

MAKING WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOLS A HEALTHIER PLACE TO LEARN

State agencies work together to educate policymakers on school nutrition standards

Public Health Problem

- Students spend a major part of the day at school in an environment that doesn't always support healthy lifestyle choices to prevent obesity.
- Federally funded school nutrition programs are the main source of food and beverages at school but minimum standards for these programs leave room for improvement.
- The West Virginia Board of Education cited data indicating that schools nationwide with high percentages of students who didn't routinely eat well and engage in physical activity had smaller gains in test scores than other schools.

Program

- The West Virginia Office of Healthy Lifestyles and West Virginia Board of Education prepared the way for proposed changes in school nutrition standards modeled on recommendations of the Institute of Medicine which had reviewed how foods and beverages sold at school contribute to a healthy school environment.
- Hosting an event in the House of Delegates chamber at the state Capitol gave the partners an opportunity to show state policymakers the practical aspects of changing nutrition standards through a visual display of the foods meeting the standards.
- A West Virginia expert who served on the Institute of Medicine committee described the available scientific evidence and justification for proposed changes.
- The event also honored twelve schools for outstanding work in school nutrition, providing West Virginia examples of what could be accomplished by the proposed changes.

Impact

- The West Virginia Board of Education Wellness Committee adopted an updated nutrition policy and Governor Joe Manchin III recommended approval. The policy establishes statewide standards for all foods and beverages sold, served or distributed to students during the school day and incorporates many Institute of Medicine recommendations for incorporating healthy foods and beverages. Board of Education policy carries the weight of state law in West Virginia.
- This policy can have a positive effect on the present and future health and well-being of West Virginia students whose health and well-being, like that of other American students is "profoundly affected by dietary intake and the maintenance of a healthy weight," according to the Institute of Medicine.

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