



*Making the right food choices, together.*

## 2008 Legislative Issue Paper

### **A Matter of Standards**

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) is deeply committed to the highest nutritional standards for all children. Schools play an important role in teaching children about healthy lifestyle behaviors, and promoting the practice of those behaviors. The current law requires that the school lunch and breakfast programs meet the goals of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, but they are interpreted differently from state to state and from school district to school district. Further, since 1983 the Secretary has not had the authority to regulate the sale of food and beverages outside of the school cafeteria.

**Therefore, SNA urges the Congress to require a science-based, yet practical, uniform national nutrition standard to govern the sale of all foods and beverages sold on the school campus during the school day.** In order to accomplish this goal, we urge the Congress to:

- Give the Secretary the authority to regulate and enforce the sale of food and beverages outside of the cafeteria (ending the “time and place” rule).
- Require all a la carte and competitive food sales to be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines, as is required for school meals.
- Require national uniform school meal patterns throughout the country. Children in all states and local districts need the same nutrients to grow and be healthy. The current lack of uniformity is increasing the cost of the program.

### **Funding is Key**

**The current reimbursement for a “free” lunch is \$2.47. A latte costs more. This is not adequate to cover the cost of producing a school meal.** The costs of food, transportation, labor and benefits, training, equipment and indirect expenses, are all increasing rapidly and the reimbursement has not kept pace. Improvements in the meal pattern will further increase the cost of producing a school meal. SNA supports more fruits and vegetables and whole grains. But these changes cost money.

The inadequate reimbursement rate is a barrier to improvement of the meal pattern. It is also why SNA supports a “level playing field” for nutrition standards within the school. If the athletic department, for example, can sell high profit sport drinks and the school food service authority can’t, it will further undermine the nutritional and financial integrity of the school meal program.

Therefore, funding must be considered as a part of any legislation to improve nutrition standards anywhere in schools.