

# Healthy Fundraising

## Promoting a Healthy School Environment



Candy, baked goods, soda and other foods with little nutritional value are commonly used for fundraising at school. Schools may make easy money selling these foods, but students pay the price. An environment that constantly provides children with sweets promotes unhealthy habits that can have lifelong impact. As we face a national epidemic of overweight children, many schools are turning to healthy fundraising alternatives.

### Benefits of Healthy Fundraising

**Healthy Kids Learn Better:** Research clearly demonstrates that good nutrition is linked to better behavior and academic performance. To provide the best possible learning environment for children, schools must also provide an environment that supports healthy behaviors.

**Provides Consistent Messages:** Fundraising with healthy foods and non-food items demonstrates a school commitment to promoting healthy behaviors. It supports the classroom lessons students are learning about health, instead of contradicting them.

**Promotes a Healthy School Environment:** Students need to receive consistent, reliable health information and ample opportunity to use it. Finding healthy alternatives to fund-raising is an important part of providing a healthy school environment.

Almost 20 percent of children are overweight, a threefold increase from the 1970's.<sup>1</sup> Poor eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle are just behind smoking as the leading cause of deaths per year in the United States, and the number of deaths related to poor diet and physical inactivity is increasing.<sup>2,3</sup>



### Consequences of Unhealthy Fundraising

**Compromises Classroom Learning:** Selling unhealthy food items contradicts nutrition messages taught in the classroom. Schools are designed to teach and model appropriate skills and behaviors. Nutrition principles taught in the classroom are meaningless if they are contradicted by other activities that promote unhealthy choices, like selling candy and other sweets. It's like saying, "You need to eat healthy foods to feel and do your best, but it is more important for us to make money than for you to be healthy and do well." Classroom learning about nutrition remains strictly theoretical if the school environment regularly promotes unhealthy behaviors.

**Promotes the Wrong Message:** Selling unhealthy foods provides a message that schools care more about making money than student health. We would never think of raising money with anything else that increases student health risks, but food fundraisers are often overlooked. As schools promote healthy lifestyle choices to reduce student health risks and improve learning, school fundraisers must be included.

**Contributes to Poor Health:** Foods commonly used as fundraisers (like chocolate, candy, soda and baked goods) provide unneeded calories and displace healthier food choices. Skyrocketing obesity rates among children are resulting in serious health consequences, such as increased incidence of type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

#### References

- <sup>1</sup> Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Curtin LR, McDowell MA, Tabak CJ, Flegal KM. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States, 1999-2004. *JAMA* 295:1549-1555. 2006.
- <sup>2</sup> Mokdad AH, Marks JS, Stroup DF, Gerberding JL. Actual causes of death in the United States, 2000. *JAMA*. 2004;291(10):1238-1246
- <sup>3</sup> Mokdad AH, Marks JS, Stroup DF, Gerberding JL. Correction: Actual causes of death in the United States, 2000. *JAMA*. 2005;293:293-294.