

High 5 Flyers Program Manual

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High 5 Flyers Program Background

What is the goal of the High 5 Flyers Program?

The High 5 Flyers program goal is for children to eat three servings of fruits and vegetables every day at lunch at school. Eating more fruits and vegetables at lunch can help children reach the daily goal of 5 a day.

Why is it important for children to eat more fruits and vegetables?

Eating habits are formed and become established in childhood. Developing healthy eating habits in childhood can reduce the risk of developing diseases like cancer and heart disease later in life.

- Scientists recommend that Americans of all ages eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Research shows that eating 5 a day can cut the risk of developing cancer in half.
- Only one in five elementary school-aged children in America eats 5 a day.
- Eating fruits and vegetables at lunch can help children reach the 5 a Day goal.

How was the High 5 Flyers Program developed?

Researchers from the Minnesota Department Health and the University of Minnesota worked with Child Nutrition Program Site Supervisors and staff from the Anoka-Hennepin school district to develop and test the High 5 Flyers program.

- This work was done in 27 elementary schools in the district as part of a National Cancer Institute-funded research study.
- The study is part of the national “5 A Day for Better Health” program.

How does the High 5 Flyers Program help change students’ eating behaviors?

The High 5 Flyers program is based on well-established nutrition education and behavioral-change theories. The program:

- Helps make fruits and vegetables more available and accessible,
- Increases peer and adult support for eating fruits and vegetables,
- Provides motivation to eat them, and
- Makes eating fruits and vegetables fun and exciting!

What are the activities?

The High 5 Flyers Program includes both daily and special activities in the school cafeteria.

- Daily activities include encouraging students to take fruits and vegetables on the line, making fruits and vegetables look appealing, and offering a wide variety of fruits and vegetables on the menu.
- Special activities include a program kick-off, regular sampling of new fruits and vegetables at lunch, challenge week and a finale meal.

How much time does it take and what does it cost?

Based on the experience of food service personnel, daily activities take no or very little additional time.

- The special activities take about 15 - 20 minutes of staff time on the days they are offered.
 - The cost is very small – there are only costs for the reproduction of optional student and parent handout materials and for the fruits or vegetables to be sampled. The district’s Child Nutrition Program will cover the costs for sampling.
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What has been learned from the study?

- It is possible to conduct an eating behavior change program in the school cafeteria. All activities can be incorporated into the food service work-day. There is no need to build in extra hours in most settings, and there is enough time in the cafeteria to conduct the activities.

- Students respond positively to the daily activities! Students enjoy being able to choose from a wide variety of fruits and vegetables at lunch. They respond when they're encouraged to choose more fruits and vegetables from the cafeteria line.

- Students love the special activities! Students like the High 5 Flyers characters, the sampling activities and the challenge week. They are eager to serve their peers during sampling and to work together during the challenge to reach classroom goals.

- Peer involvement increases students' participation. During sampling, having fellow classmates serve the samples encourages classmates to try new items. During challenge week, peers encourage each other to reach the goal.

- Food service staff members are creative people! When food service staff members add their own creative touches to the activities, it enhances the program.

- Results were positive. Students who participated in the program ate more fruits and vegetables, on average, than those that did not. Many Site Supervisors told us they are serving greater quantities and that students are eating more fruits and vegetables.

What did the Food Service staff tell us?

“The students loved the program and it was easy for us to do!”

“We thought it would be difficult but it really didn't take much extra time”

“The kids at our school really like the sugar snap peas we served during sampling. ”

“Our students loved the Challenge Week, and we served a lot of fruits and vegetables!”

“I know I am eating more fruits and vegetables – this program has made many of the adults in our school think more about eating fruits and vegetables as well as the students. ”

“When adults asked why we were serving so many fruits and vegetables at our school, it gave me the chance to tell them about eating more fruits and vegetables. ”

“Students really liked the Nibbles Days – they liked trying new fruits and vegetables and participating in the activities. ”

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Daily Activities Overview

1. Offer a wide variety of fruits and vegetables everyday on the lunch line.
2. Make the fruits and vegetables look appealing.
3. Encourage students to take the fruits and vegetables.
4. Increase the opportunity to choose.



Purpose:

The daily activities are the backbone of the High 5 Flyers program. They create an environment that includes a greater variety fruits and vegetables, encourages students to choose them and makes fruits and vegetables more appealing and available to students. By focusing on fruits and vegetables, students are likely to see them as appealing and accept them as a normal food choice at lunch.

How will these activities affect your workday?

The High 5 Flyers daily activities take little additional time. The real difference for you and your staff is increasing the focus on fruits and vegetables through some very simple activities. Since your staff is already on the line serving students their lunch, asking them to encourage students to take fruits and vegetables can be as simple as smiling at students as they move through the line or enthusiastically saying, *“The green beans are really delicious today – try some!”*

