



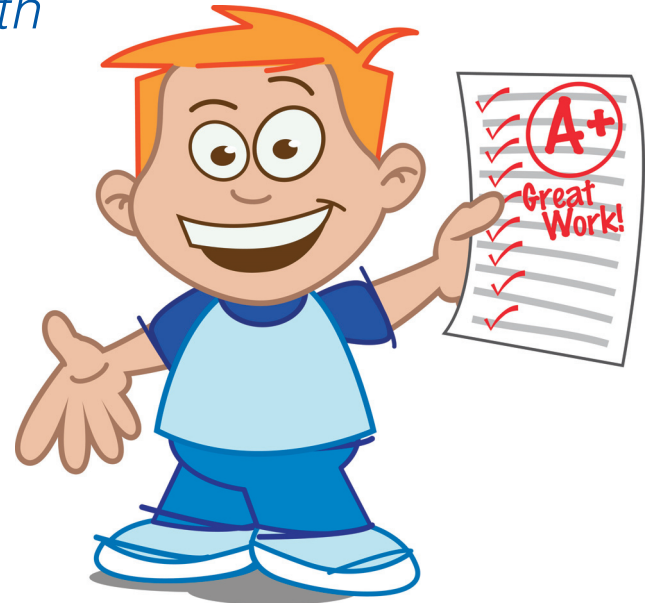
DANNON INSTITUTE®

Nutrition for Health

EVALUATING SCHOOL WELLNESS PROGRAMS

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The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 identifies evaluation as one of the key areas that must be addressed in a school policy document. Consider these tips in planning a highly targeted and useful evaluation:

- Prioritize the aspects of your program that you want to evaluate. These could be programmatic aspects that you are interested in learning more about or aspects that you plan to work on in the near term.
- Structure your evaluation to answer specific questions that you are interested in rather than a broad question like, "How healthy is our school food environment?"

Possible targeted evaluation questions include:

- What proportion of our teachers routinely use food as rewards?
- What proportion of the beverages offered in vending is water, skim milk or 100% fruit juice?
- What proportion of the snacks offered on the a la carte line meet the Alliance for a Healthy Generation criteria for calories, fat, sugar and sodium?
- What proportion of teachers report building some movement into their curriculum plans?

Make good use of the results of your evaluation:

- Identify a staff person who will be responsible for compiling the results of the evaluation and creating a brief and informative report on the findings.
- Plan ahead for how and to whom you will present your findings.

Evaluation is an essential part of program planning. Without evaluation you will not know how your program is working, if the changes that you have tried to implement are occurring or what areas need additional work. Use your evaluation results to garner support for the change that you want to see happen.

Dr. Lytle is an expert in community-level approaches for preventing childhood obesity. She has been conducting and evaluating programs in schools for more than 20 years.

Dr. Finn is CEO of The American Council for Fitness and Nutrition, which is dedicated to teaching children the important concept of energy balance. In teaching lifelong wellness habits children must learn that what they eat and what they do must be in balance.

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