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:**

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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

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. How often are all children offered at least 30 minutes of active play time?</td>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>3-4 days per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Are there enough active choices so all children can find something they enjoy?</td>
<td>All children can find something active they enjoy</td>
<td>Most children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How often do children play outside when weather permits?</td>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>3-4 days per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. When weather prohibits outside play, is indoor active play available to all children?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is taking away active play time used as punishment for unrelated behavior?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do staff members participate with children in active games whenever possible?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## How Are Children Encouraged to Eat More Vegetables and Fruits?

**Healthy Behavior Goal: Eat more vegetables and fruits**

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<tr>
<td>12. When juice is offered, is it only 100% fruit or vegetable juice?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How often is 100% juice offered?</td>
<td>Less than once a week</td>
<td>1-2 days per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Are vegetables and/or fruits other than juice offered as part of snacks?</td>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>3-4 days per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. About how many vegetable and/or fruit choices other than juice are offered each day?</td>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How often do you offer a vegetable or fruit that is new or unfamiliar to most children?</td>
<td>About once a week</td>
<td>2-3 times a month</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## 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

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<tr>
<td>17. When crackers are served, are they whole grain*? (whole grain listed as first or second ingredient)</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. When other grains such as bread, chips, cookies, or cereal are offered, how often are they whole grain*?</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>About half the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Are special occasions celebrated with mostly healthy foods?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Are staff members good role models for choosing healthy foods and drinks?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 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

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<tr>
<td>21. Do children decide what foods and drinks they take from those offered?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Can children get seconds if they are still hungry?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Are children required to eat everything they take?</td>
<td>Never or Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Is there adequate time for children to eat snacks?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. If children are given prepackaged snack items, do they each contain only one serving?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Are food items used as a reward or withheld as punishment?</td>
<td>Never or Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Are Children Encouraged to Limit Screen Time?

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. How often are handheld video games allowed?</td>
<td>Never or Rarely</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. When screen time is available, are active alternatives provided?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Some days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. How often is snacking during movies, television, video or computer games allowed?</td>
<td>Never or Rarely</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Do Staff Promote Healthy Food and Activity Choices?

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