrooms.
- Offer to help plan a classroom party with the focus on fun and activity.
- Work with the Food Service Director and assist with taste testing events to expose children to new foods and add them to the menu.

### PARENT GROUPS

- Work with the PTA/PTO or other parent organizations to use alternative fundraisers. Think about the message that you want to send to your kids. Is their health more important than having to sell unhealthy foods?
- If your organization is providing snacks to students, make sure they are healthy.
- If your school or booster group makes spirit bags for the athletes, think about what is going in them. Isn't it better to fuel our young athletes with healthy offerings instead of sugar and high fat food and beverages?
- Does your group host a carnival? Think about ways to incorporate foods that fit the standards and fun healthy messages:

- Serve/sell healthy offerings such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free dairy and lean proteins at the concession stand.

- Ask for donations such as bottled water instead of less healthy food and beverages.

- Ask your Food Service Director, and local farmer or produce supplier for healthy food donations.

- Replace unhealthy food games like the soda toss with health-promoting games or stations such as a hula hoop making station. See the Resources tab for a way to make hula hoops out of PVC and duct tape.

- Have an edible sculpture auction instead of a baked goods auction—provide a prize to the most creative or highest bid obtainer.

- Have a dance-off instead of a cake walk.

A Mid-Michigan PTA sponsors the annual field day snack for 1400 elementary students in their district. During the 2010-2011 year, instead of popsicles the children were given the choice of five different fresh fruits! By working with a food vendor, it cost only \$125 more to offer fresh fruits than popsicles. What a great use of funds to teach children to fuel themselves with yummy juicy fruits and water after working up a sweat.







## ARE WE ON TARGET? A MICHIGAN NUTRITION STANDARDS CHECKLIST

**FAMILIES:** Check out your school! Use this checklist to determine whether or not your child's school is serving food and beverages that meet the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

### FOOD AND BEVERAGES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL MEALS

QUESTION	ANSWER	RECOMMENDATION
1. DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE VENDING MACHINES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS?	Yes	Do the food and beverages all meet the <u><i>Nutrition Standards</i></u> ? *If yes, go to question 2. *If no, work with the group responsible for the machine to help change to products that do.
	No	
2. DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE A LA CARTE, SNACK LINE OR SNACK CART AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS?	Yes	Do the food and beverages all meet the <u><i>Nutrition Standards</i></u> ? *If yes, go to question 3. *If no, work with the group responsible for the school store to help change to products that do.
	No	
3. DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE A SCHOOL STORE THAT SELLS FOOD AND BEVERAGES TO STUDENTS?	Yes	Do the food and beverages all meet the <u><i>Nutrition Standards</i></u> ? *If yes, go to question 4. *If no, work with the group responsible for the school store to help change to products that do.
	No	
4. DOES THE SCHOOL OFFER FOOD AND BEVERAGE FUNDRAISERS LIKE BAKE SALES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY TO STUDENTS?	Yes	Do the food and beverages all meet the <u><i>Nutrition Standards</i></u> ? *If yes, make sure they are not sold 30 minutes before or after a meal time and go to question 5.  *If no, work with the group responsible to change the offerings and make sure they are not sold 30 minutes before or after a meal time. Non-food items can be sold during meal times.
	No	
5. DO STUDENTS RECEIVE FOOD OR BEVERAGES AS A REWARD FOR A JOB WELL DONE IN PLACES LIKE CLASS, THE PLAYGROUND, OR THE BUS?	Yes	Schools are encouraged to create healthy habits by offering non-food rewards.
	No	



For links to the underlined resources, go to the online toolkit at [www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards](http://www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards)



QUESTION	ANSWER	RECOMMENDATION
6. DO STUDENTS RECEIVE FOOD REWARD PARTIES FOR "WINNING" OR GOOD BEHAVIOR?	Yes	Schools are encouraged to create healthy habits by offering non-food <u>rewards</u> .
	No	
7. DO STUDENTS RECEIVE A SNACK PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL EVERY DAY (NOT BROUGHT FROM HOME)?	Yes	Does the policy request that food and beverages all meet the <u>Nutrition Standards</u> ?  *If yes, go to question 8.  *If no, work with the group responsible for providing the snack and provide suggestions.
	No	
8. DOES THE SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM HAVE A SNACK POLICY?	Yes	Do the food and beverages in the policy meet the <u>Nutrition Standards</u> ?  *If yes, go to question 9.  *If no, encourage a healthy snack policy to be created using the <u>GO! for Healthy Snacks</u> handout.
	No	It is encouraged to create a healthy snack policy using the <u>GO! for Healthy Snacks</u> handout.
9. DOES THE SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM CELEBRATE STUDENT BIRTHDAYS WITH FOOD AND BEVERAGES?	Yes	Do at least half of the food and beverages meet the <u>Nutrition Standards</u> ?  *If yes, go to question 10.  *If no, suggest ways to create a healthy party.
	No	If the school or classroom wants to continue to celebrate with food, consider having a party once a month or less and make sure to honor the child on their day in other ways.
10. DOES THE SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM HAVE PARTIES OR CELEBRATIONS WITH FOOD AND BEVERAGES?	Yes	Do at least half of the food and beverages meet the <u>Nutrition Standards</u> ?  *If yes, thanks for completing the checklist.
	No	*If no, go to the <u>GO! for School Parties</u> handout for ideas to put focus on fun and food ideas.





**FAMILIES:** Use this checklist for breakfast, lunch and afterschool snack menus to see how they are meeting the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

### SCHOOL LUNCH CHECKLIST

All answers should be **yes** for the lunch menu to meet the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

ITEM	YES	NO
Are <u>whole grains</u> offered at least one half the time? Check with the Food Service Director as grain products may not be listed as whole grain on the menu.		
Are at least two <u>dark green vegetables</u> offered a week?*		
Is at least one <u>deep yellow/orange/red vegetable</u> offered a week?*		
Are <u>legumes</u> offered as a vegetable or meat/meat alternate at least twice a week?*		
Is 100% juice offered as the fruit choice no more than one time per week?*		
Are lower fat (less than 40% of calories from fat) entrée choices offered at least four times per week?		
Is only skim and 1% flavored or unflavored milk offered?		

\*Does the school have a fruit and vegetable bar? Foods on the bar count toward this requirement. Many schools are using romaine and/or spinach, which are considered dark green vegetables, as their salad lettuce.

### SCHOOL BREAKFAST CHECKLIST

All answers should be **yes** for the breakfast menu to meet the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

ITEM	YES	NO
Are <u>whole grains</u> offered at least three times per week?		
Is there a fruit or vegetable serving every day?		
Are there at least three whole fruit or vegetables offered instead of juice?		
Is juice offered no more than 2 times a week as the fruit or vegetable serving?		
Is only fat-free and 1% flavored or unflavored milk offered?		
Are there either two grains or one meat/meat alternative and one grain offered daily?		

### AFTER SCHOOL SNACKS CHECKLIST

All answers should be **yes** for the afterschool snacks to meet the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

ITEM	YES	NO
Are there at least two components (meat/meat alternate, grains/breads, fruits/vegetables, milk) offered daily?		
Is at least one <u>whole grain</u> offered per week?		
Are at least one half of the fruit/vegetable servings the whole fruit/vegetable instead of juice?		
Is only fat free or 1% flavored or unflavored milk offered?		





## SCHOOL MEALS 101: WHAT FAMILIES SHOULD KNOW

The goal of offering healthy, appetizing meals is shared between families and school nutrition professionals. School meals are often in the “hot seat” with families for not being healthy. School meals have changed a lot over the years and learning more about them can help ease a parent’s mind about what is being served at school.

### DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Children who eat school meals are more likely to consume milk, fruit and vegetables and less likely to eat desserts and snack items than children who do not.<sup>31</sup>
- There is no evidence that either the school breakfast or lunch program is contributing to rising rates of childhood obesity.<sup>31</sup>
- Students are less likely to gain weight during the school year when in school than during the summer when school is out.<sup>32</sup>

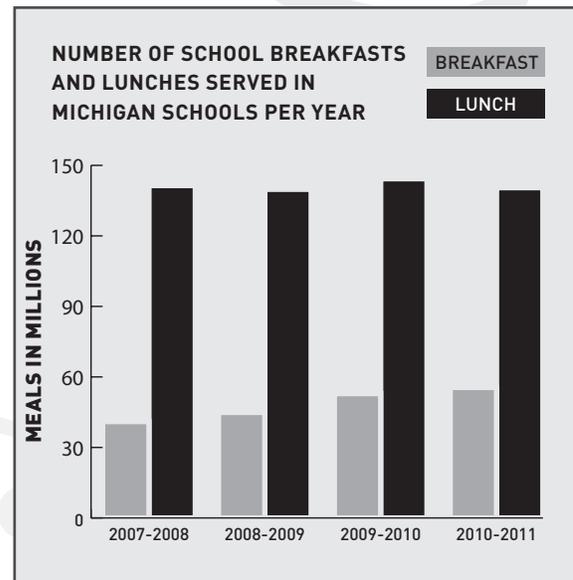


### WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM (NSLP) AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM (SBP)?

The NSLP and SBP are federally assisted meal programs for school children through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Schools that participate in the NSLP and SBP get cash reimbursement for free, reduced and paid meals and receive USDA foods. School lunches and breakfasts must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and meet nutrient standards. While school lunches must meet federal requirements, decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made locally. Local schools set their own prices for full-price meals but must operate a nonprofit lunch program. Schools are monitored by the Michigan Department of Education for compliance with the federal guidelines.

### QUALIFICATIONS FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICED MEALS

Any child at a school participating in the NSLP may purchase meals. However, children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-priced meals. For the period July 1, 2011—June 30, 2012, the income limit to qualify for free meals for a family of four is \$29,055 and the income limit for reduced-priced meals for a family of four is \$41,348. To receive free or reduced priced meals a family must submit an application available at their local school district. Contact the school Food Service Director for more information.





### SCHOOL MEALS FUNDING

School food service programs receive their funding through federal reimbursements for free, reduced and paid meals, state supplemental funding, and revenue from meals and a la carte. Schools also receive credit for meals served to use towards USDA foods.

For the 2010-2011 school year, the basic reimbursement rates were:

• **FREE LUNCH:** \$2.72    • **REDUCED PRICE LUNCH:** \$2.32    • **PAID LUNCH:** \$0.26

In addition to cash reimbursements, schools are entitled to receive USDA foods at a value of 20.25 cents for each meal served in School Year 2010-2011. Schools can also get “bonus” commodities if available from agricultural surplus.

### USDA FOODS (FORMERLY KNOWN AS USDA COMMODITY FOODS)

#### USDA FOODS:

- Are foods USDA purchases and makes available to schools
- Help food service programs stretch their budgets to provide nutritious, well balanced meals
- Make up approximately 15 to 20 percent of the food served in each school lunch.
- Provide a variety of healthy food choices, including fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, poultry, dairy, and grains.
- Include a selection of more than 180 nutritious food items—fresh, frozen, packaged, canned, dried, and bulk.
- Meet rigorous food safety standards set by Federal regulatory agencies and USDA’s two purchasing agencies—the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Farm Service Agency.

A school lunch program is required to offer five food items at a lunch from the following components—fruit & vegetable, grain, meat or meat alternate and milk.



### BUILDING A MEAL

A school lunch program is required to offer five food items at a lunch from the following components—fruit & vegetable, grain, meat or meat alternate and milk. A student must take three of the five components for the meal to qualify for reimbursement. Schools must build their menus to meet the federal guidelines. These include minimum weekly amounts for each component that must be offered to students. The current federal guidelines have calorie minimums that schools must follow. For example, an elementary lunch must have at least 664 calories but there are no maximums set. These calorie guidelines will change when the new national nutrition standards in the [Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010](#) go into effect. With the new guidelines, the calories will need to be between 550-650 for an elementary lunch. Keep these things in mind when you look at your school’s menu. Just like in homes, schools have to play a balancing act to create nutritious, student appealing meals that meet the federal guidelines and stay within their food and labor budget.

### NUTRITION STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL

The current federal school meal guidelines are under revision to meet the current nutrition needs of students. This revision is taking place because of the [Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010](#). The proposed school meal guidelines will include calorie maximums as well as minimums, maximums for sodium, fat, and saturated fat. In addition to the calorie guidelines, there are also minimum amounts for foods with health benefits such as dark green and deep yellow/orange/red vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. The new federal meal guidelines are expected to go in effect during the 2012-2013 school year.

Adapted from: USDA—National School Lunch Program fact sheet; MDE School Meals in Michigan; and USDA—USDA Foods: Healthy Foods for Our Schools



## COMMUNITIES CAN! GAINING SUPPORT FOR THE STANDARDS

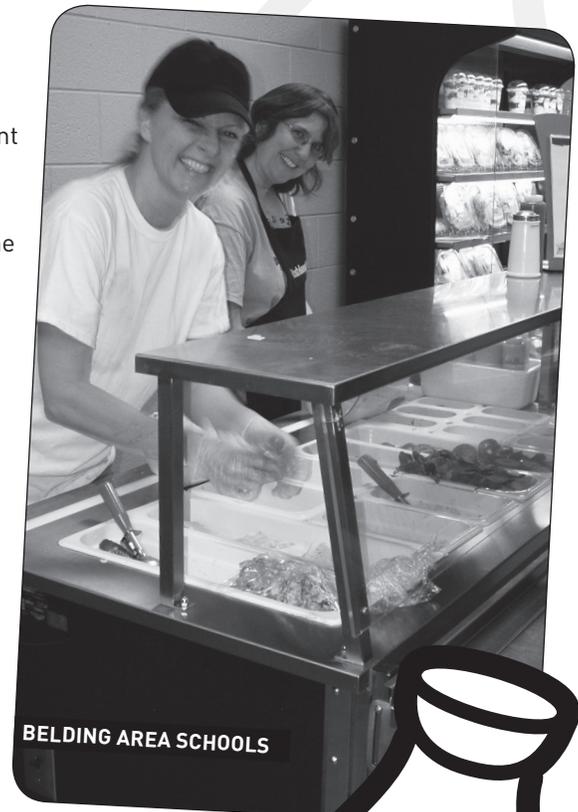
You've probably heard the expression, "It takes village to raise a child." Community support, whether it's from individuals or businesses and organizations, is vitally important to successfully implement the *Michigan Nutrition Standards* in schools. Regardless of whether or not you have children attending school in your district, you can help support the standards and encourage others to do the same. Try these suggestions:

### INDIVIDUALS CAN...

- **LEARN ABOUT THE STANDARDS.** If you don't know what they are, contact your school district foodservice director or superintendent or go to: [www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition](http://www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition) for a copy.
- **VISIT THE SCHOOL.** Find out what's being offered or served in school vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and tour the cafeteria. Be sure to make an appointment first. Many schools do not allow walk-in visitors.
- **SUPPORT HEALTHIER FUNDRAISERS** that focus on non-food items such as wrapping paper, car washes, raffles, or contests.
- **JOIN THE COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH TEAM**, or Local Wellness Policy Committee if you have time and talents to share.
- **BE A HEALTHY ROLE MODEL.** Eat healthy food that meet the standards and be active yourself.

### BUSINESSES CAN...

- **LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STANDARDS.** Ask yourself: *Is there a way through my business I can support the standards?* Be creative.
- **DONATE OR OFFER LOW-COST ITEMS** (stickers, pencils, etc.) for schools to use as rewards for students instead of food.
- **OFFER A PERCENTAGE OF A PURCHASE** (e.g. 10% on dry-cleaning) to help schools raise funds without selling unhealthy food and beverages.
- **LABEL 3-5 OF THE BEST CHOICES.** If you are a grocery store or other store that sells food, place healthy items that meet the standards where consumers can easily find and purchase them.
- **INCREASE YOUR EFFORT** to better market healthy food and beverages such as fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat dairy, and whole grain snacks if you sell them. Limit advertising of unhealthy food and beverages.
- **OFFER LOW-COST, NON-FOOD FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCES** to schools such as touring a radio station or a printing business or going bowling or roller skating.
- **PUT HEALTHY MESSAGES** that support the standards on your business marquee.
- **PRODUCE A GOOD** that meets the standards and offer it to schools, e.g. a low-fat fruit or vegetable muffin.
- **BE PRESENT AT HEALTH FAIRS AND OTHER SCHOOL EVENTS.** Show community members that your business supports community health.





### ORGANIZATIONS CAN...

- **BE PART OF THE COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH TEAM,** or Local Wellness Policy team. Contact your school district superintendent to find out if this is a possibility.
- **TAKE PART,** as a team or committee member, in completing the Healthy School Action Tools (HSAT) and other health-related community and school assessments.
- **HELP SCHOOLS LINK BETTER WITH LOCAL FARMERS** and food producers to offer local foods that meet the standards in schools.
- **HELP CREATE A SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN** to educate citizens about the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*. Make best use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
- **LEAD BY EXAMPLE.** Offer healthy food and beverages at meetings, implement a worksite wellness challenge, conduct a health fair, or distribute healthy messages to employees of your organizations and partners.





## GO! FAMILY RESOURCE SHEETS

### WHAT IS GO!?

54321GO! is an everyday plan for students to follow for a healthy lifestyle. It is a prevention message and marketing tool that has been adopted by *Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan*, a coalition focused on fighting childhood obesity through policy change. The pilot districts utilized 54321GO! resources to implement the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

### WHAT ARE GO! FAMILY RESOURCES?

GO! Family Resources are a group of handouts that provide ideas to families on how to meet the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*.

### WHAT GO! FAMILY RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

- [GO! for Healthy Snacks with Grandparent](#)
- [GO! for School Birthday Celebrations](#)
- [GO! for School Parties](#)
- [GO! for Rewards](#)
- [GO! for Healthy Fundraising](#)
- [GO! for Concessions](#)

### HOW CAN THE GO! FAMILIES RESOURCES BE USED?

- Add to take-home packets, school or classroom newsletters, or family folders.
- Provide message to PTA/PTO, boosters or other parent involvement groups to distribute at parent events.
- Have available at open house and parent teacher conferences.
- Provide to all fundraising groups in the district.
- Use at events and parent education nights.

For links to the underlined resources, go to the online toolkit at [www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards](http://www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards)







## THE MICHIGAN NUTRITION STANDARDS FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TRAINING

A PowerPoint training has been created to help families and community members better understand the importance of, and how they may be able to help implement, the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*. Creating a healthy school environment where “healthy” is the easy choice requires support from everyone in the community. Students and families will get consistent messages about healthy eating throughout the community if everyone is on the same page. So, no matter where students are in the community—the school, the mall, the park, or the football game—they know they are supported by the community in making healthy choices.

### WHERE CAN I FIND THE TRAINING?

At the *Michigan Nutrition Standards Toolkit website* ([www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards](http://www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards)) you will find in PDF format:

- A one-hour training for families and community members
- A 30-minute training for families and community members

Don't forget to train families and community members that may be affected by the standards. One pilot district educated community groups like the Rotary Club about healthy changes taking place at their concessions stands. This helped set expectations of what food would be available to purchase.

### WHERE AND WHEN SHOULD I CONDUCT THE TRAINING?

Consider conducting the *Michigan Nutrition Standards* families and community training for...

- Parent involvement groups (PTA/PTO, boosters, and other volunteers)
- Employees of your local hospital, local doctors, dentists, or dietitians
- Civic groups such as Rotary or Kiwanis
- City government employees and downtown or city development groups

“It helped to communicate the changes to community groups. It helped that we went to people before they came to us.”

.....  
PILOT DISTRICT

### TRAINING TIPS

There are many things you can do to make your training more successful and fun. Try these suggestions:

- **Invite community members** to attend the training by running an article about the standards and the training in your local newspaper.
- **Make the standards available for review** (ahead of time if desired) by community members on the school web site.
- **Offer food samples or snacks at your training.** Work with your foodservice director to prepare and offer healthy snacks for a taste testing, demonstrate the difference between healthy and less-healthy beverage choices, or model activities for a classroom party that take the focus off of food.
- **As an activity, ask training participants to take a mental tour of the community.** What places (businesses, organizations, public entities, etc.) are available in the community that could help support or promote the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*? How could they help?
- **Keep communicating.** Use school or parent newsletters, the school web site, a school or community TV station, and email to remind attendees about the standards.
- **Allow time for questions.** Have a parent and a school staff member answer the questions to show the unity of making healthy changes.
- **Check back in one month** with people who attended the training. Ask them if they have done anything they identified at the training and if not, ask if they need help getting started.

For links to the underlined resources, visit [www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards](http://www.michigan.gov/nutritionstandards)

