

**SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS:
IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION**

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1991
Reviewed by Board of Managers March 2012

- WHEREAS,** The California State PTA recognizes that children must be well nourished to achieve the optimal quality of life that they deserve; and
- WHEREAS,** Research has demonstrated that properly nourished children are better able to achieve their full potential in growth, physical development, academic and athletic performance; and
- WHEREAS** Foods available on school premises should provide for the nutritional well-being of children and be considered as carefully as other educational support services; and
- WHEREAS,** Schools should encourage students to develop lifelong healthy eating habits by offering well-balanced, properly prepared and appealing foods that prevent the early physical symptoms and behaviors related to chronic diseases; and
- WHEREAS,** Schools should incorporate the recommendations of both the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the California Dietary Food Guide when selecting the meals and snacks served on school campuses; and
- WHEREAS,** Schools should promote comprehensive health programs that include nutrition services and nutrition education for students, staff and parents; and
- WHEREAS,** Federal and state funds are available for the purpose of providing nutritious, healthful meals to all children at lowered costs to schools; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts urge school district governing boards to establish and promote school breakfast and lunch programs which provide balanced, nutritious meals; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts urge school districts to move towards higher nutritional quality foods and beverages served in the schools; to foster lifelong healthy eating habits through coordination of classroom instruction and the service of balanced, nutritious meals; and to comply with the laws and regulations governing food and beverage sales on school campuses.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

School lunch programs have been a continuing concern to National PTA and the California State PTA. Since 1944, the National PTA has supported the National School Lunch Program bill. In May 1974, the State PTA voted to support the Child Nutrition Act of 1974 which authorized school districts to apply for state and federal funds to assist schools in serving nourishing low-cost meals to children, and to provide free or reduced price meals to children from low-income families.

Nutrition programs have been shown to have a significant positive effect on children's nutritional status and learning ability:

- A U.S. Department of Agriculture study of the lunch and breakfast programs, *The National Evaluation of School Nutrition Programs, 1983*, demonstrated that these programs make nutritional improvements in children's diets. The report of the study stated: "The superiority of the school lunch program is reflected in higher daily intake of nutrients for the general school age population and for all the population subgroups that were examined." In addition, the school breakfast program was shown to increase the likelihood that children will eat breakfast.
- A 1987 study in Boston, Massachusetts, documented improvements in achievement test scores, tardiness rates and absenteeism after a breakfast program was introduced.
- The recent studies carried out in carefully controlled "laboratory" settings have revealed that skipping breakfast negatively affects children's performance in problem-solving situations similar to ones they face in a classroom setting.

PTA advocates that every school have a school nutrition policy. This policy can be used to teach school officials, school board members, school food services personnel, teachers, parents and students about the relationship between nutrition and learning, and about what schools can do to ensure that nutritional conditions are optimum for learning. Moreover, it helps schools plan improvements in the nutritional environment of their students.

The nutritional goals during childhood are to provide optimally for the needs of growth, physical development, athletics and academic performance while, at the same time, avoiding early physical symptoms and behaviors related to chronic diseases. Most experts agree that health extends beyond normal growth and development into the early prevention of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and osteoporosis. However, there is concern about doing harm through overly restrictive diets during critical periods of development or contributing to the problem of hunger among vulnerable groups. The nutrition guidelines for all school foods, as established by the State Department of Education, are a sound basis for the service of school nutrition programs and for all food and beverage sales on school campuses.