

During September, San Francisco Unified School District's (SFUSD) School Health Programs focused on starting the school year right by developing healthy habits for the entire year. Studies show that skipping breakfast, low vegetable intake, and soda intake are associated with reduced cognitive performance and/or increased risk of childhood obesity.** Following, learn more about just a few of the healthy nutritional programs that have been created in our Wellness Centers.*

George Washington High School Wellness Center Champions Second Chance Program

Lynda Boyer-Chu, Wellness Nurse at George Washington High School, shared her thoughts about the Second Chance program that gets healthy breakfasts in the hands of more teens:

“The Grab ‘n’ Go program has been available through the School District for several years, but it previously wasn’t available during the 14-minute homeroom period at about 9:30, which is the time teens usually start feeling hungry. Teens who eat a healthy breakfast have more energy, can concentrate better, and reduce their chance of becoming overweight.

With Second Chance, breakfast is offered in the morning before school starts, and again during morning recess or snack break. It’s effective for serving students who, due to family schedules or transportation issues, are not able to eat in the morning before school begins, as well as for students who are not hungry first thing in the morning but do get hungry before lunchtime.

The food options are varied: zak bars, yogurt and granola, muffins, cereal, bagels and cream cheese, milk and fruit. Both breakfast and snack are free for students on free/reduced status; otherwise it’s \$1.50.

We used to have 40-60 students per day who bought Grab ‘n’ Go breakfast but since introducing Second Chance, the number has grown to between 150-170 per day. The program is free for students eligible for free and reduced meal status and \$1.50 for other students. (Student population at Washington is 2,024.)

We want Wellness services to be connected not just with addressing health and emotional issues but with overall well-being. Promoting good nutrition at the start of the day is a prime example of our overall mission.”

Downtown High School Takes Community Approach to Food and Nutrition

Kate Baker, Wellness Coordinator at Downtown High School, describes the Wellness Center’s multi-faceted program offering healthy food choices.

“For the past two years, our Center has offered a Breakfast Club from 8:30-9:00 every day, and our Community Health Outreach Worker (CHOW), Lawrence Festin, prepares a warm breakfast two mornings each week. Lawrence also teaches an afterschool cooking class once a week where students can earn academic credits toward graduation, cook and eat the food they create.

We also provide free snacks, including fruit, oatmeal, pretzels, toast and cream cheese, and hummus, which are available all day except during lunch break, when we ask students to access cafeteria food.

By offering small healthy snacks we are able to help more students stay focused and not be distracted by rumbling tummies or headaches caused by hunger. When we began offering these snacks, some people said, 'Our kids won't eat healthy food.' However, that has been proved wrong time and time again—when offered a healthy snack versus nothing at all—our young people choose the healthy snack.

Students are pleased to have a snack and be ready to go back to class without being distracted by their hunger. They enjoy the warm breakfast and the feeling of community while Lawrence cooks. Afterschool cooking class is a lot of fun for them.

About 10 students per day take advantage of the Breakfast Club, while 15 students stop by for snacks each day. In the cooking class, we see about 3 students per week. (Downtown High School's student population is 150.)

The food is free and is paid for by Wellness funds, the afterschool Excel program funded through SFUSD, and staff donations for Breakfast Club.

Often, students come to school without eating a healthy breakfast, and the stigma against cafeteria food means they also skip lunch. We also hope we are having a positive impact on their eating habits as they become accustomed to healthier food choices here at Wellness.”

*Adolphus K et al. The Effects of Breakfast on Behavior and Academic Performance in Children and Adolescents. *Front. Hum. NeuroSci.* 2013; 7;425.

**Barlow SE, for the Expert Committee. Expert committee recommendations regarding the prevention, assessment, and treatment of child and adolescent overweight and obesity: summary report. *Pediatrics.*2007;120(suppl 4):S164-S192.