

A Healthier School Environment: Smart Snacks and Non-Food Rewards

A Toolkit for Teachers, Parents and Guardians



Santa Cruz City Schools Food Services Department

In coordination with the wellness committee

Edited SY 2022-23



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I. Introduction

Dear Educators, Parents, and Guardian,

Healthier environments support student learning and behavior- in the classroom and at home. Nutrition is an important aspect of student health and wellness. Because of this, there are laws around the food and drinks that students have access to at school. There are also SCCS district-wide goals and expectations around health- part of our wellness policy.



Everyone in our community plays a valuable role in the effort to encourage healthy food choices and physical activity among students. **At school, we can make healthy food choices easy and introduce our students to celebrations and reward systems that are not food-based. If all of us in the school environment commit to this, students' health will benefit.**

Regulations and goals related to student nutrition at school come from different groups and agencies. This can make understanding and following them tricky. So, **the purpose of this toolkit is to provide a simple explanation of our nutrition standards, provide references for those looking for more information, and offer practical options for putting all of this into action.** Our hope is that by sharing information and offering alternatives, it is easy for you to support a consistently positive wellness message.

Thank you for your support!

You can find a copy of our wellness policy here: [Policy 5030 Student Wellness](#).

If you are interested in contributing to the wellness committee, join us at a meeting. The schedule will be posted to the wellness policy page at surfcitycafes.com.

II. Why do we have a wellness policy?

In short, our district has a wellness policy because it is a federal law.

In 2004, the first laws requiring school wellness policies passed. The Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) first passed in 2010. Since then, HHFKA has been renewed , updated and expanded. In the current version of the HHFKA, there are guidelines for foods that are considered competitive to those offered by school nutrition programs. ¹

It is important for all of us in the school environment to be aware of the federal laws around foods in school- what rules must be followed, by whom and when. There are some specific terms used in the HHFKA and our wellness policy that may need clarification.

Competitive foods: Food or drink sold to students at school, during school hours, and considered in competition with the school meal program. This includes student run stores, student, staff, parent or faculty organized fundraisers, and a la carte cafeteria sales.

School hours: Before school, during school and up to 30 minutes after school.

Smart snack standard: Nutrition guidelines for competitive foods. When food is sold at school, unless intended for consumption at home or specifically approved by administration and food services, it must meet the USDA smart snack standard (view [Smart Snack Reference Card](#)).

III. 3 Opportunities for a Healthier School Environment



Three changes that have been identified as opportunities to make our school environments healthier for students. Some of these changes are necessary so that laws and regulations set by the federal government and the state of California are followed. Others go beyond, so students are hearing consistent messages around health, and practicing actions that support these messages.

All foods and drinks sold during school hours, for any purpose (fundraisers included), will meet smart snack standards for competitive foods

All foods distributed for free during school hours or at school related events are encouraged to meet the same Smart Snack standard for competitive foods

Foods that are low in nutrients and high in calories– such as candy or desserts- will be limited or eliminated from the classroom space in favor of smart snack compliant or non-food options. Food-based rewards will be eliminated.

IV. Background: Why the Focus on Foods High in Sugar?

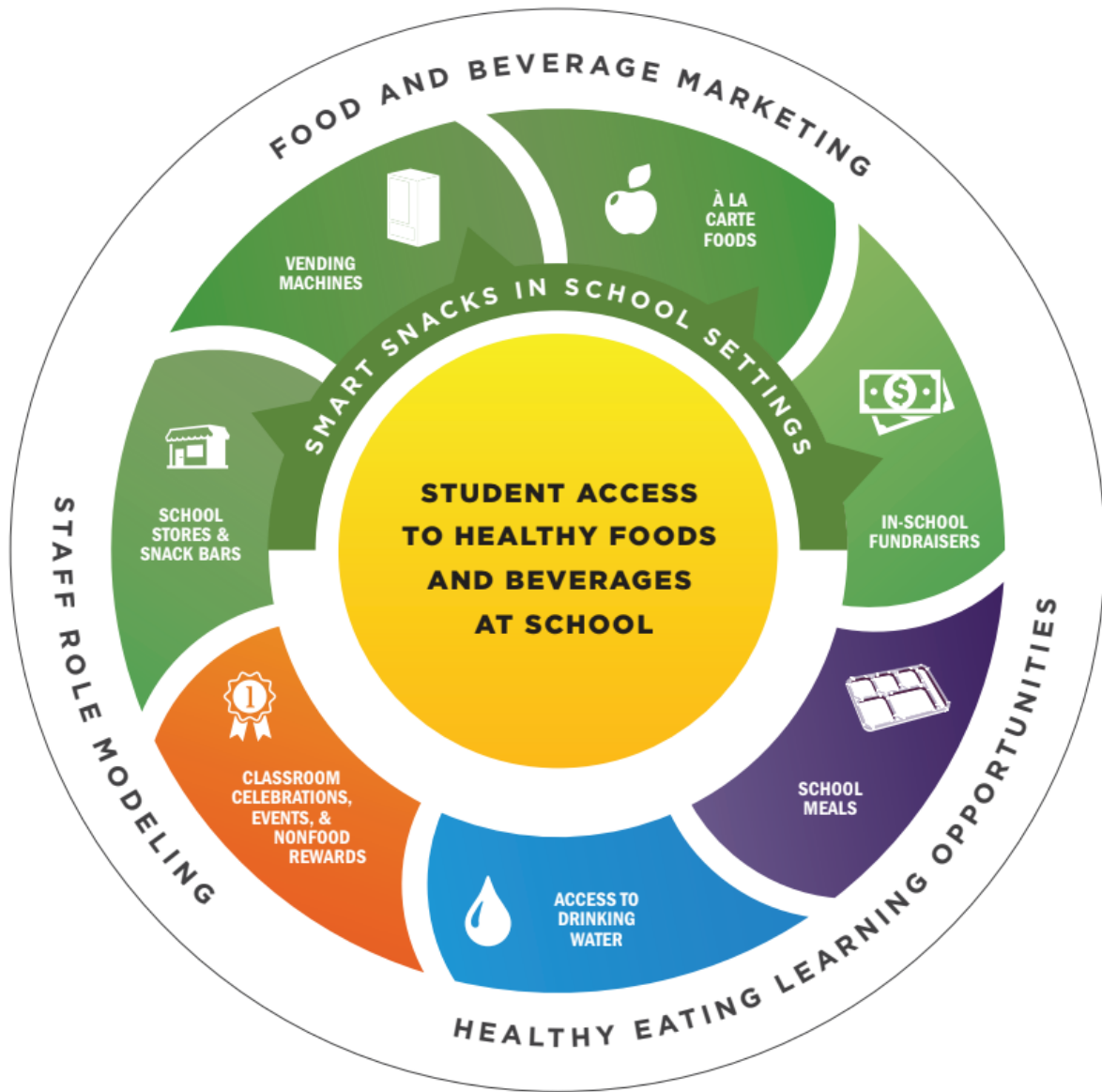
The intention of these goals is to reduce the amount of low-nutrient, high-calorie foods in our schools, in favor of more nutritious options. Foods and drinks with added sugar (think candy, pastry, soda, etc.) are often: 1) low in nutrition quality, 2) high in calories and 3) appealing to children. When choosing foods like these becomes a habit– diet quality decreases. **On average, American children between the ages of 2 and 19 consume 17 teaspoons or 68 g of added sugar each day– nearly 3 times more than the recommendation.** ²

Foods high in added sugar are often also high in calories and low in nutrients. These foods may displace other, more nutritious foods, like fruits, vegetables and whole grains that promote physical and mental health. Children with diets high in added sugar have been shown to have lower intake of important nutrients. ³⁻⁵

High added sugar intake has detrimental impacts on academic performance, learning, memory, sleep, behavior and emotional health in children. ⁶⁻¹⁰

Diets high in added sugars are also linked to a multitude of poor physical health outcomes including type 2 diabetes, weight gain, chronic inflammation, high blood pressure, heart disease, fatty liver disease, gout, asthma, acne and many others. ¹¹⁻¹⁴

V. Action: Making Change to Support Student Health



The wheel above shows opportunities to encourage healthy practices among students. If the adults in our school community commit to meeting the 3 expectations mentioned in the following pages in their immediate environment- then students will see healthy messages consistently. So, in the next pages, there are resources to support these actions.

All foods and drinks sold at school for any purpose (fundraisers included) will meet smart snack standards for competitive foods

SMART SNACKS IN SCHOOL ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION

Do you...

- Coordinate in-school fundraisers?
- Manage a school store or snack bar?
- Manage vending machines on campus?
- Sell food on campus during the school day?

If so, you are **required** to meet USDA's Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.

Here's What You **Need to Know** about Smart Snacks

Applies to all foods and beverages **SOLD** to students during the school day, other than those provided as part of the school meal programs, including:

- Vending Machines
- School Stores
- Snack Carts
- A La Carte Lines
- In-School Fundraisers

- Covers the entire school day; that means from midnight the night before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day
- Applies to all places on campus that are accessible to students
- Does **NOT** cover foods *served*, such as during celebrations
- Does **NOT** cover foods sold during evening, weekend or community events

How do I find food and beverages that meet Smart Snacks standards?

- Use the Alliance's Smart Snacks Product Calculator* to determine if a product is compliant.
- Use the Alliance's Smart Food Planner to search a database of compliant foods and beverages.

healthiergeneration.org/smartsnacks
*only compliance tool verified by USDA

Why?

This is more than a request from your administration, this is a federal law.

As a school district with a federally and state funded school meal program, the smart snack standard must be followed. The smart snack standard for competitive foods was added to the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act in 2014. ¹

Download this infographic: [Smart Snacks in Schools](#)

For our parent groups, teachers and student organizations, fundraisers and school stores are the major areas of concern. There are resources below that include detailed information about the smart snack standard and alternatives to selling food to raise money. **All resources can also be found at surfcitycafes.com, under the wellness policy tab.**

Resources:

More information about the Smart Snack Standard

Booklet for parent led organizations: [A PTA's Guide to Smart Snacks in Schools](#)

USDA Fundraiser Fact sheet: [Fundraisers and Smart Snacks](#)

Brush up on food label reading: [Food Label Basics](#), [Label Reading Tips](#), [Many Names for Added Sugar](#)

Calculator- Check if your snack is a smart snack

California Project LEAN: [Competitive Foods Standards Compliance Calculator](#)

Healthier Generations: [Smart Snacks Product Calculator](#)

Reach Out in your District

The SCCS Food services department can help you find and/or source food and drinks that are Smart Snack compliant. Visit surfcitycafes.com for contact information or call (831) 429-3850 with questions.

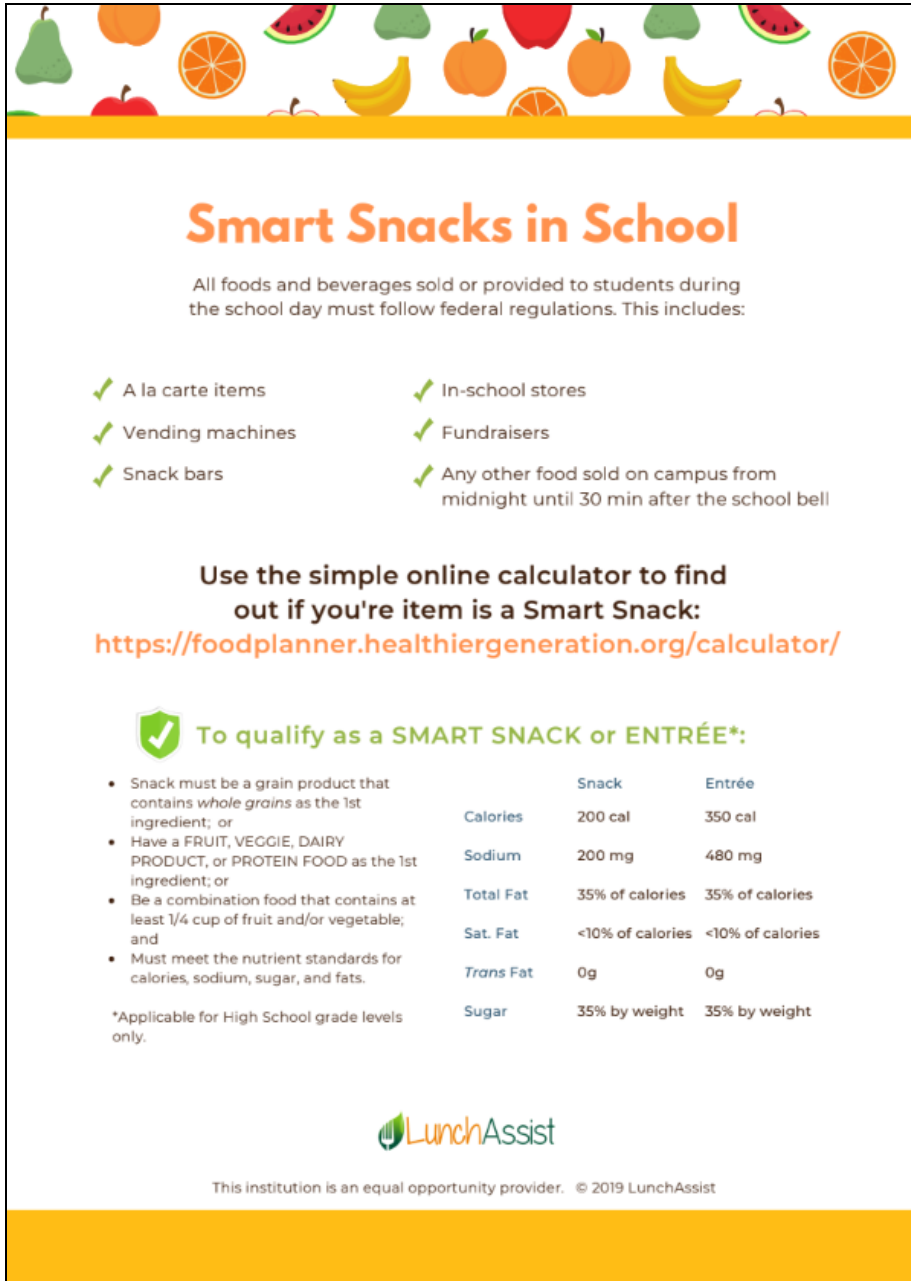
Interested in selling something other than food?

This is a great way to avoid having to calculate and locate foods that fit the Smart Snack Standard. The following links include both healthy food and non-food sales suggestions.

From Action for Healthy Kids: [Healthy Fundraisers](#)

From Action for Healthy Kids: [Healthy School Store Product List](#)

All foods distributed for free during school hours or at school related events are encouraged to meet the same Smart Snack standard for competitive foods



Smart Snacks in School

All foods and beverages sold or provided to students during the school day must follow federal regulations. This includes:

- ✓ A la carte items
- ✓ In-school stores
- ✓ Vending machines
- ✓ Fundraisers
- ✓ Snack bars
- ✓ Any other food sold on campus from midnight until 30 min after the school bell


Use the simple online calculator to find out if you're item is a Smart Snack:
<https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator/>

✓ To qualify as a SMART SNACK or ENTRÉE*:

- Snack must be a grain product that contains *whole grains* as the 1st ingredient; or
- Have a FRUIT, VEGGIE, DAIRY PRODUCT, or PROTEIN FOOD as the 1st ingredient; or
- Be a combination food that contains at least 1/4 cup of fruit and/or vegetable; and
- Must meet the nutrient standards for calories, sodium, sugar, and fats.

	Snack	Entrée
Calories	200 cal	350 cal
Sodium	200 mg	480 mg
Total Fat	35% of calories	35% of calories
Sat. Fat	<10% of calories	<10% of calories
Trans Fat	0g	0g
Sugar	35% by weight	35% by weight

*Applicable for High School grade levels only.

 LunchAssist

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Why?

Food that is free of charge does not legally need to follow the smart snack standards, but it is strongly recommended.

The goal of our district wellness policy is to create a unified message around healthy food choices. **So, you are encouraged to follow smart snack guidelines for *all* food offered to students.**

Download this sheet: [Smart Snacks in School](#)

When including foods in a classroom celebration, including foods that meet the smart snack standard will reinforce the importance of healthy snacking. Alternately, celebrations can include fun activities, in place of desserts. **All resources can also be found at surfcitycafes.com, under the wellness policy tab.**

Resources:

Healthy Classroom Celebrations

Healthier Generations: [Healthy Snack and Beverage List](#)

CDC: [Tips for Teachers](#)

Recognizing Moments and Achievements without Foods

Healthier Generations: [Birthdays, Celebrations and Family Events](#)

Sweets and other nutrient deficient foods will be limited or eliminated from the classroom space in favor of smart snack compliant foods or non-food options. Food-based rewards will be eliminated.

HEALTHY WAYS TO REWARD CHILDREN

Using food as a reward or punishment not only encourages children to eat outside of meal and snack times or when they're not hungry, but also may create a lifelong habit of rewarding or comforting themselves with food. This practice can undermine healthy eating messages and reinforce unhealthy eating habits. Whether at home or at school, try not to use food, even healthy options, as a reward or punishment.

There are many examples of non-food rewards that kids will love. Here are a few of our favorites:

<p>CHOOSE A PRIZE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencils or erasers • Stickers • Books • Enter a drawing or raffle for a bigger prize • Earn tokens or points toward a prize 	<p>GET MOVING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a special event such as a soccer game or kite flying party with friends • Provide extra time outside • Turn on the music and throw a spontaneous dance party • Let children choose and lead an activity
<p>SHAKE UP YOUR ROUTINE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a few minutes of extra free time • Allow children to select a special book during story time • For one day, let a child go first for every activity • Host a special dress day where children can dress like a superhero, athlete or animal 	<p>SHOW THANKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give out a certificate or ribbon to celebrate an accomplishment • Post recognition signs around your home or on the refrigerator • Call a family member or friend, such as a grandparent, to share the news

For more resources like this one, visit KohlsHealthyAtHome.org

ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION

Why?

Food-based rewards are problematic for our students. Recognizing achievement or behavior with unhealthy foods confuses messaging around healthy eating.

Food based rewards have the potential to rewire reward circuitry in students' brains. Associated effects include increased emotional overeating, decreased self-regulation of food intake and a preference for foods associated with accolades (usually high sugar or high fat).¹⁵

Download this sheet: Healthy Ways to Reward Children

There are endless ways to make your child or student feel special, though foods are usually the go-to. But experiences, special privileges, or community recognition can be more impactful than a sweet treat. **All resources can also be found at surfcitycafes.com, under the wellness policy tab.**

Resources:

Healthy Non-Food Rewards

Action for Healthy Kids: [Healthy Non-Food Rewards](#)

IV. Additional Resources

SCCS Policy 5030: Student Wellness

View online here: [Policy 5030 Student Wellness](#).

Smart Snack Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods in Schools

View a quick reference on the federal standards for all food sold in school here: [Smart Snack Reference Card](#). This can also be considered the recommended standard for any foods sent to school by parents or distributed by teachers.

SCCS School Food Services Department: Surf City Cafes

[Surf City Café](#) strives to provide healthy, tasty and appealing meals using local ingredients whenever possible and to give fun and friendly, informed customer service and nutritional education to all our students in a positive, equitable and safe environment.

All foods sold or served at schools, whether in the cafeteria, the classroom or at fundraising or community building events, must meet state and federal requirements based on the USDA Dietary Guidelines. **If you, a class, or an organization at your school needs help sourcing foods that fit within the smart snack guidelines, please reach out to the school food services department.**

SCCS Food Allergy Policy

In any conversation around food in school, it is important to acknowledge that some students live with food allergies. For student safety, it is advised that allergies be reported to the administration at your student's school and to the food services department. Read the full allergy policy here: [food allergy policy](#)

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