Marketing’s Impact on Program Effectiveness and Healthy Food Choices in Schools

Susie Nanney PhD, MPH, RD
Associate Professor

October 14, 2013

University of Minnesota
Presentation objectives

• Identify the 4 healthy food access areas that rural schools are lagging in

• Identify 3 promising practices for schools

• Discuss 3 actions for decision makers
Students attending rural schools are more likely...

- To attend small schools
- Live in poverty
- Be food insecure
- Unprepared for school
National study

- Principals described school nutrition policies and practices
What are the main findings?

• Junk foods and drinks were equally available across all schools, regardless of location

• Rural schools were less likely to:
  – ban junk food, fast food advertising at school
  – promote healthy foods
  – serve fruits or vegetables
  – have smaller portions sizes
Why is this important?

• Food access
  – Sugary drinks, fruits and vegetables

• Junk food marketing
  – Linked to obesity

• Promotional strategies
  – Nutrition info, taste preferences, cost sensitive

• Portion sizes
  – Serving sizes have increased over time
Promising Practices

• School Breakfast Program (SBP)

• Ban junk food marketing/promote healthy foods in schools

• Cooperative buying partnerships
Why prioritize school breakfast?

- Broad stakeholder reach
  - Academic performance, healthy diet/weight, hunger
  - School Board Association, School Nutrition Association, Academy of Pediatrics, etc.

- Academic benefits, especially for rural, low income of school breakfast

- School breakfast eaters have better diets and weigh about 4 pounds less than noneaters
Project BREAK! study results

Goal: increase access to school breakfast in rural schools

- Increase in SBP participation among low income students, girls, students of color
- Increase in whole grains and milk
- Decrease in breakfast skipping
- Maintain healthy weights
Currently evaluating:

- Grades
- Absences
- Tardiness
- Disciplinary events
- Health office visits
breakFAST
fueling academics & strengthening teens

University of Minnesota
Opportunities for decision makers

• Support School Breakfast Programs

• Connect schools to local agriculture to offset food costs and increase healthy food access

• Identify creative ways to connect parents and community businesses to schools
Support School Breakfast Programs

- Establish state reimbursements
- Enroll more eligible families
- Review bus schedules, start times
- Create pipeline programs (elementary, middle/jr., high schools)

All school districts are required to arrange bus schedules so that buses arrive in sufficient time for schools to serve breakfast prior to the instructional day.  
[KY.REV.STAT.ANN. § 158.070]
Support local agriculture

- Food Policy Councils
  - Examine local food systems and provide recommendations to improve access

- Farm to School Programs
  - Connect kids to food; supports local farmers

- Collective purchasing of food for federal school nutrition programs
  - Smaller and rural schools have the most to gain

Legal and policy tools available at the Public Health Law Center.org
A strength of rural schools…

- 41% of town/rural schools report both family and community involvement in school nutrition policy development
  - 32% of city schools
  - 34% of suburb schools
Family & community involvement

• Having family and/or community help in developing school nutrition policies:
  – Fewer junk food items in schools
  – More fruits/vegetables
  – Smaller portion sizes
  – Pricing strategies
  – Collect parent, student suggestions
  – Provide nutrition information
But not for policies to....

- Ban distributing junk food merchandise
- Ban junk food advertising in school buildings, grounds, bus, publications
Parent outreach/engagement strategies

• School siting decisions can be leveraged to promote greater school and community connectivity

• Shared use of school property

• Afterschool and out-of-school time

Legal and policy tools available at the Public Health Law Center.org
Summary: Food access in schools

• Food access challenges of costs, resources, infrastructure, etc. transcend geography
  – Most problematic in rural schools

• National evidence base exists on how to improve food access in school settings
  – Unique rural challenges

• Solutions will likely impact multiple settings
  – Child care, after school programs, worksites
Thank you & questions

- msnanney@umn.edu
- (612) 626-6794