



AMERICAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION OF INDIANA, INC.
DAIRY & NUTRITION COUNCIL, INC.

FACT SHEET

School Lunch Makes the Grade

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, students are flunking healthy eating. Less than 20 percent of school children eat the recommended daily servings of fruit, vegetables and whole grains, and only 30 percent consume three servings of dairy each day.

The National School Lunch Program proudly serves more than 30.5 million school children each day – well over the total number of people served by the nation’s largest fast food chain. School lunches, by federal regulations must be nutritious – providing a weekly average of one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for protein, iron, calcium, calories and vitamins A and C. (*Agricultural Research*, August 2009)

A study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found school meals improve fruit, vegetable and milk consumption among students in middle school. Sixth graders who had access to food and beverages from vending machines, school stores and a la carte sales consumed 15 percent less calcium, 32 percent less vitamin A and 32 percent more fat than students who ate school lunch.

The federal government requires schools to have a wellness policy in place to address the epidemic of overweight and obese children. Local school districts are required to set individual goals for nutrition education, physical activity, school-based activities and nutrition standards for foods available on each school campus.

Since children spend more than half of their day in school, it’s important they get key vitamins and minerals their growing bodies need while there. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends beverages such as 100 percent fruit juice, water and low-fat white or flavored milk be stocked in school vending machines instead of sweetened drinks. (*Pediatrics*, January 2004)

Fuel Up to Play 60 is a new program created by National Dairy Council and National Football League (NFL) that empowers students to make changes at school that will help them “get active and play” for 60 minutes daily and “fuel up” with critical nutrient-rich foods missing from their diets – like low-fat and fat-free dairy foods, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

A study of 100,000 students found that more children drink milk when schools offer it in plastic containers, served cold, and in a variety of flavors. With these changes, overall milk consumption increased by 37 percent among students. (*School Milk Pilot Test, Beverage Marketing Corporation for National Dairy Council & American School Food Service Association*, 2002)

Of milk choices offered in school, chocolate milk is the most popular. Flavored milk contains the same essential vitamins and minerals as white milk and today nine out of 10 girls and seven out of 10 boys are not getting enough calcium. Studies have shown that when flavors are on the menu, kids drink more milk and fewer soft drinks.