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EAT RIGHT MONTANA

www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm

October 2007

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the 10th issue of our 2007 campaign on ***Eating Together, Playing Together***. This issue focuses on creating healthier eating and playing opportunities at school. Our nutrition handout is about **enjoying super nutrition**, while the fitness handout covers **active school days**.

It has now been a year since schools were required by Federal mandate to have a local wellness policy in place. Along with new laws from many state legislatures, this requirement has created a revolution in school nutrition and physical activity. While the environment in many districts may still have plenty of room for improving health, significant progress is being made. Most importantly, legislators, administrators, teachers, parents, and health experts are now actively engaged in discussing what is best for kids at school – locally, statewide, and across the US.

October is the perfect time to recognize, support, and celebrate healthy school environments – and to encourage ongoing efforts to improve nutrition and physical activity at school. **International Walk to School Month** and **National School Lunch Week** provide great opportunities for wellness events and media attention. While our press release focuses on specific efforts in Montana schools, you can find more about supporting active school transportation and super school nutrition at these sites:

www.walktoschool.org/ offers everything you want to know about **Walk to School Day** (October 3rd), as well as walking and biking to school all year long – with tons of free resources to download and share.

www.saferoutesinfo.org/contacts/index.cfm allows you to click on any state for details about local contacts, funding, and existing programs.

www.voteforschoollunch.org/ is the site for **National School Lunch Week (NSLW)** – October 15-19, 2007. You can read about the features of healthy school lunches, check out new healthy recipes, and vote for your favorite healthy lunch. Visit with your local school nutrition program to find out their plans for celebrating **NSLW** this year.

Healthy Families packets are made possible with generous support from agencies, organizations, and individuals. Please join us in thanking the 2007 sponsors listed on the left. If you use this packet and can make a donation to support positive, practical messages for families, please contact ERM Chair Katie Bark at 406-994-5641 or kbark@mt.gov

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Five Fun Ways to Make School Days Active Days

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Physical activity is as important for children's minds as it is for their bodies. Being active before, during, and after school can help kids feel better, behave better, and perform better at school. It can also help them maintain a healthy weight naturally. Being active with family and friends adds social benefits to this win-win situation.

★ Walk to and from school.

For generations, walking to and from school was the tried-and-true fitness path for children. It still can be an awesome way for kids and adults to get physically fit and enjoy some family togetherness at the same time. To get started, plan to walk at least one way every day – or back-and-forth a few days per week.

★ Use pedal and push power.

Bikes and scooters are also good ways to make school-day transportation work for everybody's fitness. Make sure that everyone wears a helmet and knows the details of bike or scooter safety. Have younger children? No problem! Let them walk as far as they can and then push them in the stroller for the rest of the way.

★ Start a walking club at school.

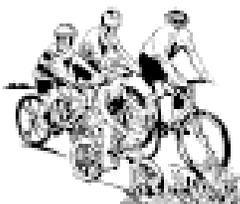
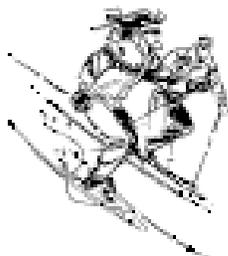
If walking to or from school isn't practical due to distances involved or safety concerns, walking at school is a great alternative. Children can walk around the playground before the bell rings (a little music always helps) or enjoy a nearby park. Check with the PE teacher about getting a club going in your school.

★ Take 5 or 10 in the classroom.

Savvy teachers know that a 5 to 10 minute activity break is a great way to switch from subject to subject. It can also be an effective way to calm down an antsy class and to refocus students' attention where it should be – on learning. Coaches and PE teachers often know where to find lots of fun and easy energizers.

★ Plan for active recess.

Recess is a time for playing with friends rather than leaning against the wall. Recess works best when teachers (and parent volunteers) engage children in age-appropriate games focused on movement and fun rather than winning and losing. Old-fashioned jump rope and hopscotch can be lots of fun for today's children.



EAT RIGHT MONTANA

Healthy Eating

Five Tasty Ways to Enjoy Smart Nutrition at School

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Smart food choices provide the fuel that kids need to perform well at school – both in the classroom and during athletic events. There are many ways to support smart choices wherever children, staff, and families eat together on the school campus. Family involvement is always an important part of healthier school environments.

● Get behind breakfast at school.

When it comes to school performance, there's no doubt that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A morning meal fuels children's brains for paying attention, staying on task, and absorbing new information. If your school offers breakfast, use it whenever you need it. If not, ask if they can start a program.

● Support school lunch.

Exciting things are happening in school dining rooms: more fruits and veggies, more whole grains, more tasty good-for-kids options. As you read the menus, realize that things have changed. That pizza may have a whole wheat crust, low-fat cheese, and several veggies. Join your child for lunch – and taste for yourself.

● Makeover brown bags and lunchboxes.

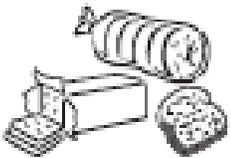
When your child takes lunch from home, pack fun, nutritious foods for optimal performance. Plan on five items: a fruit, a veggie, a whole grain, a protein, and a dairy food. It's as easy as sliced turkey on whole wheat with lettuce and tomato, a single-serve cup of canned fruit, and low-fat milk purchased at school.

● Focus on fruit and vegetable treats.

Fruits and veggies make the perfect treats for classroom celebrations and for booster clubs sales at athletic events. You can go simple with veggie sticks plus low-fat Ranch dip – or go fancy with fruit kebobs or a fresh fruit pizza. Veggie boats and fruits cups are popular with kids and parents at concession stands.

● Push for effective, non-food rewards.

Sugary rewards can cause real problems – for kids' teeth and their long-term eating habits. Check your school wellness policy to see what it says about classroom rewards. Push for effective, non-food rewards. Special privileges (like extra recess for the class or computer time for an individual) can work wonders.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MT Department of Public Health & Human Services

EATING TOGETHER, PLAYING TOGETHER
Celebrating Healthy Families 2007

October 1, 2007

Support Smart Nutrition and Fitness at School

With school routines firmly in place, this is a great time to focus on healthy choices at school. In the first year of the local wellness policies mandated by the US Congress, districts across Montana have made exciting and significant changes in nutrition and physical activity for students and staff. During October, **National School Lunch Week** and **International Walk to School Month** provide perfect opportunities for parents to support the changes in their local district. It is also an excellent time to get involved in ongoing efforts to create the healthiest possible learning environments.

“Montana continues to be a pioneer in creating healthy school environments,” says Katie Bark, RD (Registered Dietitian) with the Team Nutrition Program at Montana State University in Bozeman. “In our efforts to provide what’s best for kids at school, Team Nutrition – funded by a USDA grant - works closely with administrators, teachers, and Child Nutrition Directors in all Montana districts. We also collaborate with the volunteer leaders of statewide groups like Montana Action for Healthy Kids and Montana PTA, as well as local community groups across the state.”

During **National School Lunch Week** – October 15 through 19 – Montana school cafeterias will celebrate a national trend towards healthier lunches. Parents, grandparents, and other family members are encouraged to join their children for lunch – and taste the positive changes in school meals for themselves. Some of the exciting changes in Montana schools include:

- **Billings:** Both School District #2 and Billings Catholic Schools have switched to healthier a la carte items in middle schools. Veggie boats and fruit cups have been sell-out hits.
- **Box Elder** schools won a HealthierUS School Challenge Award for their efforts, which include a morning nutrition break for teens, a salad bar for grades 6-8, and fruit bars for all ages.
- **Lewistown** schools have increased participation and improved nutrition with healthy Grab-and-Go high school meals, daily entrée salads, and fresh fruits/veggies four days a week.

To learn about Montana school wellness in action, download *Making It Happen in Montana* at www.opi.mt.gov/PDF/SchoolFood/SchoolWellCaseStudies.pdf. The national School Nutrition Association has information for parents at www.schoolnutrition.org/parent.aspx?id=1981

Many districts will use **International Walk to School Month** and **Walk to School Day (WTSD)** on October 3rd to showcase safe routes for walking or biking to school – one of the easiest ways to increase children’s daily physical activity. Schools from Billings to Vaughn have already registered at www.walktoschool.org/who/seestate.cfm?st=MT, where groups can find ideas for events and materials to distribute to children and families. Examples of fun activities in schools include:

- **Bozeman’s Emily Dickinson Elementary** will kick-off **Walk/Bike/Wheel to School Month** at a party with their mascot (Carlo the Newfoundland), healthy snacks and a bicycle drawing.
- **Gardiner’s** first-time **WTSD** event will include neighborhood “walking school buses,” healthy breakfast snacks at school, and a “Be Safe, Be Seen” Fashion Show for participating students.
- **Shelby Elementary** will have “Walk-and-Wheel Wednesdays” all year long. By completing punch cards whenever they bike or walk to school, students will be eligible for prize drawings.

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana’s monthly packets can be downloaded free at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm