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# Healthy Schools Competitive Food Pilot Project Case Study

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## Situation

Our children's health is a hot topic nationally. You cannot turn on a news program or read a newspaper without hearing how overweight our nation's children are becoming. If you haven't heard, this generation will be the first to die before their parents (or at least have a shorter life expectancy).

Idaho is no exception. Statistics show:

- 11.8% of Idaho children and adolescents ages 2-19 are obese (*2009 CDC*)
- 82% of Idaho high school students consumed less than the recommended five servings of fruit and vegetables a day in 2009 (*2009 YRBS*)
- One in five (20%) students bought at least part of their lunch from a vending machine during one or more of the weeks prior to the survey (*2009 YRBS*)



In 2010, Red Sky was contracted by the Idaho Physical Activity & Nutrition Program (IPAN) through the Department of Health and Welfare to help combat the trend and conduct outreach to Idaho schools regarding grant funding available for Idaho schools/districts willing to institute policy changes regarding foods and beverages vended and sold - through avenues outside of the USDA breakfast and lunch programs - during school hours.

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# Opportunity

IPAN staff realized there was a gap in what schools are teaching about health and nutrition and the environments and policies related to vending and “competitive foods” (foods offered during the school day outside of the USDA’s school breakfast and lunch programs) that had been established within the schools themselves. After receiving funding from the CDC, IPAN staff and Red Sky set out to identify the best path to helping Idaho schools/districts create environments that make the healthy choice the easy choice. Mini grants were issued to adopt and implement [IOM Nutritional Standards](#) for Competitive Foods in schools during 2011-2012 school year. Parents, community and student involvement were encouraged.



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# Implementation

## Jefferson County Joint School District

Jefferson County’s action plan focused on improving nutrition standards for all vending and competitive foods options available in each elementary, middle and high school with in the district. Activities include:

- Evaluation of current food and beverage options vended and available within school stores and a la carte lines
- Removal of all items that do not meet IOM standards
- Monthly tracking compliance of vending and school stores





- Conducting student surveys and taste testing for healthy food choices
- Including non-food options for sale in school store environments

**Successes:**

- Each school is moving toward making the healthy choice the easy choice. After evaluation, some schools in the district have eliminated the sale of all food items outside of the breakfast and lunch programs.
- Principals and administrators across the district are experiencing a paradigm shift – moving away from concerns over lost revenue and instead focusing on healthy eating and physical activity programs that will benefit their students’ health and academic performance.
- IPAN funding has served as a gateway grant. Many schools within the Jefferson County School District are now active in the Fuel Up to Play 60 program. School administrators are also thinking in new ways about how their schools are used and implementing staff wellness programs.
- Roberts Elementary School transformed school store to include non-food items as well as healthy snacks. Students are buying and enjoying healthy snack options. This school is also a Fuel Up to Play 60 location and is a recipient of the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable grant.
- Harwood Elementary has changed school store options and will be undergoing a cafeteria redesign through the Fuel Up to Play 60 program. Harwood has also made changes to the way kids move through the school in the mornings, which has increased participation in the breakfast program.
- Southfork Elementary has instituted a “healthy snacks only” policy for classroom parties, is selling only healthy snack options and has started a robust staff wellness program.
- Rigby High School (10, 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> grade) has had great response to healthy foods in vending machines. Machines are



being restocked every day to keep up with demand. Revenue estimates are between \$350 and \$450 every day.

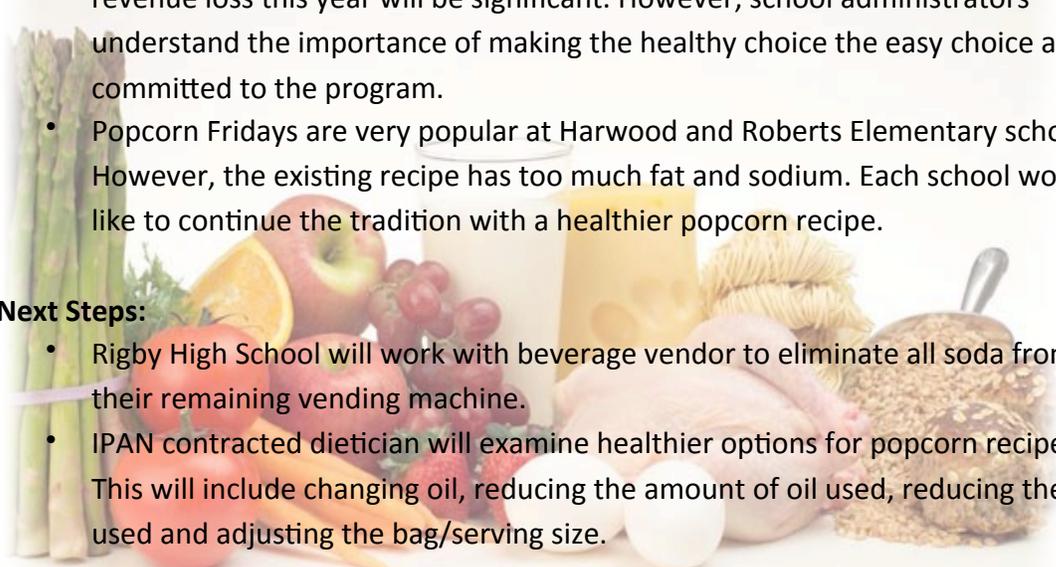
- Midway Middle School (6-7<sup>th</sup> grade) has applied for a dairy vending machine through the Dairy Council and will be stocking healthy snacks in a new vending machine purchase through IPAN funds. Midway Middle has plans to involve students in a taste testing day.
- Food Service Director is fully engaged in the process and serves as a resource for schools regarding nutrition education, evaluation of food items and ordering at a lower cost.
- Parent and student feedback has been positive.

### **Challenges:**

- As the largest district in the pilot, Jefferson faced the most challenges to implementation of the new policy and standards. Collaboration across schools was initially difficult, but these challenges are being worked through, as the list of successes indicates.
- With a number of school stores and concessions driving a significant amount of revenue within the district, there were concerns over changing what was being offered. Through the process, principals determined the best way for their school to implement the new standards and a majority is having positive results.
- Midway Middle School decided to completely close their school store, which yielded approximately \$13,000 in revenue annually. The store area used to sell pizza and candy, but is now used to provide grab and go lunch options. The school is just beginning their taste testing and selling of healthier items, so revenue loss this year will be significant. However, school administrators understand the importance of making the healthy choice the easy choice and are committed to the program.
- Popcorn Fridays are very popular at Harwood and Roberts Elementary schools. However, the existing recipe has too much fat and sodium. Each school would like to continue the tradition with a healthier popcorn recipe.

### **Next Steps:**

- Rigby High School will work with beverage vendor to eliminate all soda from their remaining vending machine.
- IPAN contracted dietician will examine healthier options for popcorn recipes. This will include changing oil, reducing the amount of oil used, reducing the salt used and adjusting the bag/serving size.



- A district-wide collaboration meeting will be held to hear how each school is using their funding and allow for sharing and learning for each administrator.
- Food Service Director will pursue local community partnerships with grocers and farmers to provide fresh fruit and vegetable options.
- Midway Middle School will examine potential options for reopening their school store.
- Examination of selling healthier choices in the concessions during sports activities.
- Evaluation of probability of opening schools 15 minutes earlier to allow for increased breakfast and/or physical activity opportunities for students.
- Discussion regarding opening schools after hours or on weekends as a meeting place for families and community members to exercise, participate in recreational sports, etc.

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# Implementation

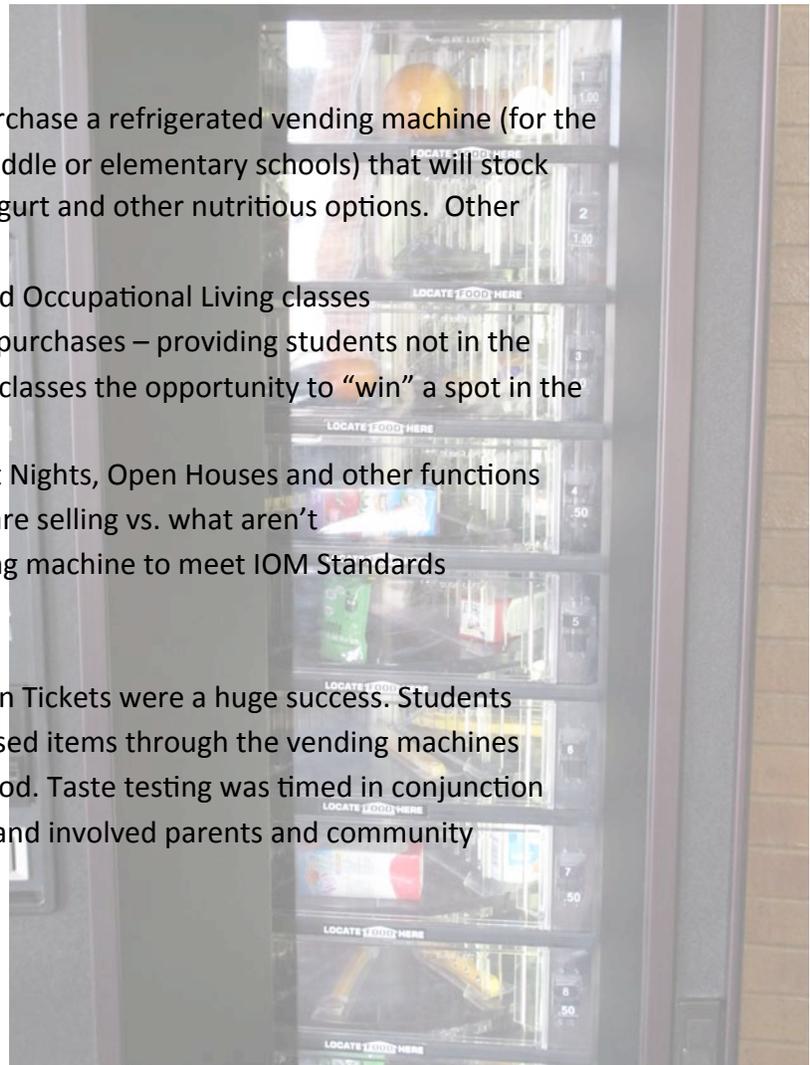
## Soda Spring High School

In Soda Springs, funding is was used to purchase a refrigerated vending machine (for the high school – there is no vending in the middle or elementary schools) that will stock fruits and veggies, low-fat milk, low-fat yogurt and other nutritious options. Other activities include:

- Student taste-testing via Health and Occupational Living classes
- “Golden Tickets” through vending purchases – providing students not in the Health and/or Occupational Living classes the opportunity to “win” a spot in the taste testing.
- Changes to foods offered at Parent Nights, Open Houses and other functions
- Tracking revenue and what items are selling vs. what aren’t
- Changing options in current vending machine to meet IOM Standards

### Successes:

- Golden Ticket Taste Testing: Golden Tickets were a huge success. Students received tickets when they purchased items through the vending machines during an identified two-week period. Taste testing was timed in conjunction with their community blood drive and involved parents and community members that donated blood.



- Refrigerated Vending – The refrigerated vending machine is stocked with a variety of fruit, vegetables, yogurt, juice and other snack items that meet the IOM standards. The items offered in the machine are very popular with the students and it is restocked on a daily basis.
- Drink Vending – All beverage items being sold during school hours are water or 100% fruit juice. The beverage vendor is being very supportive and supplying only items that meet IOM standards (no caffeine, no artificial sweeteners and sugar within the allowed range).
- Strategic Pricing Strategy: Soda Springs HS has implemented a strategic pricing strategy and is selling most vended items at a cost of \$.50 - \$1.00.
- Creative Snack Packaging: Soda Springs HS has been very creative in packaging items such as dried fruit and nuts in portions that meet the IOM standards.
- Parent, Student and Staff Support: Parent, student and staff support of the program has been positive..

#### **Challenges:**

- Reduction in Revenue: There has been a reduction in revenue, however, administration is satisfied that the program is sustaining itself and they anticipate increased revenue over the course of the next school year.
- Shopping: One of the most popular 100% fruit juice drinks, SWITCH, can be purchased at Costco, but Costco's across Southern Idaho are sold out. Soda Springs HS has purchased the last 20 cases from the Twin Falls Costco and anticipate this will last through the remainder of the school year.

#### **Next steps:**

- Developing a stronger tie with their food service director to take advantage of commodities and items that may be able to be ordered at a reduced cost
- Looking at the Richfield model for nutrition education
- Ongoing investigation of additional foods and experimentation
- Continued revenue tracking
- Partnership with the concession stand to begin offering healthy options during sports activities



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# Implementation

## Richfield School District

Richfield's action plan allows for student engagement through:

- A student-led nutrition fair
- Blind taste-tests with students and parent to determine items meeting IOM standards that are popular
- Education of students, parents and teachers regarding healthy nutrition options (through school newsletters)
- Implementation of healthy snack offerings through lunchroom snack line

### Successes:

- Richfield allowed two student leaders to facilitate the taste testing and manage the vending machine stocking as their leadership project. One of the boys has noticed a weigh loss of approximately 25 pounds since starting to eat healthier options at school and make better choices at home.
- Richfield's Food Service Director has played a key role in the success of their program. Each week she provides an in-classroom nutrition lesson and allows students to taste foods associated with the lesson. This has been wildly popular with both teachers and students.
- The Food Service Director is making smart choices in commodities and is able to use items such as frozen (sugar-free) berries to make smoothies for students.
- Students acted in and filmed their own commercials promoting the healthy food options found in the vending machines.
- Fuel Up to Play 60: The pilot project has been a compliment to the district's existing Fuel Up to Play 60 grant.



- Students and parents are involved and supportive of the changes.

### Challenges:

- Shopping has proven to be a bit challenging. The challenge lies in the distance to the store (in Twin Falls) rather than in finding items that meet the standards.
- The health/PE teacher has taken on management of the grant. He's found it a bit challenging to manage all of the hats he wears as a teacher in a small district, but remains committed to the success of the program. Student leaders have played a key role in helping taking over some of the program management.



### Next Steps:

- Adding additional healthy items to vending
- Approaching local senior center about having students visit and teach seniors the nutrition education lessons
- Continuing partnership with local store for taking produce that is nearly to sell/ use by date and serving as snacks or via the very popular salad bar during lunch.
- Revenue tracking

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## Summary

The USDA will be releasing updated guidelines regarding school vending and competitive foods. While they are not expected to be as stringent as the IOM Standards, schools across the country will need to be prepared to make changes to provide healthier competitive food items to students during the school day. IPAN encourages Idaho schools to begin identifying and instituting simple changes now to be better prepared for the forthcoming guidelines.

Districts participating in the Healthy Schools Competitive Foods Pilot Project have experienced greater success than they had initially expected and will continue to make student's health a priority.