



## Case Studies

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# Key Strategies for Maintaining Revenue while Changing School Foods for the Better

## INTRODUCTION

*One of the ways schools play a key role in the national effort to reverse the trend of childhood obesity is by promoting healthful nutrition practices.*

It is important for schools to create a healthy food environment because some students consume up to 50 percent of their total daily food intake at school.<sup>1</sup> Food and beverages are available to students through two avenues; the *U.S. Department of Agriculture's* reimbursable school meal programs (school breakfast, lunch and afterschool snacks) and through competitive foods which include a la carte items sold in cafeterias, vending machines, school stores, snack carts and fundraising. USDA reimbursable school meals must meet federal nutrition standards but competitive foods are exempt from such requirements. Reports on the school environment in individual states have found that schools often sell competitive foods and beverages that have little or no nutritional value.<sup>2</sup> Districts have attempted to make healthy changes to school foods, in particular, competitive foods and beverages; but one of the main concerns is a potential decrease in revenue. When improving nutrition standards, especially those relating to competitive foods and beverages, there is a common fear

that revenue will drop, thereby creating a financial hardship. However, a meta analysis of revenue studies revealed that fears of net financial loss due to changes in food options and overall school nutrition are unfounded; available data suggests that most schools experience no loss of revenue.<sup>3</sup>

In providing technical assistance to schools across the country, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation wanted to identify specific factors that facilitated revenue neutral or positive shifts after healthier food changes were implemented. Through a review of surveys, research on competitive foods and beverages, relevant success stories in *Making it Happen* and the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program and via interviews conducted, the Alliance surfaced key strategies that help a school maintain or increase revenue while integrating healthier foods and nutrition standards and guidelines. Findings are presented in summary below and are embedded into school-specific case studies.

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# Data Collection

To further examine what happens to revenue when healthier foods and beverages are implemented, representatives from three schools and four school districts were interviewed. All had responded to surveys conducted by the Alliance on competitive foods and school meals and/or were recognized by the Healthy Schools Program with a Bronze or Silver award. To gather a variety of perspectives, interviewees included teachers, food service directors, principals, school nurses, cafeteria managers and nutrition specialists. The aim of the interviews was to collect information on the process of transitioning to healthier foods and the strategies that allowed schools to remain financially neutral or to experience a positive revenue shift.

Interviews were conducted in April and May 2010 by telephone. School representatives were asked to describe the healthy changes that had been made in regards to competitive foods and beverages, what effect the changes had on revenue, key factors that contributed to success, challenges that were faced and suggestions for others seeking to make changes in the school foods environment. Responses were compiled into individual case studies with the format of the case studies modeled after the *Making it Happen: School Nutrition Success Stories*. Key strategies are highlighted and summarized to illustrate the variety of approaches used to improve student nutrition and maintain revenue.<sup>4</sup>

## Findings

All school personnel interviewed reported challenges during their process of transitioning to healthier food choices. The most common challenges faced dealt with the current economic crisis, budget constraints, student acceptance, cost of products and district reluctance to implement changes. A lack of studies without controlled variables has made it difficult to identify how challenges affected revenue. However, the case studies indicate that with ingenuity, perseverance and continued attention to student acceptability, revenue can rebound. Revenue stability was not achieved overnight, but when schools demonstrated patience, creativity and consistency in application of changes, schools were able to gain student acceptance towards the healthier foods. Students adjusted and purchased the products at the same rate without food services experiencing significant revenue losses. Throughout the case studies, key facilitating factors emerged to help address and overcome challenges in order to maintain or increase revenue while implementing healthier foods. Here is a highlight of the some of the facilitating factors identified:

### **FACILITATING FACTORS**

#### **Student Engagement:**

Revenue success relies on student participation in the school meals program. Students are the customer base and target audience for foods and beverages. To ensure acceptance of healthy changes, it is important to involve them in decisions about their school food environment and engage them in activities that promote nutrition and wellness.

- Taste testing is an effective way to introduce students to new and healthier items and receive feedback. Products that receive a positive response are implemented into the menus. Students feel empowered when involved in the decisions of switching to healthy items and are more likely to support the changes by buying the healthier products.
- Student focus groups that address health and nutrition topics allow students to engage in peer discussions and become more conscious of their individual health. Brockport County Schools reached out to campus student council groups and established food committees to initiate specific nutrition topics. Input from food committees helps ensure the selection of profitable products in competitive foods and beverages.
- Brockport food services also worked closely with the high school's horticulture club to plant fresh herbs that are used to season foods in the school meal menu. Direct student engagement caused sustainable changes in Brockport and students were more motivated to buy the healthier items.
- Afterschool programs that promote physical activity help students focus on overall wellness. Hortonville High School intramural sport programs get students excited about fitness and sport nutrition. Serving healthy snacks during afterschool activities promotes proper nutrition for leading an active lifestyle.

## Education:

Nutrition education helps students understand the reasoning behind the food changes and increases their willingness to buy the healthy items. By providing students with health knowledge, students are better able to make their own nutritionally sound decisions and show less reluctance in purchasing healthier items.

- Providing students with nutrition and health education in the classroom reinforces healthy habits. Hagen Road Elementary school nurse stated, “The more you educate the children to live healthy lifestyles, the more they hear it, the more they know it, the more they live it.” A Hortonville High School teacher also commented, “Change takes awhile. It isn’t something you can do overnight. You will meet great resistance but it helps to explain to the students why you are making the changes and then they will understand and accept them better. Change will happen faster.”
- Educational handouts that teach basic nutrition content and how to read food labels helps steer students towards buying the healthier products. Readily available educational resources allow students to become more aware of how they are fueling their bodies and value the importance of good nutrition.
- School cafeteria managers have noticed that students are more enthusiastic towards eating the healthy foods that they have learned about prior in the classroom. Hagen Road Elementary saw an increase in specific vegetable consumption concurrent with the related instructional component in the health curriculum.
- Hortonville High School offers a complimentary breakfast to students during finals as a way to educate them about the importance of eating a balanced breakfast in order to stay focused and be a better learner. (Hortonville High School instills the habit of eating breakfast daily in hopes to raise revenue by increasing participation in the USDA school breakfast program. According to USDA’s report on the School Breakfast Pilot Project, in schools that implemented universal breakfast programs, total breakfast revenue exceeded total costs. Plus the combined food and labor cost per breakfast served was 11 percent lower than in schools that did not implement universal breakfast programs.<sup>5</sup>)

## Staff Involvement:

A collaborative effort of teachers, principals, cafeteria managers and various staff is vital to revenue success when transitioning to healthier foods. Staff is also affected by changes in the school food environment and thus it is important to get their feedback and participation to support the changes. When staff set a good example of leading healthy lifestyles, it reinforces the students’ behavior and convinces students to make the similar choices.

- Brockport Central School District incorporates staff in menu planning by asking them to submit new and creative menu items. This has increased staff

participation in school meal services. Brockport food director stated, “Receiving the buy-in from staff has helped ease the transition to healthier foods.”

- Staff representation on wellness committees is important for keeping communications open, gathering insight regarding student behavior and maximizing support for healthier choices.
- Grand Rapids School District’s sport coaches teach their athletes, and also role model, how to make healthy choices in the cafeteria to provide them with the energy needed for success in competition.

## Strategic Implementation:

Integrating a full line of healthy products for the start of the school year or making gradual changes throughout the year provides two different models of strategic implementation. With both models there is evidence that students purchase healthier products at the same previous rates and revenue remains stable.

- District School Board of Pasco County evaluates their a la carte menu annually and changes are made before students return for the following year. This is beneficial in that it allows students to be more flexible and open to the new products. When their favorite products are removed mid- year, they are less likely to accept the healthy changes.
- Grand Rapids Public School District used to sell cookies and French fries. When the students returned for the following school year, they noticed that these options were no longer available. At first, students were waiting for these products to re-appear, but they had no other choice then to adapt to the healthier menu items and revenue quickly rebounded.
- Gradual changes throughout the school year at Hagen Road Elementary have allowed revenue to remain stable and student participation in the cafeteria lunches has increased. Hagen Road Elementary Principal states, “We are amazed at how many more students are buying school lunches and that they are really eating most of their lunch.”
- School representatives have reported greater success when strategically presenting their students with only healthy foods. The leading thought is that if students come to school with money to spend on a la carte, they are going to find something to buy so why not strictly make healthy options available, especially in a closed-campus setting.
- Research suggests that when more healthful food choices such as fruit and vegetables are available, students may purchase and consume more of them. A 2009 study found that having no access to unhealthy a la carte food was related to higher intake of fruit and vegetables among middle school students.<sup>6</sup>
- Several interviewees emphasized success when offering a variety of healthy foods and making healthier alterations to popular food items. Brockport Central

School District turned to new products from vendors such as a breakfast “cookie” that is made with oatmeal, whole grains and cinnamon chips. It is high in fiber and high in protein. The new products are slightly more expensive but the students and staff love them and the cookies have caused an increase in school meal participation during breakfast.

#### **Parent Involvement:**

It is important for parents to be aware of school food offerings so they can encourage their children to make healthy choices at school as well as at home. Studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between healthy eating habits at home and healthy eating habits at school.<sup>7</sup> When students have already acquired the taste for healthy foods, they are more willing to accept and purchase them at school.

- Educating parents on ways to practice healthy eating habits at home is a strategic way to encourage students’ acceptance of healthier changes at school. Pasco County is aware that many students are not eating healthy at home so this may also hinder their willingness to accept changes at school. The registered dietitian for Pasco County Schools provides articles on the school web site to educate parents on ways to improve their children’s health.
- Hagen Road Elementary is aware that parents play a major role in their children’s dietary decisions. A parent newsletter that highlights ways to promote a healthy home environment is sent home monthly. Students who are at high risk for obesity are given private individualized sessions with the school nurse to monitor health and nutrition progress. Building a parent and child support system helps create sustainable change in student behavior towards accepting and choosing the healthier products at school.
- The nutrition services coordinator at Grand Rapids Public School District set up information booths at parent teacher conferences and spoke at various afterschool events where parents attended. Presenting information on school meal programs and discussing with parents the importance of promoting a healthy diet for their children in and out of school proved effective. At appropriate venues, parents were engaged in taste testing such items as quinoa and offered recipes to encourage simple and healthy food preparation at home. Recipes were then duplicated in schools and served to students, thereby increasing exposure of new foods.

#### **Marketing Strategies:**

Marketing strategies, and consistent messaging on healthy eating and active lifestyles, enhance changes in food offerings. A community health dialogue, price adjustments and exposure to health-promoting images cultivate a positive school culture and make good health practices a norm.

- Healthy school images provide a fun atmosphere and community spirit that motivates children to eat healthier. Gainesville High School remodeled their cafeteria by replacing wall pictures of hamburgers and French fries with pictures of active teenagers engaging in various activities such as kicking a soccer ball or running. To further promote an overall healthy school environment, they branded the school health motto: Eat well. Play hard. Live Long.
- Price adjustments are a successful marketing strategy. Gainesville High School generated profit from their a la carte café products by simply charging a quarter more than food services’ purchase price. Over the course of the year with the accumulation of the twenty-five cent profit for each item, the Purple Palace Café made over 20,000 dollars for food services while two campus clubs made 8,000 dollars.
- The All School Walk at Hortonville High School is a one-mile walk that gets students excited about fitness. Teams walk around campus writing down letters placed along the course to unscramble a phrase. The winning phrase, “Make Healthy Choices” reminds and motivates students to lead a healthier lifestyle. Other ways Hortonville markets healthy habits is by including a tip of the day in the morning announcements.

#### **Utilizing Outside Resources:**

Committing to change can be difficult, but taking advantage of various resources can make the process smoother and ultimately more successful. The Alliance for a Healthier Generation provided many of the schools with several toolkits and health promotion programs that helped initiate and guide change.

- Several schools reported that the use of the Healthy Schools Program Inventory served as a foundation to fulfill their vision of a healthier school. It allowed them to assess the schools’ environments and identify areas for improvement. By following the Alliance Competitive Foods Guidelines, schools were able to make consistent changes that eased the transition for students.
- Brockport Central School District took advantage of the agricultural resources in upstate New York and began a local program with a farm six miles down the road to obtain fruits and vegetables. Brockport Food Service Director stated, “When students see a familiar apple from their hometown or an apple that they may have picked from that same orchard, they are more inclined to eat it.”
- Supplementing school programs with outside state and community programs further strengthens the support needed for students to make healthier choices. Hagen Road Elementary School Nurse encourages her students to participate in active summer camps and community sports teams such as the YMCA league. She refers parents to the Food Pyramid and health web sites for additional tools to help inspire their children to lead healthier lifestyles.

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# Hagen Road Elementary School

**School District:** Palm Beach County Public School District, Florida

**Percent Free and Reduced Lunch:** 38%

**Bronze Level:** Alliance Healthy Schools Program 2009-10

**Persons Interviewed:** Richard Hughes, Principal and Louise O'Grady, Cafeteria Manager

## KEY FINDINGS:

Upon implementing healthier changes in the schools meals and fundraising practices, Hagen Road Elementary revenue remained in a neutral state.

## FACTORS FACILITATING SUCCESS:

- **Teamwork:** Principal, food services, support staff and teachers working together for change
- **Parent Involvement:** Educating parents on the importance of creating a healthy home environment
- **Utilizing Outside Resources:** Participating in outside activities, summer camps and programs such Reindeer Gift Shop and Jump Rope for Heart
- **Education:** Providing students with nutrition and health education in the classroom and supplementing it with a monthly newsletter that is sent home
- **Strategic Implementation:** Taking gradual steps toward improving nutritional content in school lunch meals

## HAGEN ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S STORY

Hagen Road Elementary has made progress towards creating a healthier school environment for their students and staff. Principal Richard Hughes credits their successful implementation of healthy changes to collaborative efforts, staff involvement, utilizing outside resources and health education.

Hagen Road Elementary does not have an a la carte option or vending machines. However, the school does count on fundraising efforts to generate revenue for school activities and supplies. Hagen Road Elementary has changed its fundraising practices by ending all types of sales that involve candy or dessert items. Principal Hughes wants to promote overall school wellness and believes that making simple health conscious changes can help build a healthier school environment.

During the holidays, students previously sold chocolate and cookie dough. The school is now involved with the Reindeer Gift Shop program which sells items such as gift-wrapping, ornaments and other gift items. The children are just as



enthusiastic about selling these items and the change has not triggered any significant shifts in revenue. Hagen Road Elementary is still able to reach their revenue goals without the sale of unhealthy foods.

Another main focus area for Hagen Road Elementary has been implementing healthier school lunch meals in the cafeteria. The process of **implementing healthier lunch items on the menu has been gradual** and revenue has remained in a neutral state. It should be noted that student participation in cafeteria lunches has increased. Principal Hughes commented on the reaction of students to the healthy changes, "We are amazed at how many more students are buying school lunches and that they are really eating most of their food."

All breads have been changed to whole grain; even hamburgers are served on whole grain buns. **A variety of vegetables are supplied by local farmers** which allows the cafeteria to serve fresh corn on the cob, green beans, sliced carrots and fresh salads that are made daily. White rice and refried beans have been replaced by brown rice and black beans. All chips and cookies have been removed from the menu. There are no longer candy dishes; they have been entirely replaced by fresh fruit cups. Only low fat milk is served.

Louise O'Grady, school cafeteria manager, has been working in food services for 14

years and is happy with the healthy transformation at Hagen Road Elementary. In her experience she has discovered that kids at the elementary level are more open to change and more willing to accept healthier foods than middle or high school students. She emphasized, "It is important to **introduce a variety of fruits and vegetables** to students at a young age so that they can develop healthy eating habits for life."

O'Grady encourages her students to try the new healthy items and particularly targets Kindergartners by putting a small sample on their plates to try the different vegetables. When she serves the food, she makes it **fun and educational** by telling them how these healthy foods will help build strong bones and help them focus to get good grades.

She also credits the high level of student acceptance for the healthy lunch items to student engagement. She ensures that her cafeteria staff are working together to encourage students to try healthier items. The school nurse also reiterates healthy habits by providing students with nutrition and health education in the classroom. O'Grady has noticed that students are more enthusiastic about eating the vegetables that they learned about in the classroom.

The school nurse believes that **education is the key to success** in motivating children to live healthier lifestyles. She said, "The more you educate the children to live healthy lifestyles, the more they hear it, the more they know it, the more they live it." She particularly works with the first and third graders. The nurse spends time in the classroom teaching them healthy habits such as eating breakfast every morning, implementing more fiber into their diet with fruits and vegetables, being active and cutting down on TV and computer time. With her efforts, Hagen Road Elementary is now part of the Jump Rope for Heart Program through the American Heart Association.

The school nurse calculates student body mass index (BMI) to keep track of students' progress. The **children at high risk are given private individualized sessions** to provide them and their parents with tips on how they can help improve their child's health. She has follow-up meetings to ensure that sustainable changes are happening at home. At the elementary level, the nurse is aware that parents play a major role in children's decisions so she **sends home a newsletter that highlights ways to promote healthy habits**. She refers parents to outside resources such as the Food Guide Pyramid, community activities and active summer camps.

# Gainesville High School

**School District: Alachua County Public School District, Florida**

**Percent Free and Reduced Lunch: 32%**

**Bronze Level: Alliance Healthy Schools Program 2008-09**

**Person Interviewed: Janine Plavac, Director of the Academy of Health Professions**

## **KEY FINDINGS:**

When healthier changes in competitive foods and beverages were implemented, revenue increased and continues to increase.

## **FACTORS FACILITATING SUCCESS:**

- **Collaboration:** Combined efforts from administration, school food service director, students and partnership with the University of Florida dietetics programs
- **Price Adjustments:** Charging twenty-five cents more in the student-operated café for items purchased through the food service department to generate profit for school clubs
- **Vision:** Strong focus and commitment to creating a healthier school environment.
- **Utilizing Outside Resources:** Use of the Alliance Healthy Schools Program Inventory and School Beverage and Competitive Foods Guidelines
- **New Product Integration:** Implementing a variety of products that are lower in fat and caloric content
- **Student Engagement:** Input and feedback from students, a student-operated cafeteria line
- **Marketing:** Providing a fun atmosphere for the location of the cafe, a healthy dialogue, inspiring motto and marketing images that involve an active lifestyle

## **GAINESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL'S STORY**

Through the **collaborative team efforts** of students, faculty, administrators and the University of Florida graduate dietetics programs, Gainesville High School has implemented successful changes to create a healthier school environment. In 2008, the team used the Healthy Schools Program Inventory as the foundation to fulfill its vision of a healthier school. The Inventory allowed the team to **assess the school environment and identify improvement areas**.

In the past year, Gainesville High has expanded its wellness council, improved the aesthetics of the cafeteria, created a student-operated healthy café, stopped all

soda sales, delivered trainings on reducing fat and sodium for food service staff, added before and afterschool fitness programs and created a walking/biking school program. As a result, their hard work has gained them national recognition from the Healthy Schools Program at the Bronze level.

Within their competitive food and beverages practices, Gainesville High made changes in products sold in vending machines and **created a separate line within the cafeteria system that offers healthier food items for students.**

Carbonated beverages were removed in all vending machines and replaced with vitamin water, 100% fruit juices, flavored waters and Gatorade bottles were reduced from 20 oz to 12 oz. Students have responded positively to these changes and revenue generated from beverages and competitive foods has increased and continues to do so.

The separate cafeteria line, called the Purple Palace Café, has been one of the greatest health additions to Gainesville High and has tremendously increased school revenue. The Café is largely **student-operated**, led by the two campus clubs, Consumer Sciences and the Academy of Health Professions. Janine Plavac, Director of the Academy of Health Professions, noted their success by stating, “The Purple Palace Café is a win-win situation; we make money and the students are eating healthier!”

The products the Purple Palace Café offer must be products that are not otherwise sold by the school cafeteria. Gainesville High School generates profit from items by simply **charging a quarter more** than the purchase price. Food services are then reimbursed for their costs. Over the course of the year with the accumulation of the twenty five cent profit for each item sold, Purple Palace Café made over 20,000 dollars for food services and the two campus clubs made 8,000 dollars.

Plavac explained, “With the current state of the economy where money for education has been cut left and right, the Purple Palace Café has been a phenomenal way for us to generate income for our clubs to allow our students to participate in outside educational opportunities.” The profit has enabled the students to travel to competitions, organize field trips to museums and attend lectures by nationally recognized speakers. The revenue has also allowed the Consumer Science program to continue its food labs in the classroom because there is now enough money to purchase the necessary ingredients that the school could not previously afford to buy.”

Every school in the Alachua County Public School District has a program where they provide a separate lunch line within food services to generate revenue. The difference with Gainesville High is that they focus on implementing healthy food items that are compliant with the Healthy Schools Program criteria and Alliance Guidelines.

Students have responded very positively to the healthy items sold at the Purple Palace Café—which often sell out daily. When asked what key factors contributed to revenue success, Plavac emphasized the importance of implementing a variety of healthy foods to choose from and making healthier alterations to popular food items. She added, “Kids don’t know the difference between lower calorie and lower fat items compared to full calorie and high fat items. They eat what is given to them as long as it tastes good.” Examples of healthier and popular items sold at Purple Palace Café are 100% fruit slushies; low fat versions of cheese sticks with marinara sauce, pizza, brownies and ice cream; spicy fries that are baked; and fresh fruits and salads.



The cafeteria staff is only responsible for food preparation. The rest of the responsibilities are given to the student club members who volunteer their lunch hours to work the line. This allows students to acquire skills and gain a sense of responsibility that will be helpful in future job settings. Students count inventory, expedite sales, schedule volunteers, perform set up and clean up. **Students are the decision-makers and customers.** The students are involved in selecting products and providing staff with feedback. Overall, Purple Palace Café is a fun community-focused atmosphere located in an outdoor courtyard separated from the school cafeteria where students can sit, eat and socialize.

To further promote school wellness and motivate students to eat healthier, Gainesville High completely remodeled the cafeteria including the images displayed. The cafeteria previously had pictures of hamburgers and French fries on the walls. When Gainesville High received Bronze level recognition, they decided to whitewash the walls and paint active scenes of teenagers engaging in various activities such as kicking a soccer ball or running. They also painted on their branded school health motto: Eat well. Play Hard. Live long. The motto has now been adopted by the entire district. **Healthy marketing images** helped further build community spirit and strengthened the support for a healthier school environment.

**Addendum:** Gainesville High School reported that for the first week of the 2010-11 school year, revenue directed to the student clubs from the Purple Palace Cafe was \$325.00 - just from the 25 cent profit on every item sold.



# Grand Rapids Public School District

School District: Grand Rapids Public School District, Michigan

Percent Free and Reduced Lunch: 80%

Person Interviewed: Amy Klinkoski, Nutrition Services Coordinator

## KEY FINDINGS:

Due to the high percentage of students who receive free and reduced meals, Grand Rapids Public School District does not rely on competitive foods and beverages to generate revenue. Thus, energy has been focused on making healthy transformations in school meals. Upon implementing healthier changes in schools meals, Grand Rapids Public School District has seen an increase in student participation.

## FACTORS FACILITATING SUCCESS:

- **Strategic Implementation:** Implementing healthy products at the beginning of the school year
- **Student Engagement:** Directly involving students through taste testing to obtain student feedback of healthy products
- **Parent Involvement:** Involving parents by educating them on the importance of creating a healthy home environment
- **Partnerships:** Utilizing and collaborating with outside partnerships such as the YMCA, health department and other programs in the community
- **Collaborative Effort:** A district-wide effort involving principals, staff, teachers and coaches working together for change
- **Education:** Providing students with nutrition and health education through student focus groups

## GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT'S STORY

Grand Rapids Public School District takes a different approach to food service operations due to their increasing population of students who receive free and reduced meals. As of 2009, all a la carte practices have been completely eliminated from elementary and middle schools. In the five high schools, there are remaining a la carte items that are sold in the cafeteria line but there is no profit generated and sales are continuing to decrease.

When interviewed, the district was in a change process- contemplating whether to eliminate a la carte practices all together. District Nutrition Services Coordinator Amy Klinkoski explained, "When the majority of my students are qualified for reimbursable meals, it does not make financial sense



for our district to sell a la carte items. Why would we sell a three dollar sandwich when the student should be getting a free meal?"

Regardless of the decreasing sales, Klinkoski has still made it a priority to sell healthy items. She has analyzed the nutritional value of each item and has removed or replaced the items that did not have much nutritional value. Only cookies that contain oatmeal or whole grains are sold. Other items include 100% fruit juice drinks and baked chips.

In 2002, Grand Rapids Public School District recognized the increasing population of students who qualified for reimbursable meals and decided to focus most of its attention on school meals. The district adopted a philosophy that the school meal program in itself is enough food for the kids to eat and, if they want more food the extra choices for them are available on the salad and fruit bar. Thus, any extra calories that they are consuming would be nutrient dense such as fruits and vegetables.

Klinkoski stresses the importance of making **nutrient-based decisions** when selecting products to buy and include in the school menus. She focuses on lower calorie and lower fat products and also ensures that products include essential nutrients such as calcium, fiber, iron and vitamins.

Upon implementing healthier items in the breakfast and lunch meals, Grand

Rapids School District has seen a slight increase in lunch participation and a steady increase in breakfast participation. Even though the students were not initially pleased with the healthier options, they learned to adapt and participation numbers continue to increase. Klinkoski believes the increase is due to a combination of **district-wide outreach efforts** to encourage kids to eat healthier and due to the economic crisis where more students see it financially beneficial to participate in low cost or free meals.

Grand Rapids Public District has noticed that students are more willing to accept changes when healthy implementation is done at the beginning of the school year. For example, the middle schools used to sell cookies and French fries but when the students returned for the following school year they noticed that these options were no longer available. At first the students kept waiting for the French fries and cookies to appear, but they had no other choice then to adapt to the healthier menu items. Klinkoski explained, "If you make a change, stick to it. Have a reason for changing it. Plan now for the next school year."

Klinkoski emphasized the importance of helping students understand the reasoning behind the healthy changes so they will be more willing to accept them. She said, "Talk to the kids first. Always try to get them involved."

Grand Rapids does this in a variety of ways that all involve **direct student engagement**. Taste tasting is one effective way to receive input from the students towards the new healthy products. Taste testing has been conducted to see if students enjoy sunflower kernels, pumpkin seeds, fresh pineapple spears, apple slices, yogurt, milk and cheese sticks.

Another way to gain student input is by creating focus groups within existing campus clubs to **educate the students about healthy food choices**. The information presented in the focus groups reaches a large amount of students but in a small and concentrated environment that allows for more one on one time to answer questions and address any specific nutrition topics.

Grand Rapids Public School District has also found that afterschool programs are very effective ways to reach out to students and parents. Klinkoski utilizes after school events such as parent teacher conferences by setting up tables to present health information. Grand Rapids Public School District believes that parents need to be aware of the food services offered in the schools and educated on ways to practice healthy eating habits at home. When possible,

Klinkoski speaks at school events such as the health fairs that are organized by the YMCA, health department and other partners in the community.

Staff involvement is also vital to the success of teaching the students the importance of following a healthy diet. Wrestling and other sports coaches promote making healthy choices in the cafeteria to provide athletes with the energy needed for success in competition. Klinkoski also works with the school nurse, teachers and faculty to strive for a **district-wide collaborative effort**. Overall, Grand Rapids Public School District will continue their educational and outreach efforts in hopes that it will encourage more students to accept the healthier options and that the school meal services will remain financially stable.



# District School Board of Pasco County

**School District:** District School Board of Pasco County, Florida

**Percent Free and Reduced Lunch:** 49%

**Chasco Middle School:** Bronze Level: Alliance Healthy Schools Program '09-'10

**Wesley Chapel Elementary School:** Bronze Level: Alliance Healthy Schools Program '09-'10

**Person Interviewed:** Maggie Giunta, Nutrition Specialist

## KEY FINDINGS:

Upon implementing healthier changes in the school meals and competitive beverages, revenue shifts have not followed any consistent pattern. Maggie does credit the years of upward revenue increases to the combined efforts of education, marketing and student outreach. The District School Board of Pasco County is hoping to stabilize revenue.

## FACTORS FACILITATING SUCCESS:

- **Utilizing Outside Resources:** Utilizing outside resources such as the Healthy Schools Program Framework and the Competitive School Foods and Beverage Guidelines
- **Education:** Providing educational handouts for students to learn about the nutritional content of school food items
- **Product Innovation:** Finding healthier versions of current products that are appealing to the students
- **Attitude:** Making student wellness and nutritional value a top priority
- **Marketing campaigns:** Creating better-looking menus to entice students to buy items
- **Parent Involvement:** Involving parents by educating them on the importance of creating a healthy home environment
- **Strategic Implementation:** Annually evaluating nutrition content and gradually implementing healthier options at the beginning of every school year

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF PASCO COUNTY'S STORY

Maggie Giunta is the Nutrition Specialist for the District School Board of Pasco County, which includes 81 schools. Her role includes planning the school menus, conducting nutrient analyses, spending time on special diets/allergies and assisting schools with implementing the Alliance Guidelines.

Over the past four years, the District School Board of Pasco County has **gradually**



**implemented healthier options** into both competitive foods and beverages and school meal services. For example, in 2006-2007, fat content in snack foods was analyzed to meet specific guidelines and the number of snacks students may purchase was limited. In 2007-2008, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Competitive Foods Guidelines were implemented in all grades and the School Beverage Guidelines were implemented at the elementary level. By 2008-2009, the Guidelines were implemented at all grades for beverages purchased within food and nutrition services. By 2009-2010, the district bid for a new beverage contract and healthy vending was also implemented.

In terms of the a la carte menu, the district focused on removing unhealthy products, finding healthier versions of current products and **finding new innovative products**. For example, the cookies sold used to have 320 calories and 26 grams of fat and now has been replaced by a reduced fat and whole grain cookie. Full fat chips have been replaced by reduced fat and baked chips. Larger and high calorie ice creams have been switched to smaller portions made with lower fat milk. All products sold comply with the Alliance Competitive Foods Guidelines. A healthy vending program was implemented in February 2010 in the middle and high school. Pasco County is hoping that these new vending machines will help increase and fill the gaps in revenue.

Upon implementing the healthier a la carte menus, revenue shifts have not followed any consistent pattern. Elementary sales have remained about the same. Middle school



sales saw an increase from the 2006-2007 school year to 2007-2008 but then decreased for the following two years. High school sales saw an initial increase from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008, then a downfall in 2008-2009, but saw an increase in 2009-2010.

Giunta explained that it is difficult to determine to what extent the healthy products have affected revenue since there was no reliable study that looks at independent variables. She expresses how the economic crisis may have played a role in the downward revenue shifts. Giunta credits the upwards revenue increases to the combined efforts of education, marketing and student outreach. The school board is unwilling to raise a la carte and meal prices. Thus, Pasco County relies on continually exploring different strategies to keep revenue stable.

"I think the important thing for districts who want to make successful healthy changes is to **make small changes at the beginning of every year** so the students are more accepting," Giunta said. The a la carte menu for all schools is evaluated each year and changes are made before students return for the following year. Strategic implementation is beneficial in that it encourages students to try new products and they tend to adapt more easily rather than making changes mid-year. Giunta also said, "We start exposing students to healthy items at the elementary level so by the time they are in secondary and high school, they have learned to like the healthy options. This way we have a better chance of developing healthy habits." Thus, a la carte and school meal menu changes are consistent across the grade levels. Overall, the main thinking of the District School Board of Pasco County is that if students come to school with two dollars to spend on a la carte they are going to find something to buy so why not **only present them with healthy foods.**

Another key factor to motivate students to eat healthier is through providing students with health knowledge. If they understand the reasoning behind the menu changes, Pasco County hopes students will be more willing to adopt the healthy items. The schools registered dietician, Emily Mark, provides educational handouts for students to learn about the nutritional content of items. Pasco County is aware that many students are not eating healthy at home so this may also hinder their willingness to accept changes at school. Mark also provides a number of health articles on the school web site to **educate parents.**

Product testing has also been a great way to expose students to healthy items and receive feedback. All products are tested by students before they are placed on the menus. Pasco County finds that students enjoy being involved in the decisions around switching to healthy items. Marketing campaigns, such as more professional looking menus, are another way to attract students to new items. Pasco County is continuously looking for other strategies to get students involved and always looking for **new, healthy and innovative products.**



When transitioning to healthy foods in school meals, Pasco County has been facing many financial challenges. Whole grain pasta, pizza, brown rice and breads and the entrée salads are more costly and students do not seem to be responding positively to the changes. Student participation in paid school lunches has been decreasing. However, student participation in free and reduced lunches has been increasing for the past four in all grade levels.

To compensate for the decreased revenue from school lunches, Pasco County has focused on increasing breakfast participation. They received grants from the Dairy Council to help fund more innovative breakfast programs. Regardless of the challenges Pasco County faces, Giunta emphasized that student wellness and nutritional value will continue to be the top priority.

# Brockport Central Schools

School District: Brockport Central Schools, New York

Percent Free and Reduced Lunch: 35%

Person Interviewed: Jim Liebow, Director of Food Services

## KEY FINDINGS:

When interviewed in spring 2010, Brockport was in the midst of change with a new food service director who was transitioning to a healthier food services program. Brockport was waiting for the district's financial review at the end of the year to see how the healthy changes ultimately affected revenue. Some specific strategies have clearly helped stabilize revenue and increased school meal participation.

## FACTORS FACILITATING SUCCESS:

- **Product Innovation:** Including a variety of creative recipes into school meals and competitive foods/beverages
- **Student Involvement:** Receiving input and feedback from students and creating student focus groups that discuss health and wellness
- **Staff Involvement:** Getting staff involved with menu planning and food sampling
- **District Support:** Principal, food services, staff and teachers working together for change
- **Utilizing Outside Resources:** Utilizing outside programs such as participating in the local supermarket's health challenge and taking advantage of local farms to obtain fresh foods
- **Education:** Providing students with nutrition and health education in the classroom and having coaches teach their athletes how good nutrition can enhance sport performance
- **Strategic Implementation:** Taking gradual steps toward improving nutritional content in school lunch meals

## BROCKPORT CENTRAL SCHOOLS' STORY

Jim Liebow is the food service director for Brockport Central Schools which includes one high school, one middle school and three elementary schools. The district has over 4100 students. Liebow became director of food services in September of 2009 and made notable efforts towards transitioning to healthier foods in schools meals and competitive foods and beverages. In terms of revenue, costs are not finalized until the end of the year. With **gradual implementation**, students have been positively accepting the new items. The combined efforts of education, staff involvement, innovative recipes, utilization of resources and

student involvement are the keys to success for creating healthier school environments at Brockport Central Schools, according to Liebow.

The Brockport school meal programs are nutrient based as opposed to food based which allows for more flexibility to offer a wide variety of healthy options. The main goal of the district is to produce as many fresh, healthy food choices as possible. Brockport **takes advantage of the resources** in upstate New York, which happens to be apple country. Brockport decided to begin a local program with a farm just six miles down the road to obtain fruits and vegetables. They also get fresh pears from an orchard that is in close proximity to the schools. Three fresh fruit choices are offered daily for breakfast and lunch through the school meals program.

The abundance and availability of fresh fruits and vegetables allow more **opportunity for creative recipes**. Food services buys local potatoes from an upstate New York farm and were able to find a recipe that calls for roasting fresh potatoes, adding light seasoning and serving it with other vegetables. A few years ago, they stopped using the fryer and instead purchased an expanded salad bar for the high school to offer more fresh vegetables and a larger variety of healthy options.

Other healthy school lunch changes include pizza shells made from whole grains that are bought from local vendors. It took students a little while to accept the pizza crust in the beginning. Whole-wheat rolls are used for chicken patties and hamburgers. Brockport is planning on transitioning from a processed burger to a 100% beef burger with fewer additives and procuring an all-white meat chicken patty.

Within the five district schools, there are few la carte options in the middle and high school and no a la carte items available at the elementary level. The a la carte items must follow New York's Choose Sensibly Guidelines. These items are offered in addition to school meals and there are a la carte snack rooms that are only open at certain times when the main lunch line is closed. Brockport is always looking to get healthier options into the a la carte menu. Specific items for the a la carte options include bagels with peanut butter and low fat cream cheese, baked chips and yogurt parfaits. The preservative fruit yogurts have been replaced by low fat vanilla yogurt with fresh fruit toppings of strawberries and blueberries. The district health and wellness committee analyze the competitive foods and beverages on an annual basis to ensure they fit the requirements and guidelines.

Also, vending items that do not fit within New York's nutritional guidelines are removed and the elementary schools do not have vending machines. In the middle school there is a refrigerator machine and a healthy vending machine with a variety of items. Some items include milk and pieces of fresh fruit. Brockport's goal is finding items that will not necessarily take away from a student eating a reimbursable meal, but could be eaten as a healthy snack. Removing the unhealthy items has been an ongoing challenge for the school district because the healthier items are not always raising as much revenue.

The financial review at the end of year will help Brockport food services identify and



measure their progress. Liebow explained how some of the healthier items are more expensive. The local apples are more costly but offer greater variety and are more appealing and fresh for the students than the traditional commodity apples. Student acceptance goes hand in hand with student revenue. Liebow said, "The healthy items may be more money but if you get the buy in from the students you can make the money back. For example, when students see a familiar apple from their hometown or an apple that they may have picked from that same orchard, they are more inclined to eat it."

Due to the district population base, there has also been declining enrollment in the school as a whole and that is causing additional revenue challenges for school food service. Liebow maintains an optimistic outlook and hopes to find ways to compensate for declining enrollment. He shared, "My goal is to maintain the same revenue stream even with declining enrollment. We must find strategies to motivate students to accept the healthy items in order to stabilize revenue."

It is not always easy to increase lunch participation, especially if the district is 35% free and reduced lunch. Therefore, in order to help fill revenue gaps, Brockport has been focusing on increasing breakfast participation. Brockport Central schools had a 9% breakfast participation rate and have increased this to 11%. Even though a 2% increase may not sound like a lot, it is still 2% more than they had before- and without extra labor costs. By June 2010, food services is hoping to see another 5% increase in breakfast participation. Healthier breakfast foods have slightly increased costs, but they have been able to remain revenue stable because there was no increase in labor costs. The key is **gradual, incremental changes** to allow the students to accept the new items.

Brockport has turned to new products from vendors such as a breakfast cookie that is made with oatmeal, whole grains and cinnamon chips. It is high in fiber and high in protein. The cookies are slightly more expensive but the students and staff love them and this has resulted in an increase in participation. Other healthy items that have been implemented are breakfast burritos with commodity low fat "turkey ham" with low fat cheddar cheese on a wheat wrap. Brockport is looking for more hot items as opposed to cold items. They recently found a new fruit strudel that is made with whole grain. It comes in an "ovenable" package and is creating a buzz around the district. The goal is to try and get kids to eat breakfast so it is essential to make sure the healthy items are appealing to the students.

Brockport has focused efforts on motivating students to accept the healthier options. The idea is to get students who normally would bring their own lunch to participate in school food services. Brockport uses various strategies to achieve their goal of raising revenue and increasing participation. The Department of food services works with the high school's horticulture club to plant fresh herbs that are used to season some of the foods on the menu. This is a great way to get students

involved and excited about healthy eating. Liebow also reaches out to different student council groups to educate them on health and nutrition and works with them to establish committees to create sustainable changes in the school food environment. For example, in the 4th and 5th grade, there is a **student council that participates in food sampling and taste testing**. Liebow said, "If students are not going to buy the healthier products, no one wins. If they don't eat it, they don't get the nutrition and food service does not get the revenue."

Another way to motivate students to eat the healthy items is by **presenting foods attractively**. Brockport has been making different shaped low fat chicken nuggets and serving them with healthier options such as fresh fruit cups, fresh carrots and vegetables. Brockport is always experimenting with different foods and coming up with original recipes. Instead of doing three-week cycle menus, new items are implemented every month. Liebow incorporates his broader school foodservice staff into the menu planning. Staff is asked to submit at least three new menu ideas that utilize the available commodity items and/or suggest creative ways to use the commodity items in a different fashion. Instead of a processed chicken, staff has suggested a whole roasted chicken with whole breast, legs and thighs. Staff has also asked to use a barbeque sauce from a local company that everyone loves. When it comes time to taste test or sample the new menu items, staff are included for their input.

Food services make sure to receive positive feedback before adding items to the menu. Receiving the buy in from students and staff has helped ease the transition to healthier foods.

Education is another essential factor to motivate students to eat healthier. Liebow is working with the middle school health teachers to promote healthy eating and nutrition curriculum into the health classes so students can learn the value of fueling their bodies to be better learners. At the high school level, coaches are prepared to teach their student athletes to fuel up before and after practice and how nutrition can affect sport performance.

Another strategy is utilizing outside resources. For example, the local grocery chain, Wegmans, has an Eat Well Live Well Challenge that staff participate in. Each staff member had a goal of walking at least 10,000 steps and eating five fruits and vegetables every day. The staff is not only teaching students to eat healthy but also walking the talk and leading by example.

Liebow stated, "I am very fortunate to be in a district that understands and supports the importance of student health. I do not do this alone. It does take some time and a lot of people's efforts to make these successes happen!"

# Hortonville High School

School District: Hortonville Area School District, Wisconsin

Percent Free and Reduced Lunch: 9%

Bronze Level: Alliance Healthy Schools Program 2006-07 and 2009-10

Person Interviewed: Marcia M. Schmidt, Physical Education Teacher

## KEY FINDINGS:

Upon implementing healthier competitive foods and beverages, Hortonville High School has seen no significant shifts in revenue. Students have easily accepted the healthy vending changes and are buying the items at the same rate. A la carte options are currently in a change process and revenue is yet to be evaluated.

## FACTORS FACILITATING SUCCESS:

- **Strategic Implementation:** Gradual changes were made in vending practices over a six-year period
- **Utilizing Outside Resources:** Using the Alliance Healthy Schools Program criteria and Alliance Guidelines to identify what changes needed to be made
- **Education:** Helping students understand the reasoning behind the healthy changes
- **Student Engagement:** Creating afterschool programs to engage students in physical activities
- **Marketing Strategies:** Creating a healthy dialogue and communicating a healthy tip of the day on the daily announcements
- **Staff Involvement:** Staff, food service director, teachers, district members and cafeteria managers working together to create a healthier school environment

## HORTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL'S STORY

Marcia Schmidt is the physical education teacher and chairperson of the health and wellness committee at Hortonville High School. Her leadership has helped Hortonville High School become a healthier environment for the 1,130 students who attend. The school is currently working with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation in hopes to achieve more successes in transitioning to healthier food services.

Hortonville has focused most of its efforts towards making healthier changes in their vending practices. In 2004, Hortonville completely removed soda from its vending machines. This caused great controversy because the school was worried that revenue would decrease and there would not be enough money raised for scholarship awards. However, the removal of the soda in vending machines and the



implementation of alternative beverages did not negatively affect revenue and there was still enough money to award scholarships.

Schmidt has also been working with the vending company to analyze the nutritional content of the snacks and beverages in the remaining school vending machines. The **Alliance Competitive Foods and School Beverage Guidelines** helped her identify what changes needed to be made. At the beginning of the 2009 school year, Hortonville made the decision to have only one vending machine available to students which contains healthy products. Vending items include compliant snack bars, popcorn that students can cook in the microwave, baked chips, water and milk. Hortonville is hoping to meet all the Alliance requirements for national recognition by focusing on portion sizes. Large milk jugs have been switched to 8 oz cartons and other items were resized. Upon transitioning to one vending machine, the high school noted no significant losses or changes in revenue. In fact, the school vendor operator said, "Business is booming!"

Hortonville High School also has a separate line in the cafeteria for a la carte options. Food service managers and cafeteria staff have been working hard to transition to healthier items. In order for students to accept the new foods, changes have been made gradually. For example, pastas have been changed to whole grain. Students initially complained about the healthy items, but they quickly adapted. Schmidt stated, "If you try to make many changes all at once, there will be too much opposition."

Hortonville has been **increasing the number of recipes made from scratch**—from 15 to 20 recipes. For example, pre-made super sized muffins were removed from the a la carte menu and replaced with a muffin now prepared on-site. These smaller sized muffins are lower in fat, sugar and calories. Schmidt commented on how much the students are enjoying the muffins. A number of a la carte items have been re-evaluated and taken off the menu due to lack of nutritional value. Hortonville hopes to make more a la carte items compliant to the Alliance Competitive Foods Guidelines. Revenue has yet to be evaluated for a la carte.

Student engagement has played a key role in motivating students to lead a healthier lifestyle and help them **understand the reasoning behind the healthy changes**. Hortonville High School has started an intramural afterschool program to promote physical activity and wellness. There has been an encouraging amount of student participation in such diverse and fun activities as archery, flag football, ultimate Frisbee, pickleball, badminton, bowling, volleyball and circle rules football. Healthy snacks and water are served.

The school also offers an All School Walk for students and staff in the fall and again in the spring. Teams walk the one-mile course around the campus writing down letters that are placed along the way with stakes. Teams try to unscramble the phrase and submit the answer to compete in a drawing for a healthy reward to be delivered to their entire class. The most recent winning phrase, “Make Healthy Choices,” is a strategic way to encourage a health promoting attitude and dialogue.

Other ways Hortonville promotes healthy habits is by including a tip of the day in the announcements. Also, a complimentary breakfast is served to students during finals to educate them about the importance of good nutrition. Fruit and milk are served in the morning to help students jump start their day and increase their focus.

As a member of the district and school wellness committees Schmidt said, “Change takes awhile. It isn’t something you can do overnight. You will meet great resistance, but it helps to explain to the students why you are making the changes and then they will understand and accept them better. Change will happen faster with their understanding.” She further explained how the **collaboration and support of staff** has helped Hortonville transition to healthier practices. The wellness committee meets once a month to discuss ways to continue to promote a healthy school environment.

## Coos Bay School District

**School District: Coos Bay School District, Oregon**

**Percent Free and Reduced Lunch: 63%**

**Blossom Gulch Elementary: Bronze Level: Alliance Healthy Schools Program—2008-09; Silver Level 2009-10**

**Madison Elementary: Bronze Level, Alliance Healthy Schools Program—’09-’10**

**Millicoma Intermediate School: Bronze Level: Alliance Healthy Schools Program: ’09-’10**

**Person Interviewed: Angie Webster, District Nurse**

### **KEY FINDINGS:**

By forming a partnership between the PTA and the school wellness councils, the district was successful in making significant changes in fundraising practices. Upon implementing the healthier fundraising practices, the PTA has doubled its profits.

### **FACTORS FACILITATING SUCCESS:**

- **Partnerships:** Forming a partnership between the PTA and school wellness committees to work together to make healthier changes
- **Utilizing Outside Resources:** Using the Alliance Guidelines to identify what changes needed to be made
- **Marketing Campaigns:** Promoting good nutrition in a fun and creative way
- **Laws:** An Oregon health bill dictates nutrition standards which provides for implementation with less resistance - as all across the state must adhere to the same standards (the bill is closely aligned with Alliance Guidelines)

### **COOS BAY SCHOOL DISTRICT’S STORY**

Angie Webster is a district nurse for the Coos Bay School District which includes Blossom Gulch Elementary and Millicoma Intermediate. Webster was recently recognized by the Alliance as a national Healthy Schools Program Champion for her boundless energy in starting many school health initiatives. Webster participates in the district health advisory council and implements programs that have been inspired by the Alliance’s Healthy Schools Program.

One of the first action steps towards change was **partnering with the PTA**. Webster began attending PTA meetings to show interest and learn more about their programs before directly addressing the changes that needed to be made. She explained, “It is important to get the buy in from PTA because they have a great

influence on the school environment. Go at it slowly and offer as much help as you are asking for in return.”

By forming a partnership between the PTA and the schools’ wellness councils, successful changes were made. The PTA events used to sell candy, soda, high fat and high calorie snacks to attendees at events. Webster prompted changes by being proactive and asking the PTA for the nutrition labels. The poor nutritional content brought awareness to the need for change. The PTA now sells healthier snacks and beverages. For example, the PTA has transitioned to water instead of soda and popcorn instead of candy.

One of the most significant changes made was in the broader PTA fundraising practices. **Cookie dough and beef jerky sales were replaced with non-food items** that included candles, magazines, gift-wrap and calendars. Upon implementing the healthier practices, the PTA doubled its profits.

In terms of competitive foods and beverages, Webster works diligently at the elementary level trying to implement the Alliance Guidelines. There was a long-standing ice cream sale once a week where the fourth graders sell to the younger students. The offerings were analyzed for calorie, fat and sugar content to ensure they are compliant with the Alliance Guidelines. Upon implementing healthier options, revenue decreased. However, the decrease was considered to be a result of the change in the structure of the schedule. The lower elementary grades moved recess to before lunch and no longer have time to participate in the ice cream sale. Feedback from teachers indicated that the schedule change probably affected revenue sales more than the actual ice cream product changes.

Webster explained, “Kids will buy whatever is available to them. They bring their 50 cents for the day and they will spend it regardless. So it makes sense to only offer something that is healthy.” For example, if there is chocolate milk and white milk options presented together, Webster observed that the students will most likely take the chocolate milk. However, if you eliminate the flavored milk as an option, the students will be more likely to drink the white milk. “It is simple, if all you offer them is healthy options, they will eat and drink them.” In the case of the PTA, revenue even improved when strictly changing to healthier fundraising practices.

At the elementary schools there is a school store that is part of the positive behavior program where students can earn “Panther Paws,” which are tickets that allow them to receive a treat from the store. The program does not raise revenue, but instead provides rewards. Students may use their Panther Paws to choose from stickers and other items including water bottles and healthy snacks that the kids seem to love. Webster commented on how it is encouraging to see the student enthusiasm towards the healthy foods. As the schools increase in levels of national recognition with the Healthy Schools Program, they will need to stop using food as a reward and reinforcement. The non-food choices will likely need to increase

for the Panther Paws initiative. There are no vending or a la carte options at the elementary level.

Within the health curriculum, the wellness council implemented a new classroom policy where parents must only bring in nutritious items for class parties. In addition, afterschool programs and school events now serve healthy foods and water. Webster hopes to continue to create a healthy school culture. She wants healthy practices to be the norm in the Coos Bay School District.

Another factor that helped initiate the process in implementing healthy changes was an **Oregon health bill** that passed in 2008. It set nutrition standards for foods and beverages that were sold outside the National School Lunch Program for grades K through 12. The standards very closely align with the Alliance Guidelines. The standards dictate serving sizes, calories and nutrients. The law was very helpful in getting staff on board with the changes. Webster explained that most of the healthy changes made were made gradually. “I guess I don’t have a quick fix. It has taken a lot of time.” She hopes to continue her hard work in cultivating healthy school environments and plans to become even more involved in making healthy changes at the high school.

