



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension



Cornell Healthy After-School Environment (CHASE) Self-Assessment Tool

Purpose: This tool was developed to help after-school staff assess where they are now in terms of supporting healthy eating and active play, and to think about possible ways to be more supportive. The goal is to generate a discussion and help promote thinking about changing environments rather than only individual behavior.

Suggested use: If you work with after-school programs that are interested in promoting health, suggest that they complete this self-assessment and offer to discuss ideas with them if they are interested in making changes.

Background: This tool was developed by Wendy Wolfe, Cornell University Division of Nutritional Sciences, and Sally Crosiar, healthypeoplelearn.com. It was modeled after the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) program,¹ and adapted from a similar tool we developed for overnight camps for the Choose Health at 4-H Camp project. Development was also informed by the Healthy Kids, Healthy New York After-School Initiative toolkit, developed simultaneously, as well as by CDC's School Health Index. Question items were cognitively tested in a sample of after-school directors in spring 2009 and revised accordingly.

For more information or an electronic copy of this tool, contact Wendy Wolfe at ww16@cornell.edu.

Recommended Citation:

Wolfe, Wendy S and Crosiar, Sally. Cornell Self-Assessment Tool for After-School Food and Physical Activity Environments. Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University, 2010.

¹ Benjamin SE, Ammerman A, Sommers J, Dodds J, Neelon B, Ward DS. Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC): Results from a Pilot Program. *J Nutr Edu Behav* 2007;39:142-149.



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension



Cover letter from CCE educator or whoever is working with the after-school program (personalize as needed)

Dear After-School Director,

As I am sure you are aware, many youth today are not eating as healthfully or being as active as recommended. Many programs are working to improve this, including many after school programs.

The purpose of this tool is to help after-school programs think about ways they might encourage kids to eat well and be active. This is not an easy task. Programs have to balance what might be optimal in terms of health with the real limitations of child preferences, cost and other factors.

This tool is designed to help you assess where you are now and help you think about small changes you might want to make to support healthy choices. It is in no way intended to be an evaluation of your program. If you are interested in ideas for how to make changes, we would be happy to assist you.

The tool is divided into 7 sections, one for each of the behavioral goals for healthy eating and activity that research shows will help youth to prevent overweight and chronic diseases like diabetes. Each question is designed to suggest more supportive practices in the left-hand columns and less supportive in the right-hand columns. There are no right or wrong answers; your specific situation, competing priorities, and other issues can affect what is feasible or even ideal for your program. But in general, wherever you are now, moving one column to the left in one or more areas will be helping children in your program to be healthier.

Thank you for the work you do to help children.

What Can Children Choose to Drink?



Healthy Behavior Goal: Replace sweetened drinks with water and low-fat milk

Questions to Investigate	Circle the ONE response that is closest to what you think is true				Comments
1. How available is drinking water to children?	At all times indoors and outdoors	Readily available inside	Available only on request	Never or Rarely	
2. How often is water served with snacks (e.g., in cups, not just water fountain)?	Every day	3-4 days per week	1-2 days per week	Never or Rarely	
3. How often is milk served with snacks?	Every day	3-4 days per week	1-2 days per week	Never or Rarely	
4. What type of milk do you serve?	Skim or non-fat milk	1% milk	2% milk	Whole milk	
5. How often are sugar-sweetened drinks offered (e.g., soda, juice drinks,* lemonade, Kool-Aid, sports drinks)?	Never or rarely	Once a week or less	2-3 times a week	Every day or most days	

*Juice drinks are fruit-flavored drinks that may or may not contain a small amount of real fruit juice.

How Can Children Choose to Be Physically Active?

Healthy Behavior Goal: Move actively 60 minutes a day



Questions to Investigate	Circle the ONE response that is closest to what you think is true				Comments
6. How often are all children offered at least 30 minutes of active play time?	Every day	3-4 days per week	1-2 days per week	Never or Rarely	
7. Are there enough active choices so all children can find something they enjoy?	All children can find something active they enjoy	Most children	Some children	Few or no children	
8. How often do children play outside when weather permits?	Every day	3-4 days per week	1-2 days per week	Never or Rarely	
9. When weather prohibits outside play, is indoor active play available to all children?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
10. Is taking away active play time used as punishment for unrelated behavior?	Never	Once in a while	About once a month	More than once a month	
11. Do staff members participate with children in active games whenever possible?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	

How Are Children Encouraged to Eat More Vegetables and Fruits?

Healthy Behavior Goal: Eat more vegetables and fruits



Questions to Investigate	Circle the ONE response that is closest to what you think is true				Comments
12. When juice is offered, is it only 100% fruit or vegetable juice?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
13. How often is 100% juice offered?	Less than once a week	1-2 days per week	3-4 days per week	Every day	
14. Are vegetables and/or fruits other than juice offered as part of snacks?	Every day	3-4 days per week	1-2 days per week	Never or Rarely	
15. About how many vegetable and/or fruit choices other than juice are offered each day?	Three or more	Two	One	None	
16. How often do you offer a vegetable or fruit that is new or unfamiliar to most children?	About once a week	2-3 times a month	About once a month	Never or Rarely	

What Healthy Snacks Can Children Choose?

Healthy Behavior Goal: Eat fewer high-fat or high-sugar foods and more nutrient- rich and high fiber foods



Questions to Investigate	Circle the ONE response that is closest to what you think is true				Comments
17. When crackers are served, are they whole grain*? (whole grain listed as first or second ingredient)	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
18. When other grains such as bread, chips, cookies, or cereal are offered, how often are they whole grain*?	Most of the time	About half the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
19. Are special occasions celebrated with mostly healthy foods?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
20. Are staff members good role models for choosing healthy foods and drinks?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	

* Examples of whole grains are whole wheat flour, whole grain corn, whole oats, and brown rice.

Are Children Encouraged to Be in Control of their Own Eating Choices?

Healthy Behavior Goal: Eat only as much and as often as you need to satisfy your hunger



Questions to Investigate	Circle the ONE response that is closest to what you think is true				Comments
21. Do children decide what foods and drinks they take from those offered?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
22. Can children get seconds if they are still hungry?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
23. Are children required to eat everything they take?	Never or Rarely	Some-times	Most of the time	Always	
24. Is there adequate time for children to eat snacks?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
25. If children are given prepackaged snack items, do they each contain only one serving?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
26. Are food items used as a reward or withheld as punishment?	Never or Rarely	Some-times	Most of the time	Always	

Are Children Encouraged to Limit Screen Time?



Healthy Behavior Goal: Limit TV, video games, and computer time to 1-2 hours a day

Questions to Investigate	Circle the ONE response that is closest to what you think is true				Comments
27. How often are hand-held video games allowed?	Never or Rarely	Some-times	Most of the time	Always	
28. Is non-homework, non-active screen time (TV, movies, video, computer games) limited to 30 minutes per day or 2.5 hours per week?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
29. When screen time is available, are active alternatives provided?	Always	Most days	Some days	Never or Rarely	
30. How often is snacking during movies, television, video or computer games allowed?	Never or Rarely	Some-times	Most of the time	Always	

Do Staff Promote Healthy Food and Activity Choices?



Questions to Investigate	Circle the ONE response that is closest to what you think is true				Comments
31. How often do staff seek feedback from children about the food offered?	At least once a week	Every few weeks	Every few months	Never or Rarely	
32. Do children help plan and/or prepare their own snacks or meals?	Most of the time	Sometimes	Only for special events	Never or Rarely	
33. How often do staff talk informally with children about trying and enjoying healthy foods?	Every day	Most days	Some days	Never or Rarely	
34. Does fundraising consist of selling only healthy food or non-food items?	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Never or Rarely	
35. Is information on healthy eating and active play provided to families?	About once a month	A few times a year	Seldom	Never	
36. Is training on nutrition and/or physical activity provided for staff?	Several times a year	Once a year	Less than once a year	Never or Rarely	
37. Are there written guidelines on nutrition?	Written, available and followed	Written but not always followed	Exist informally but not written or followed	Do not exist	
38. Are there written guidelines on physical activity?	Written, available and followed	Written but not always followed	Exist informally but not written or followed	Do not exist	