

Chalkboard

By

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Act 1220 of 2003 mandated that each school district in 2004-05 form a School Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory (SNPAA) Committee to focus on two areas. The first was to help raise awareness of the importance of nutrition and physical activity and assist in the development of local policies that address issues and goals, including but not limited to, the following: 1. Assisting with the implementation of nutrition and physical activity standards developed by the committee (Arkansas Child Health Advisory Committee) with approval of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and the State Board of Health; 2. Integrating nutrition and physical activity into the overall curriculum; 3. Ensuring that professional development for staff includes nutrition and physical activity issues; 4. Ensuring that students receive nutrition education and engage in healthful levels of vigorous physical activity; 5. Improving the quality of physical education curricula and increasing training of physical education teachers; 6. Enforcing existing physical education requirements; 7. Pursuing contracts that both encourage healthy eating by students and reduce school dependence on profits from the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value.

The Gentry School District complied with the law and formed such a committee. The members of the committee elected Kaye Cripps, a teacher at the middle school to chair the committee. After much research and discussion the committee has made the following suggestions or observations to me.

“The committee would like to initiate the following food and vending machine guidelines for each campus. These are guidelines and recommendations suggested by the CHACR and the SNAPEL committees.

During the school day, foods with no or low nutritional value may not be given away to students, or used as rewards by school administration, staff, students, student groups, parents, or parent groups, or any other person, company or organization. Middle and high school snack vending machines should contain items that are nutritious and low in fat and sugar. At the middle school beverages will need to be non-carbonated and low in sugar. We recommend sports drinks, water, 100% fruit juice, and dairy drinks. At the high school, the plan is to phase out carbonated drinks but at this time limit the carbonated drinks to 12 oz. as recommended by the CHACR and to

incorporate healthier drinks into the machines. During the declared school day, middle and high school students will not have access to vending machines anywhere on school premises until 30 minutes after the end of the last lunch period.

Fundraisers need to support healthy eating. We realize that some fundraisers sell a variety of items that include non-nutritional foods and cannot be totally eliminated. We would like to eliminate fundraisers that focus only on candy sales.

We would like to visit area cafeterias with our food director to view the different food menus and services that are provided for students. We want our students to be excited about eating in our cafeteria.

We feel that low fat chocolate milk should be included in the elementary children's daily diets. Chocolate milk does not cause hyperactivity and is considered a nutritious drink. Many children would drink more milk if they had a choice.

We also discussed the types of snacks the kindergarten students are receiving. Suggestions were made about changing the prices of lunches to include a milk and cracker snack.

Regarding, Health Promotion for Safety, at the elementary we have playground equipment that need to have the tire chips placed underneath them. This will help cushion accidents that occur. After listening to parents concerns it was suggested that duty teachers/aides be strategically located on the playground during playtime to help eliminate fighting, accidents, etc.

Middle and high school concerns include floor mats need to be placed by all entrances into the schools during rainy and snowy weather to help eliminate slipping and falling accidents. Also at the middle school, tire chips need to be placed under the swings to help cushion accidents.

The areas between the high school and middle school are unsupervised during transition time. The campuses need to come up with a plan to supervise these areas.

Custodians and science teachers need to be reminded that all chemicals need to be placed under lock and key. Doors should not be left open for student access.

At the high school, the lighting at the high school and football stadium parking areas is limited. We suggest dusk to dawn lighting in both areas. This will help detour vandalism and keep our students and patron's safe. Smoking on the school campuses is against the law. We still have smokers during the events that are held on our campuses. The no smoking policy needs to be enforced throughout our school district."

I commend this committee for their frank and student-centered efforts. If you have ideas you would like to share with this group, I encourage you to contact Ms. Cripps at the middle school.