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Research Informing Policies & Practices  
for Healthy Youth

## What Local Coalitions Need to Know about Competitive Foods in Schools

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# Presentation Overview

- Why do competitive foods and beverages matter?
- How does Illinois' competitive food law compare to other states?
- What do we know about district policies?
- Do competitive food policies make a difference?
- What's happening at the federal level?
- How can local wellness councils and coalitions help?
- Resources
- Summary

# Why do competitive foods and beverages matter?

# What are competitive foods?

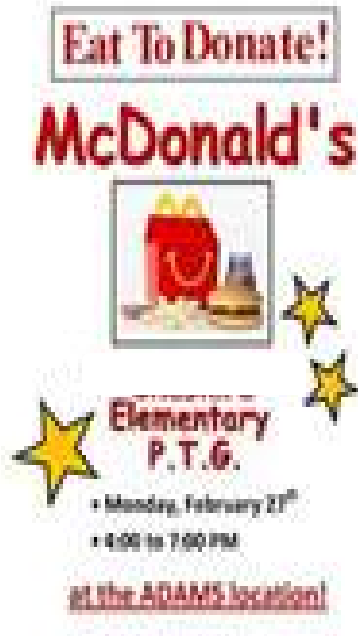
à la carte settings



Class parties/celebrations



Fundraisers



Vending machines



School stores



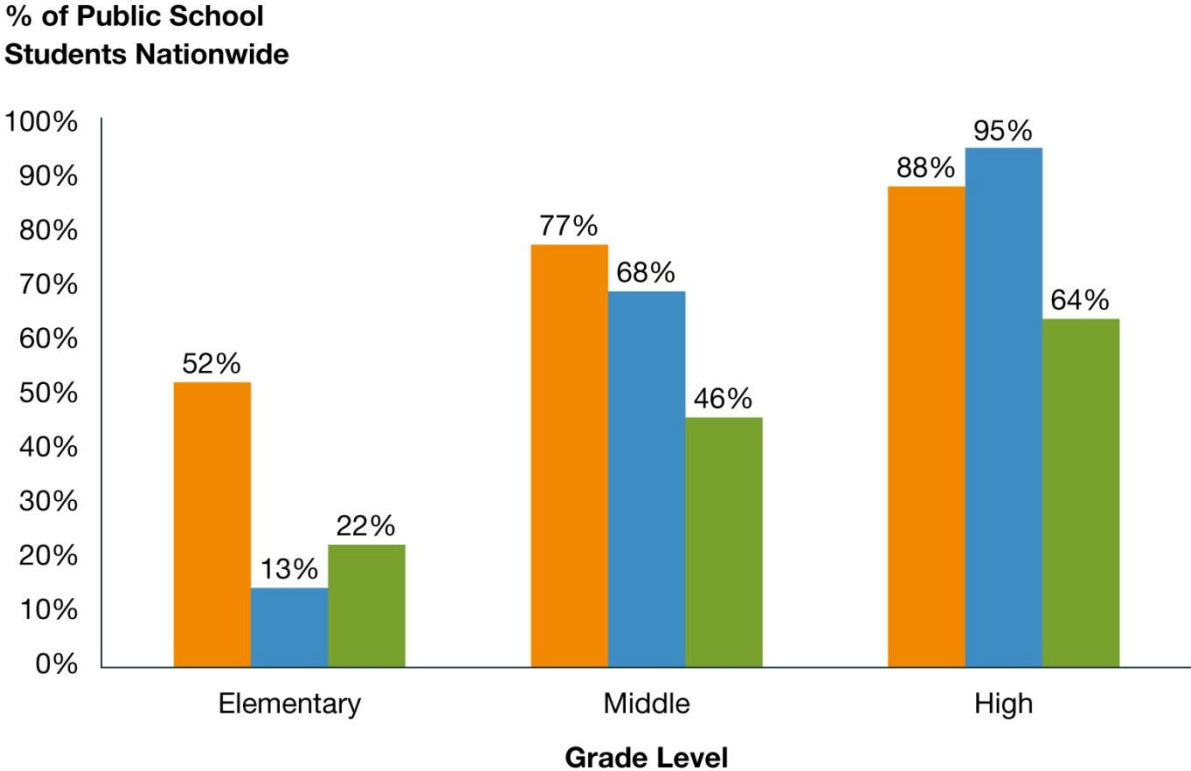
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# Competitive food and beverage venues are widely available in US public schools

**FIGURE 1**

**Percentage of U.S. Public School Students Nationwide with Access to Competitive Food and/or Beverage Venues by Grade Level, School Year 2009–10**

- À La Carte Lines in the Cafeteria
- Vending Machines
- School Stores/ Snack Bars



Source: Turner et al., 2012; Johnston et al., 2012; both available on [www.bridgingthegapresearch.org](http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org)

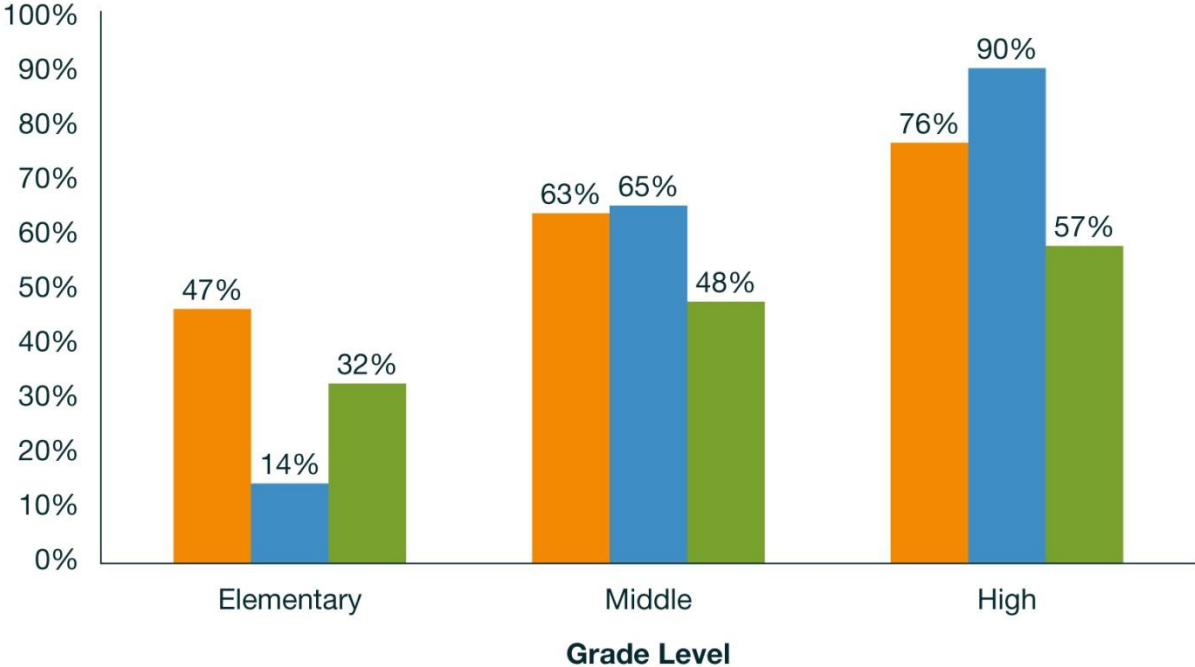
# Unhealthy competitive foods and beverages are widely available in US public schools

FIGURE 2

**Percentage of U.S. Public School Students Nationwide with Access to Unhealthy Foods and Beverages in Competitive Venues by Grade Level, School Year 2009–10**

- Sweet/Salty/High Fat Snacks
- SSBs
- 2% or Whole Milk

**% of Public School Students Nationwide**



Source: Turner et al., 2012; Johnston et al., 2012; both available on [www.bridgingthegapresearch.org](http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org)

How does Illinois' competitive food law compare to other states' laws?

# How does Illinois compare to the rest of the states: á la carte restrictions, SY 2010-11



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Source: Forthcoming on Bridging the Gap website



# How does Illinois compare to the rest of the states: vending machine restrictions, SY 2010-11



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Source: Forthcoming on Bridging the Gap website

# How does Illinois compare to the rest of the states: school store restrictions, SY 2010-11



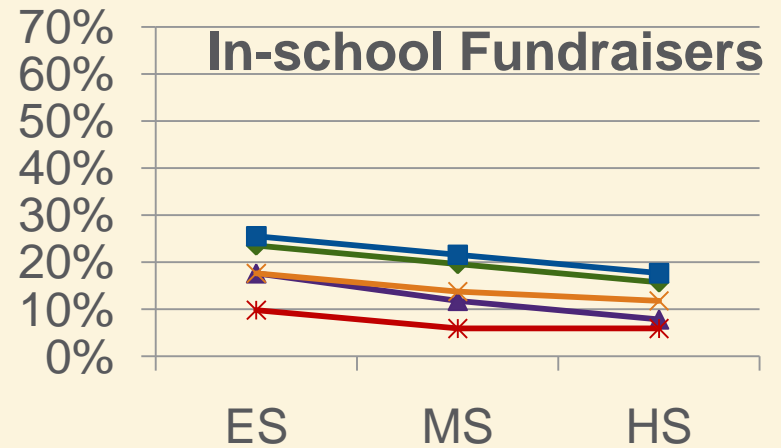
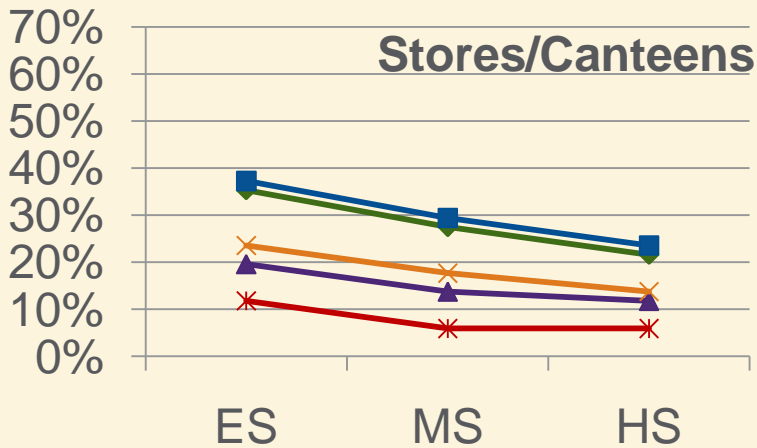
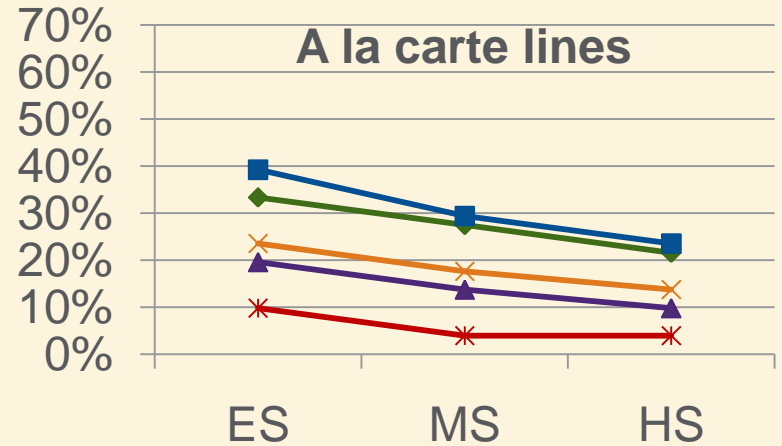
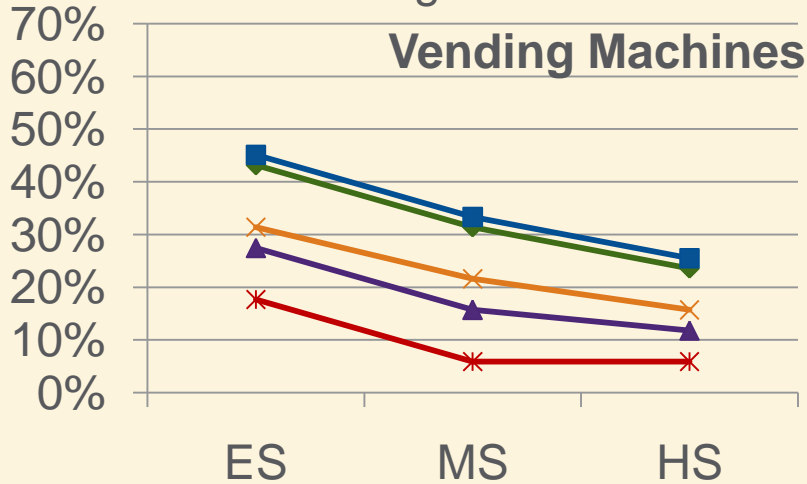
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Source: Forthcoming on Bridging the Gap website

# State with laws containing specific and required limits\* on competitive foods

% of states\*\* with law by grade level of applicability, SY 10-11

◆ Sugar ■ Fat ▲ Sodium ✕ Calories \* Candy



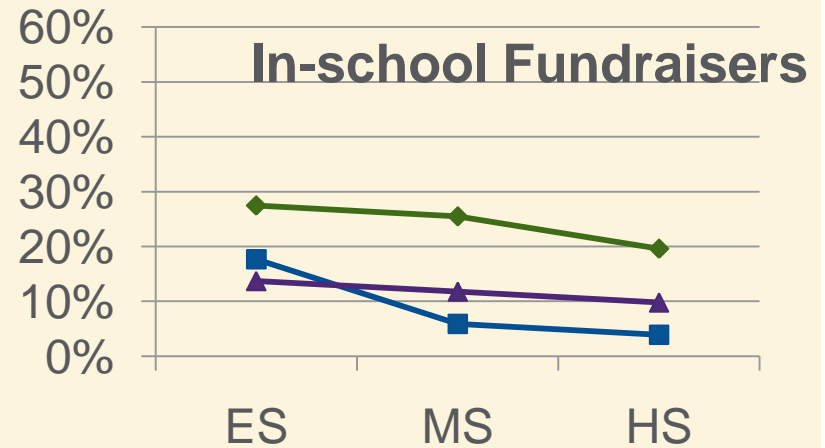
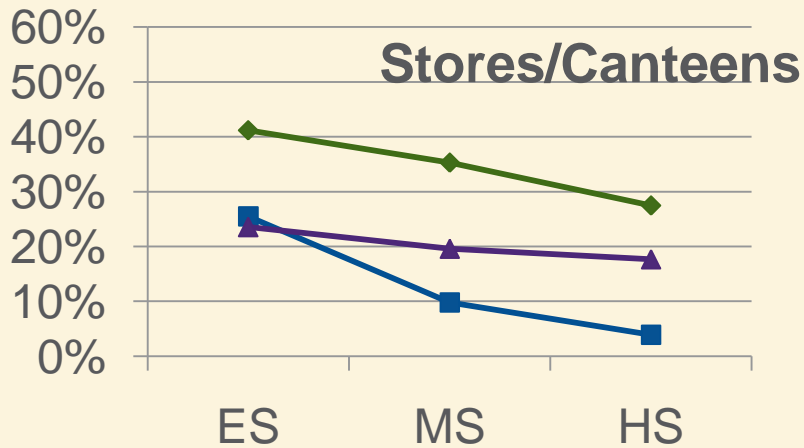
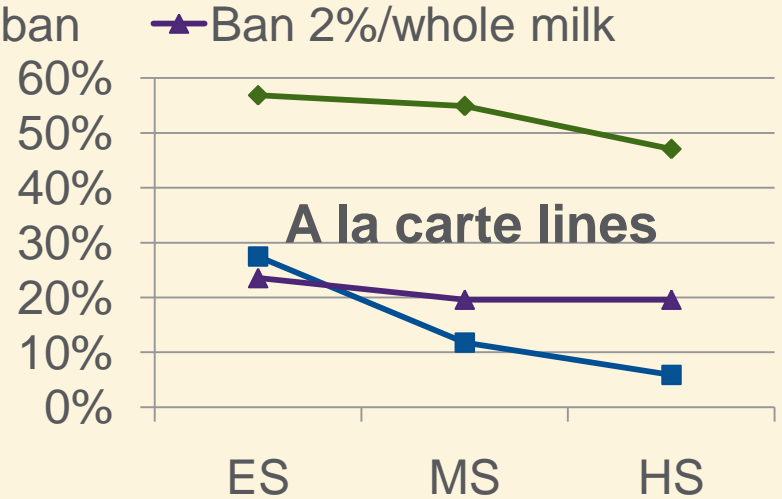
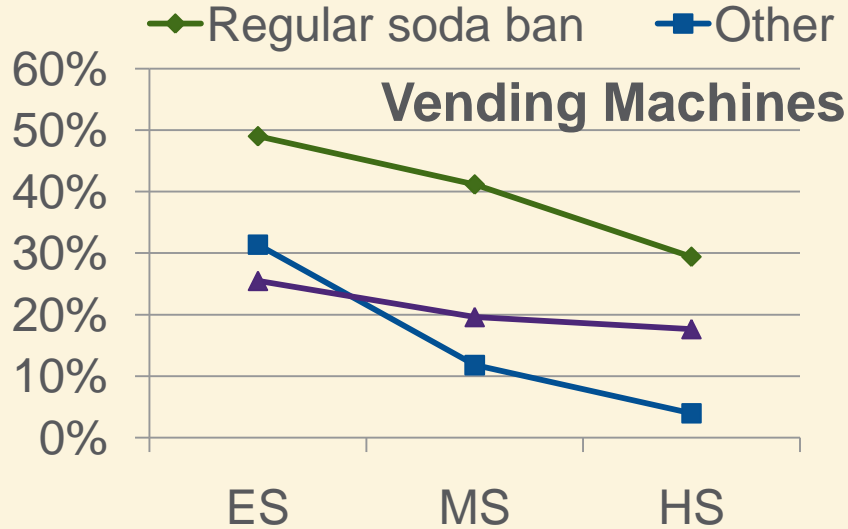
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\*Includes location/competitive food bans

\*\*State includes the 50 states and D.C

# State with laws containing competitive beverage restrictions\*

% of states\*\* with law by grade level of applicability, SY 10-11



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\*Includes location/competitive food bans

\*\*State includes the 50 states and D.C

# Illinois may have specific requirements governing a la carte, vending, and stores for elementary and middle schools, but what is really regulated?

## For elementary and middle schools ONLY (nothing for HS)

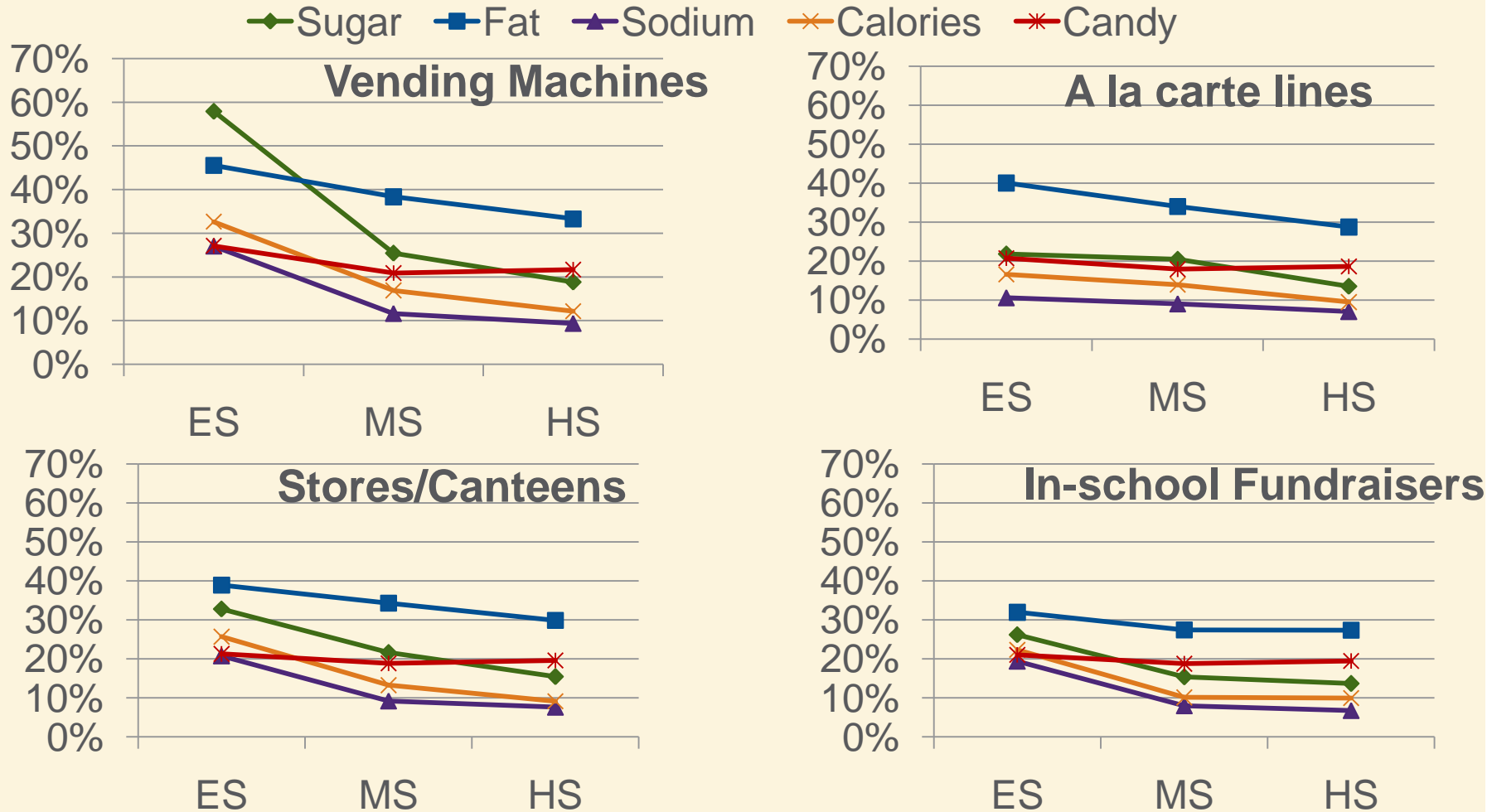
- Specific, required limits on sugars, fats, and calories per serving of competitive foods sold in vending machines, school stores, and á la carte settings
- Prohibit regular, sugar-sweetened soda (but not other SSBs)

Source: 23 Ill. Adm. Code 305.15

District policies to reduce availability of competitive foods and beverages high in fats, sugars, and/or calories

# Districts with policies containing specific and required limits\* on competitive foods

% of districts nationwide with policy by grade level of applicability, SY 10-11

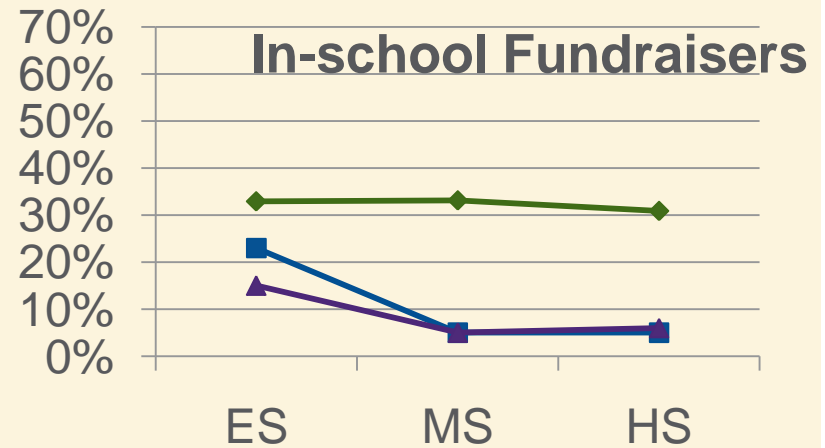
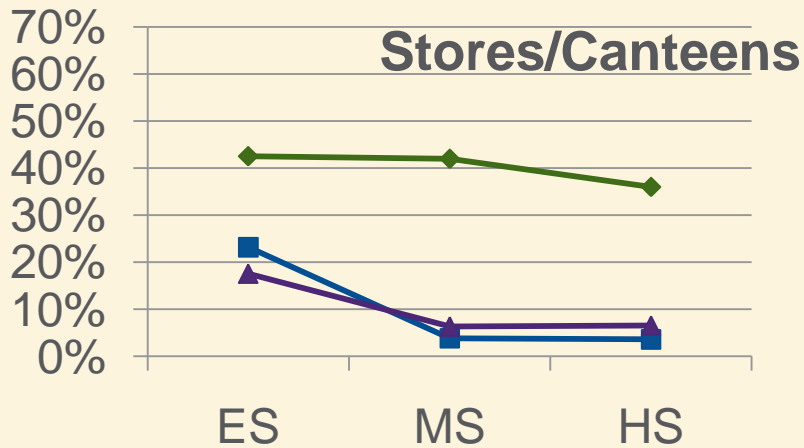
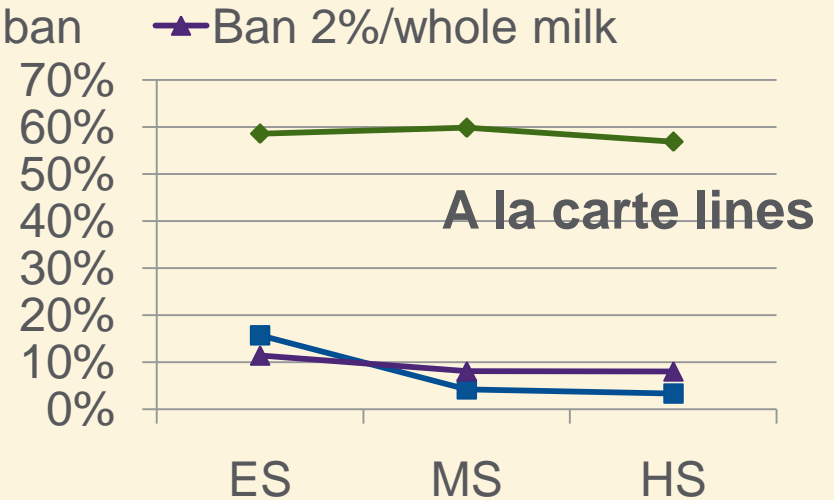
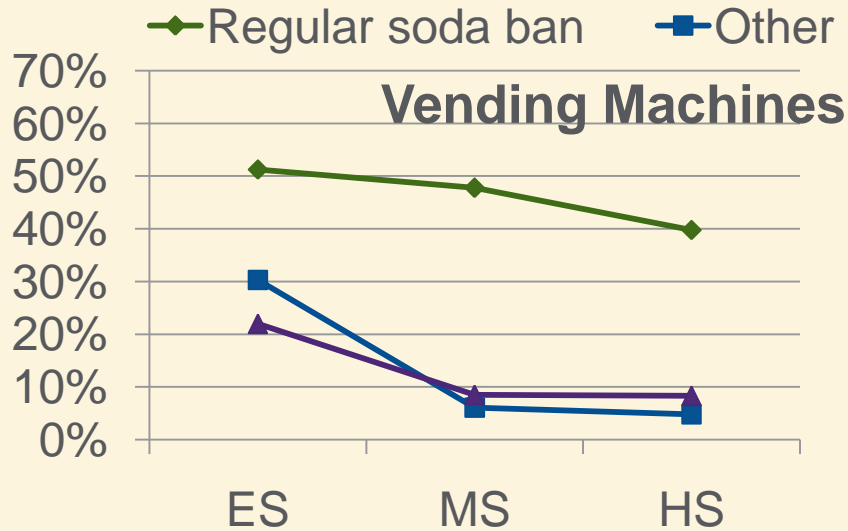


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\*Includes location/competitive food bans

# District with policies containing competitive beverage restrictions

% of districts nationwide with law by grade level of applicability, SY 10-11



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\*State includes the 50 states and D.C.



# Model Competitive Food Policy: Chicago Public Schools' Newly Adopted Policy

## Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual

**Title:** HEALTHY SNACK AND BEVERAGE  
**Section:** 407.3  
**Board Report:** 12-1114-PO1 **Date Adopted:** November 14, 2012

**Policy:**

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:**

That the Board rescind Board Report 04-0623-PO1 and adopt new Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to establish nutrition standards, requirements and recommendations for foods and beverages sold, provided or served to students at school that compete with food provided under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), National School Breakfast Program (NSBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This policy seeks to create a school environment that supports student nutrition and healthy food choices by providing nutrition standards for food and beverages sold as competitive foods in vending machines, school stores, food vendors on school grounds, a la carte items, or as part of a school fundraiser, celebration or reward. The nutrition standards set forth in this policy are consistent with the USDA's gold standard for competitive foods.

**POLICY TEXT:**

**A. Definitions:**

***Food of Minimal Nutritional Value:*** Food which provides less than five percent of the Reference Daily Intakes (RDI) for each of eight specified nutrients per serving (iron, calcium, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, niacin, thiamine, or riboflavin).

***A La Carte:*** Individually priced food items available for sale in the school dining center that are not part of the NSLP, NSBP, SSO or CACFP.

***Competitive Foods:*** Foods and/or beverages sold to students on school grounds that compete with the school's operation of the NSLP, NSBP, SSO, or CACFP. Competitive foods include, but are not limited to, items sold in vending machines, school stores, food vendors on school grounds, in school dining centers as a la carte items.

***Rewards:*** Incentives offered to students in recognition of good behavior or performance whether offered before, during or after school.

***Fundraiser:*** Any activity, event or sale to raise funds by or for a school occurring on school grounds whether before, during or after school hours including any direct sales activity by students on school

# What is the impact of competitive food and beverage policies on availability, consumption, and BMI?

A review of the literature

# Literature Summary-Impact on Availability and Consumption

- Prohibiting or restricting unhealthy snack foods and beverages is associated with less access to and consumption/purchasing of these items
- Policies limiting fats, sugars, and calories are effective at reducing children's intake
- Policies allowing items high in fats, sugars, and calories are associated with increased consumption and less consumption of healthier options

**Source:** Chriqui, J.F., "Influence of Competitive Foods and Beverage Policies on Children's Diets and Childhood Obesity, " Available: [www.healthyeatingresearch.org](http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org)

# Literature Summary-Impact on BMI

- Most evidence thus far indicates that policies allowing unhealthy snack foods in schools are associated with increased BMI among students
- Most of the limited evidence indicates that policies restricting unhealthy snack foods are associated with lower proportions of overweight/obese students or lower rates of increase in student BMI

**Source:** Chriqui, J.F., “Influence of Competitive Foods and Beverage Policies on Children’s Diets and Childhood Obesity, “ Available: [www.healthyeatingresearch.org](http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org)

# Literature Summary-To be effective, policies must be comprehensive

- Policies that apply to some but not all venues (e.g., to à la carte lines but not vending machines) or some but not all grade levels (ES, MS, HS) are not as effective as comprehensive policies
- Comprehensive policies are key to reducing access to and consumption of SSBs
  - Soda only policies don't work
- Mixed evidence on the impact of in-school policies on dietary changes outside of school
  - Notable exceptions: Cradock Boston PS study, Taber CA study

# What's Happening at the Federal Level?

# Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 (PL 108-296)

- Requires USDA to develop nationwide competitive food standards
  - USDA has drafted a proposed rule → currently undergoing White House/OMB review
  - HHFKA requires that the standards be consistent with the most recent edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans
    - Limits on solid fats and added sugars
    - Only 1%/skim milk
    - Minimize consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages
    - Increase consumption of fruits/vegetables/proteins
  - Expect proposed rule to be issued in the next few months with 60- to 90-day public comment period → **that means you!**
  - Expect full implementation probably by SY 2015/2016

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What role can local wellness councils and coalitions play?



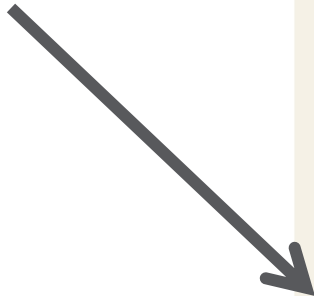
# How can wellness councils and local coalitions help to improve competitive food and beverage environments?

- What role can councils/coalitions play in policy development and implementation?
  - **District level:** instrumental in both policy development and, equally important, ensuring implementation and ongoing monitoring of compliance
  - **State level:** working to strengthen existing state law
  - **Federal level:** submitting comments and case studies during the public comment period on the proposed rule
- How can councils/coalitions engage the community in supporting strong competitive food policies?
  - Educating the community—parents, PTAs/PTOs, school-sponsored groups, etc.
  - Involving students in efforts to promote healthier food options (e.g., taste testings, school gardens, field trips, etc.)

# Resources and Contacts

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Research Informing Policies and Practices for Healthy Youth

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### District Wellness Policy Report

Landmark study reveals magnitude of district wellness policies fail to provide healthy school environment for kids. [LEARN MORE >](#)

## Evaluating school district wellness policies

#### Bridging the Gap

Bridging the Gap is a nationally recognized research program. Our goal is to improve the understanding of how policies and environmental factors affect diet, physical activity and obesity among youth, as well as youth tobacco use.

#### What We Do

- Identify the policy and environmental factors that have the greatest impact on diet, physical activity, obesity and tobacco use among youth.
- Track trends and changes in these factors over time at the state, community and school levels.
- Disseminate findings to help advance solutions for reversing the childhood obesity epidemic and preventing young people from smoking.

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*Local Wellness Policies: Assessing School District Strategies for Improving Children's Health: School Years 2006-07 and 2007-08* is the most comprehensive ongoing analysis of the federally-mandated district wellness policies.

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##### Report

*Local Wellness Policies: Assessing School District Strategies for Improving Children's Health: School Years 2006-07 and 2007-08*. More information

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## Influence of Competitive Food and Beverage Policies on Children's Diets and Childhood Obesity

Healthy Eating  
Research  
Bridging the Gap

Research Review, July 2012

### Abstract

Competitive foods is a term used to describe food and beverages that generally compete with school programs. These foods and beverages are sold through vending machines, à la carte cafeteria lines, school stores, and other venues. They are commonly referred to as "junk" foods, and they are often high in fat, calories, sugar and/or salt. Many schools also sell unhealthy drinks to students, including high-fat and sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) such as soda, sports drinks and high-calorie fruit drinks.

The influence of policies related to the sale of competitive foods is worth examining because the foods and beverages available in school have a significant effect on children's diets and their weight. Given the high rates of obesity among children and adolescents nationwide, it is important to understand how competitive foods and beverages sold and consumed by students in school, as well as to identify effective strategies for improving the nutritional quality of those products.

### Introduction

More than 23 million children and adolescents in the United States—nearly one in three young people—are obese or overweight.<sup>1</sup> The foods and beverages available in schools have a significant impact on children's diets and their weight. Children spend the majority of their

Healthy Eating Research and Bridging the Gap are programs of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

## Influence of Competitive Food and Beverage Policies on Children's Diets and Childhood Obesity

Healthy Eating  
Research  
Bridging the Gap

Issue Brief, July 2012

### Introduction

More than 23 million children and adolescents in the United States—nearly one in three young people—are obese or overweight, putting them at risk for serious health problems. The foods and beverages available in schools have an influence on children's diets and their weight. In fact, children and adolescents consume more than 35 percent of their daily calories at school.

Outside of meal programs, schools sell many foods and beverages to students through à la carte lines in the cafeteria, vending machines, school stores, snack bars, canteens, fundraisers and other venues. Such snack foods often are high in fat, calories, sugar and/or salt, and offer minimal nutritional value. Many schools also sell a variety of unhealthy drinks to students, including high-fat milks and sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) such as soda, sports drinks and high-calorie fruit drinks.

Collectively, the snacks and beverages sold or served outside of school meal programs are known as competitive foods because they compete with school meals for students' spending. Despite voluntary agreements by several snack and beverage manufacturers to remove unhealthy



competitive foods from schools, the majority of public school students, particularly middle and high school students, still have ready access to them (Figure 1).

This brief examines the emerging evidence about the influence of competitive food and beverage policies on children's diets and childhood obesity. The research clearly shows a need for comprehensive policies that govern the sale and consumption of these foods and beverages in the school environment.

*This issue brief is based on a research review prepared by Jamie Cloriqui, PhD, MHS, Health Policy Center in the Institute for Health Research and Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The full research review, which includes citations, is available at [www.healthyeatingresearch.org](http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org) and [www.bridgingthegapresearch.org](http://www.bridgingthegapresearch.org).*



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- Research review
- Issue brief

# For More Information

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