



Wellness Wakeup Call Newsletter for 6-12

Month #9: Media Literacy & Food Politics

Welcome to Wellness Wakeup Call! This newsletter contains messages to be read each morning in school over the loud speaker for morning announcements. This program is an easy way to help fulfill the requirements of nutrition education goals for the federally mandated Local Wellness Policies. If there are more messages than school days in the month, please combine a few so that you will be able to read them all. The program is intended to be used in chronological order, so start with month 1, and continue from there. We encourage you to photocopy this newsletter double sided to send home with students so parents can learn, too, and have a healthy recipe to try. In addition, we encourage you to notify parents about this program through the district or PTA/PTO newsletters or on your website. This document is available as a PDF file at www.healthyschoolfood.org and you are welcome to post these files on the district website. Learn more about healthy school food at www.healthyschoolfood.org.

- Each day, start the message with: **"Good morning, this is your Wellness Wakeup Call!"**
- Then read the message for the day. End each message with: **"Enjoy your day, the healthy way!"**

Note: wherever the word soda is used, replace it with "pop" or "soda pop" to reflect the common usage in your area if necessary. We have underlined the word so you will see where it occurs.

1. What makes you likely to buy a certain food? Have you ever bought a food (or asked someone else to buy it) because you've seen it advertised? How much are your food purchases influenced by advertising?
2. The food industry spends a lot of money on advertisements to make people want their foods and buy them. They spend billions of dollars to advertise on TV, on billboards and in magazines and newspapers. Did you know that many websites are created to sell products? Did you know that some companies give teachers materials to use in their classes that look educational but that are designed to make you buy certain foods?
3. Most people know that commercials are produced in order to get people to buy products. Did you know that companies pay to have actors eat or drink their products in movies, TV shows, and even video games as a way to promote their products? When you watch a movie, a TV show, or play a video game, see how many products you can recognize. Of course, we should all spend less time in front of the TV, computer, or playing video games so we will have fun doing other more active things and be exposed to fewer unhealthy messages about food.
4. Every year the typical American child or teen watches more than 20,000 TV commercials for junk food like soda, candy, sugary breakfast cereals, and fast food. That means one of these ads is watched every 5 minutes the TV is on which translates to about 3 hours of junk food ads every week.
5. Young children can't understand the difference between a TV show and a commercial. They think everything an ad says is true. You know better - but do you sometimes think that if you could just eat a certain food you've seen in an ad that you'd be more popular, prettier, smarter, or stronger? That's what advertisers want you to think, and they are very good at what they do.
6. Have you ever seen an ad or a commercial that shows you exactly what's in fast food or junk food or how it's made? Of course not! Companies would rather you didn't know how unhealthy their products are. In New York City they want to put calories on fast food restaurant menus and fast food companies are fighting it. Can you guess why?
7. Have you ever seen a commercial for broccoli? If you haven't, do you wonder why not? Advertisers make more money from selling processed foods like breakfast cereals, fast foods, and sodas than they would make from fruits and vegetables. Imagine how it might change people's diets if ads told us how attractive, fit, and healthy we will be when we eat more fruits and vegetables!
8. Advertisers want teens to turn into salespeople and nag their parents to buy them the newest or most popular foods. Are you working for the food companies? Why should you do their advertising for them and not even get paid?
9. Some companies give away clothes with advertisements on them. If you wear them, you're like a walking billboard advertising their product. Are they paying you to do this? Is this something you want to do?
10. Some food companies hire people to follow groups of kids in public places and listen to their conversations. They are actually spying on you! That way they know how to make ads that will make you want to buy more of their products.

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1. When you hear an advertisement or a commercial about food, think about who is saying it and that they want to make money by selling it. For instance, we often hear that milk and dairy products are important to build strong bones. We don't hear as much about other foods that also have calcium like broccoli or kale and other important factors for bone health, like exercise and sunlight. That's because the dairy industry has lots of money for advertising, while the broccoli farmers do not.
2. Food companies pay scientists to use their products in research studies. When the studies have results that the companies like, they tell about the results in ads. Many studies show poor results, but these results are not advertised at all.
3. About one of every six deaths in the United States is linked to a poor diet and not exercising enough. That's about the same as the number of deaths caused by tobacco use and much higher than the number of deaths due to car accidents, homicide, and suicide, combined.
4. Did you know that the laws about food are influenced by the food industry? For instance, some places want laws that require fast food restaurants to post information about how many calories are in their food. Fast food restaurants often fight this kind of law because they don't want people to find out how fattening and unhealthy their food can be or some people would stop eating it. It's too bad that companies are more interested in making money than in keeping people healthy or just telling the truth.
15. Companies that make soda also work very hard to make sure that schools don't ban sales of soda. They hire people called lobbyists to convince state legislators and school boards that soda should be sold at school. They ignore issues like the connection between soda and being overweight in order to sell their product. Because they know that they have to seem like they care and are doing something, they say they will get rid of regular soda, but then they plan to make just as much money selling diet soda and the "sports" drinks, which have almost as much sugar as soda.
16. Much of the nutrition information like the Food Guide Pyramid is developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA for short). The USDA has 2 roles that can conflict. One role is to promote good nutrition. The other role is to promote all agricultural products, whether or not they contribute to good nutrition.
17. Health messages from the government almost never tell people which unhealthy foods should be avoided. Messages are often vague and say things like "make smart choices from every food group". Do you think more specific messages would help people make better food choices?
18. Some people think that there should be a sales tax on junk food to help pay for health care. What do you think? Do you think companies that make junk food would support this kind of a tax?
19. Do you think there should be warning labels on unhealthy foods just like there are warning labels on cigarette packages? For decades, the tobacco industry resisted putting labels on cigarette packages. Do you think the food industry would support having warning labels on unhealthy foods?
20. Getting active doesn't just mean exercising more (although that is important). Getting active can also mean contacting government officials (like your senator or representative) and letting them know how you feel about things like food advertising, junk food, and soda in schools, and encouraging others to do so too. This helps the people who represent you to know what you want them to do.
21. Want to learn more about the politics of food? Pick up a good book like *Chew on This* by Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson or *Appetite for Profit* by Michele Simon.
22. When it comes to food, it's important to think for yourself, and not believe what the food companies tell you. They just want to sell their products and make money. They are usually very successful in duping/brainwashing (use whatever phrase would work best for your students) most of America's youth, and see you as the "bull's-eye" of the target. You can be different. Thinking for yourself means that they did not succeed in hoodwinking you.

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Recipe of the Month

Happy Burgers

Children can help with this recipe by peeling the sweet potato with a potato peeler, mashing the beans and the sweet potato, combining the ingredients, and forming the patties into desired shapes.

You will need:

- 3 cups cooked black beans (make sure they are well cooked)
- 1 sweet potato, peeled
- 1/2 cup quick cooking oats
- 1/2 cup walnuts, finely chopped
- 2 Tablespoons onion powder
- 1 Tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 Tablespoon dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt



What to do:

Bake or steam sweet potato until soft. If baking, skin can be left on and insides scooped out. If steaming, peel first. Mash black beans into sweet potatoes. Add all of the rest of ingredients, and mix well. Form into 12 patties using a heaping 1/4 cup of the mix for each.

Heat an oven to 350F Place patties on a nonstick baking sheet, or a lightly oiled baking sheet. Bake until brown on one side (8-10 minutes). Flip, and bake on the other side for the same amount of time.

Makes 6 servings.

Recipe by Allison Memmo Geiger.

PLEASE SEE EXTRA RESOURCES ON THE NEXT PAGE...



Additional Resources

Month #9: Media Literacy & Food Politics

Parents - Want to learn more about advertising and food politics?

Here are some recommended books, websites, DVDs, and videos.

- ***Appetite for Profit: How the Food Industry Undermines Our Health and How to Fight Back***
a book by Michele Simon: www.informedeating.org

- ***Chew on This*** a book by Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson, for 9 - 14 year olds:
www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/schlosser_chew.shtml

- ***Disease-Proof Your Child: Feeding Kids Right***
a book by Joel Fuhrman, MD: www.drfuhrman.com

- ***Fast Food Nation***
a book by Eric Schlosser: www.harpercollins.com then search for "Fast Food Nation"