

Smart Snacks Potential Financial Impact

Studies indicate that schools that maintain strong nutrition standards are able to maintain financial stability.

Participation in school meals (reimbursable meals) has been reported to increase with the introduction of nutrition standards for vending and a la carte foods. This also demonstrates that an increased number of students are receiving healthier foods by participating in the school meal program.

Evidence from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Eighty percent of principals in one survey reported little or no change in revenue when they implemented a state policy restricting the sale of junk foods and soda in schools.

Among 16 schools that received funding to pilot test the implementation of state nutrition standards, 13 schools reported an increase in gross revenue. Most of these schools reported increases in the sales of reimbursable school meals, with the greatest increases occurring in the schools that eliminated à la carte foods completely.

An evaluation of the impact of state legislation establishing nutrition standards for competitive foods found that of the 11 schools that reported financial data, 10 experienced increases of more than 5% in revenue from meal program participation, which offset decreases in revenue from à la carte food service.

Local Success Story: Henry Sibley High School, ISD 197, Mendota Heights, MN

After receiving the silver Healthier US School Challenge (HUSSC) award at all of their five elementary schools, ISD 197 decided it was time to focus on improving the foods available at their two middle and one high school. One big road block was the proliferation of unhealthy a la carte foods at these buildings, including soda pop, sports drinks, large bottles of “juice” drinks loaded with sugar, cheesy nachos, salty soft pretzels with cheese-like dip, pastries, fried chips, and cookies. The district started gradually by switching the chips used in nacho prep to a whole grain corn chip and reducing the portion size of cookies to a 1.5 ounce whole grain option. The following school year (2011-2012) the a la carte changes picked up speed when samples of healthier products were taste tested by middle and high school Family and Consumer Science students. These options included hummus and pita chips, a celery/peanut butter/raisin combo, air-popped popcorn, and a cinnamon-filled pretzel. During winter break that year, unhealthy options were removed and replaced with foods that met the HUSSC nutrition standards (which are similar to the newly adopted USDA Smart Snacks standards). Although there was a slight dip in a la carte sales, there was a greater increase in reimbursable lunch revenue.

Table: Financial Data for Henry Sibley High School from 2006-2012

Year	Reimbursement Revenue	A la carte Revenue	Total Revenue
2006-2007	\$1,563,000	\$540,690	\$2,103,690
2007-2008	\$1,565,000	\$527,900	\$2,092,900
2008-2009	\$1,534,721	\$493,607	\$2,028,328
2009-2010	\$1,699,723	\$354,030	\$2,053,753
2010-2011	\$1,859,723	\$289,740	\$2,149,463
2011-2012	\$1,871,868	\$257,072	\$2,128,940