



## Linking the Classroom and the Cafeteria

(Adapted from Yourself, A Program of the US Department of Agriculture)

Together, the classroom and the cafeteria can bring to life the important messages in *yourSELF*. Here are some ideas for reinforcing the cafeteria's role in each of the *yourSELF* topics. Your school's health teachers, cafeteria manager and students can brainstorm more ideas.

### Are You Normal?

- Health teachers and the school cafeteria manager can jointly sponsor an art/essay contest to get students thinking about how school meals feed body and mind - and contribute to overall good nutrition, health, energy, and learning. The theme might be "The Power of Choice." Teachers can give extra credit, and the cafeteria manager can display entries in the cafeteria and hallways, and give an appropriate prize.

### Feed Me!

- Display a chart that shows how the daily menu selections relate to the Food Guide Pyramid.
- Students can partner with the cafeteria manager to display the healthy eating advertisements they create in class near the menu boards. Ask the team coaches to display health advertisements at school athletic events, too.
- Display an appealing sample of a healthy meal each day—include some interesting ethnic food choices.

### Snack Attack

- Offer fruits, vegetables and whole grain healthy snacks for activities on school grounds – and actively promote them.
- Encourage students to conduct an "environmental assessment"—to identify snack foods that are convenient and available, and contribute to meeting their food group requirements. This will help students and adults recognize what influences food choices each day and make them more aware of healthy options.

### Move It!

- Begin the day with breakfast and a motivational, entertaining physical activity. Invite student leaders, athletes, cheerleaders, physical education teachers or special clubs to demonstrate or lead aerobic activities.
- School cafeteria managers, health teachers, and physical education teachers can collaborate on activities that promote good nutrition and physical activity, learning and good health. Your partnership will reflect the positive relationship between good nutrition, physical activity and learning.

### Just For You

- Introduce students to community nutrition resources by setting up Rap Sessions in the cafeteria with a local nutritionist at breakfast or lunch time. Students can get some advice on nutrition—like how to make healthy eating choices in the cafeteria and how much food and physical activity makes sense for their height and weight.
- Urge students to check out nutrition websites. Encourage their computer skills, and motivate them to be educated school meal customers.

### What's Your Goal?

- Set up a system for getting input from students on school meals. Offer opportunities to tastiest foods, plan menus, and work with staff in the kitchen. Use the student ideas to enhance the cafeteria meals.
- Get students and adults to work together to make sure healthy eating messages are supported by the food sold in vending machines, a la carte meal offerings and snack bars.
- Bring foodservice staff, teachers, parents and the community together for a Health Fair or other event that makes it fun to learn about nutrition and physical activity. Students can help plan activities and contribute to the event.