

No Junk Food Week Promotes Better Nutrition

Process of Creating Change

No Junk Food Week is a countywide activity that was first planned and initiated by the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) in March 2004.

As part of this event, schools asked students to sign a pledge promising to eat healthy snacks instead of junk food for one week in March. The activity has been sponsored by WCDH for three years to promote awareness about the benefits of healthy eating.

Letters and event materials were mailed to all elementary school principals and school nurses in Westchester County. Approximately 300 information packets have been distributed each year.

The following materials were provided to schools:

- Guidelines for No Junk Food Week participation.
- “Contracts” for parents to sign indicating that their children avoided “junk food” every day for the designated week.
- A list of healthy snacks to encourage children to make healthier choices.
- Incentive prizes to raffle off to participating students.
- Certificates of recognition that could be individualized to acknowledge all student participants.



No Junk Food Week materials were provided to our Fit Kids of Hudson Valley partners to enable promotion of this event in their local schools.

No Junk Food Week proved to be a tremendous success. On average, 33 schools with approximately 17,000 students participated each year. The schools with the highest level of participation (i.e. highest percentage of the student body participating) were acknowledged at press conferences with a certificate of recognition. In 2004, one elementary school had an 83% rate of student participation. In the subsequent two years, 69% was the highest level of participation.

Evidence of Change

No Junk Food Week heightened student, teacher and

parental awareness about the importance of healthy snacking and served as a catalyst for changing the foods served in school cafeterias. Many schools used this activity as an opportunity to highlight nutrition education both in the classroom and in the cafeteria. During No Junk Food Week, a number of schools served special healthy snacks in their cafeterias, some of which were then adopted as part of the menu.

No Junk Food Week was also an opportunity to introduce schools to nutrition standards. Many schools included nutrition standards for a la carte menu items, vending, and beverages into their wellness policies.

Costs Incurred

No Junk Food Week has proven to be a successful, low cost, high reach intervention. The estimated annual cost is \$1500 and includes printing, postage, and incentives.

Other Money Leveraged

Many schools used their own sources of funding to expand on this activity and continue to promote healthy choices in the school cafeteria.

Lessons Learned

- ♥ A key element contributing to the success of No Junk Food Week was the ability to provide schools with all the necessary materials in a “turn key” manner. Schools were then able to build upon what was provided to enhance the activity. Another key feature was that No Junk Food Week did not require use of classroom time.
- ♥ Parents were asked to sign their children’s contract and therefore became actively involved in the intervention, resulting in children and parents learning about the importance of healthy snacking.
- ♥ Schools require ample time to plan activities. Program materials should be available by mid-January.

Type of Change:	Policy, Practice
Risk Factor :	Nutrition
Location:	Schools in Westchester County
Reach/Impact:	33 schools/17,000 children per year



NYS Healthy Heart Program