

Wellness Promotion in the Somerville Public Schools Food Service Department

Strategies for Success

Mary Joan McLarney, M.S, R.D.

Food Service Director

Somerville Public Schools

School Wellness in Massachusetts Symposium

April 7, 2009



Somerville, Massachusetts

- Urban, industrial city of 78,000 residents, located north of Boston, MA
- Total area consists of 4.1 square miles and 3% open space with few resources
- 4,870 Students in 12 district schools
- 65% of students are eligible for free and reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program
- Greater than 50% of students are from ethnic/racial minorities and speak 27 languages
- In 2006, 48% of 4-8th graders were overweight or at risk for overweight

Somerville Food Service Department Overview

- \$2.81 million annual operating budget.
- Services 12 Somerville schools, 4 Community and Charter schools and 19 Head Start locations (6,100 students total) plus full summer service.
- Central production system with 7 satellite locations and 9 partial/full service kitchens
- 60 food service personnel
- Average daily service:
 - 1,450 universal free breakfasts
 - 3,600 lunches
 - 540 after school snacks
 - 1,415 summer lunches and 573 summer breakfast/day
- 2007-2008 food expenditures exceeded \$1.1 million

2007-2008 Self Funded Annual Operating Budget \$2.8 million/year

Annual Revenues

- Fed./State Reimbursements 70%
 - Lunch and A la carte sales 16%
 - Head Start Programs 9%
 - Summer Service Everett 2.5%
 - Catering 2.5%
- (2007-08 Annual Commodity Value \$152,000)

Challenges of Providing Healthy Food In School Food Service

- Cost - Economics Determine Menu
- Decreased Student Acceptability of Healthy Choices Resulting in Decreased Meal Participation
- Unskilled Labor Pool/Poor Recipe Execution
- Facility & Infrastructure Issues
(Schools lack space, storage equipment, computers)
- Staff Resistance to Change
- Insufficient Time for Students to Eat Lunch

How Somerville Was Able to Achieve Healthy Changes (2002-2009)

1. Focus on Improved Food/Menu Quality
2. Continuous Infrastructure/Facility Improvement
3. Increased System Sales/Controlled System Costs
4. Continuous Training, Monthly Staff Meetings
5. District Support of Wellness, Programs & Policies
6. Grant Funding (Shape Up Somerville, PEP, Growing Healthy, USDA Fruit & Vegetable Grant)
7. Student/Staff Nutrition Education (taste tests)
8. Nutrition Education & Partnerships (U-Mass Extension, Goundwork Somerville, Nutrition Outreach Coordinator)

Focus on Improved Menu and Food Quality



- Expanded lunch choices in all schools
- Introduced fresh fruit daily at breakfast & lunch
- Introduced daily fresh salad selection grades 4-12
- Continuous recipe development, use of fresh ingredients, fruits, vegetables, whole grains & olive oil
- Chef consultants - Staff culinary training
- Established purchasing system for local produce
- Staff & Student taste tests
- Recipient of USDA Healthier US School Challenge Award

Limited-A La Carte Sales while Increasing Internal and External Revenues

- All lunches were reimbursable meals-no a la carte menu items.
- A-La Carte Snack Sales in grades 3-12 were limited to the Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kid Guidelines (less than 30% of calories from fat, 10% or less from sat. fat, reduced portion size, decreased CHO) No K-2 snacks.
- Current Elementary grades 3-8 A-La-Carte snacks sold are limited to low fat milk, water, 100% juice and low fat, low calorie ice cream twice per week.
- Externally Increased Catering, Head Start & Summer Program Sites, Participation and Revenues.

Lunch participation increased from 63.5% of students in March of 2003 to 68 % of students in March 2008 as the menu became healthier.

Purchasing & Cost Control Systems

Revenues & Expenditures Need to be Monitored and Measured to Effectively Control Costs

- Established a Six School District Purchasing Cooperative with Other Large Urban Districts
- Centralized District Purchasing at All Levels
- Consolidated to a Single Production Facility
- Continuous Review of Individual School Forecasting and Production to Control Waste
- Constant Menu Review for Student Acceptability
- Recipe Development Utilizing Raw Commodities
- Established a System for Local Produce Purchases

Somerville School Wellness Policy

(implemented September, 2006)

A District wide commitment to improving the areas of nutrition, nutrition education, physical activity and physical education for all staff and students by fostering an environment in which students & staff can make healthful choices related to food & physical activity.

Objectives

- To Provide nutritious meals each day
- To Provide safe and enjoyable experiences for physical activity
- To Improve learning through better nutrition and physical activity
- To help Somerville's children develop healthy eating and physical activity habits through instruction and role modeling in a healthy environment
- To make the wellness policy available to all on the District website and in Parent and Guardian Information Guides
- To review the wellness policy annually with all District Administrators during Leadership Meetings.

Wellness Policy Highlights

School Environment

- School fundraisers involving food can only be held after school lunch is over and fundraisers are encouraged to sell foods from the recommended snack list.
- Principals are encouraged to provide recess before lunch.
- Students are encouraged to walk, bike or actively commute to school.
- Schools will continue to participate in the "Safe Routes to School Program" and distribute maps annually.
- Height and Weight data is collected annually on all children in Grades K through 8.

The Somerville School Committee approved a preference for local vendors in produce contracts to support purchase of local products and agriculture (June, 2008)

Wellness Policy Highlights

School Food Service

- Fresh fruit is served daily at school breakfast and lunch.
- A La Carte items meet the guidelines established by Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids.
- Health education training is offered annually to school food service staff.

Classroom Snacks

- A list of recommended snacks is disseminated to parents and teachers annually from Food Service for children's snacks.
- Candy is not to be used as a reward for children's accomplishments.

Physical Education and Health Services

- Physical education is required in grades K through 8.
- Fitness testing is incorporated into all PE services at all schools.

Staff Trainings & Wellness Opportunities

Professional Development and Training on nutrition education, knife skills, & food presentation.

- Programs for personal development (yoga strength training and apple picking).



New Equipment Purchases

- Combi oven, walk in freezers, refrigerators, warmers, slicers, grills, peelers, refrigerated delivery trucks, dicers, marketing and merchandising materials



Computerization of Department

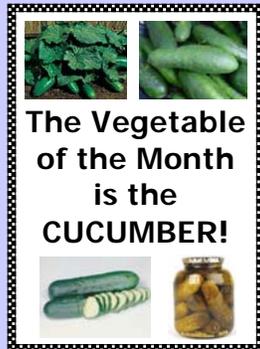
Grant Funding : Student & Community Outreach

- Student Advisory Board
- Vegetable of the Month
- Cafeteria taste tests
- School gardens
- School contests
- Newsletters
- Food Service Menus/Web Info



Feature Vegetables 2008-2009

- September - Tomatoes
- October - Corn
- November - Squash
- December - Potatoes
- January - Beans
- February - Carrots
- March - Cucumbers
- April - Broccoli
- May - Spinach
- June - Garden Greens



What Makes It All Work

- Modeling and reinforcement of department and district policies
- Collaborations and partnerships with school, after school, parents and community groups
- Constant communication about initiatives and programs
- Continuous reinvestment in program facilities, equipment and infrastructure
- Grant Funding: Shape Up Somerville, PEP, Growing Healthy, USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Grant
- Planning and a positive, proactive approach to problem solving
- Always keeping the kids first

Recommendations for Success in School Food Service

- Uniform national nutrition standards must be developed for school meal programs with the goal of disease prevention.
- Government funding and reimbursements must adequately support the costs for nutritious meals and keep pace with inflation and real food/paper/labor cost increases.
- Additional reimbursements and/or grant funding should be offered as incentives for Districts offering healthy meals.
- Commodity Foods should serve as a model for healthy foods.
- More time needs to be mandated for students to eat lunch.
- Wellness policies must be District embraced/supported.
- States must adopt policies to support local agriculture and allow for contract preference to purchase from local vendors.
- Nutrition Education and Physical Education must become a larger part of the whole school curriculum.

Somerville Resources Available Online

- School menus
- Wellness Policy
- Recommended Snack List
- Vegetable of the Month posters and recipes
- Detailed description of how to hold a taste taste
- Other nutrition outreach materials



Visit: <http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us>

➡ Departments ➡ Food Services