



# Healthy Active Schools Program

## What is the Healthy Active Schools Program?

The Healthy Active Schools Program works in partnership with school districts, SUN Community Schools, and community partners to develop and implement policy and systems change strategies that promote healthy eating and physical activity in schools. The Program works at three levels: 1) advancing district-wide policy change to promote population-wide student health, 2) implementing nutrition, physical activity, and screen time standards for after-school programs in schools identified as high need and serving communities disproportionately affected by chronic diseases, and 3) coordinating a Healthy Eating Active Living Coalition in partnership with the Cesar Chavez K-8 School community in North Portland as an on-going neighborhood-based demonstration project.

## Why focus on school environments?

There are strong links between health and academic achievement. Studies underscore the importance of school meals and snacks programs in helping children maximize their learning potential. For example, research shows that well-nourished students that skip breakfast perform worse on tests, have poor concentration, and have inadequate daily attendance. Results of physical fitness testing studies show that higher levels of fitness are associated with higher achievement in mathematics and reading, and the motor learning that occurs in quality physical education programs can support reading readiness, increased cognitive responses, and attention span. Schools are a key environment where Multnomah County, school districts, and community partners can come together to slow rates of childhood obesity as well as promote student academic success.

## Program Goals

In collaboration with school districts and community-based partners, the Program is pursuing a number of policy, environmental, and systems change goals aimed at shifting school standards and norms related to healthy eating and physical activity. Initiatives include implementation of food procurement policies that increase the availability of local fruits and vegetables in school meals, school cafeteria reforms to encourage healthy choices, restrictions on the availability of high calorie and high sugar food and beverages, as well as strategies to promote safe walking and biking to school and increase physical activity throughout the school day.

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