

Comprehensive nutrition services vital to children's health

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School meal programs play a significant role in keeping children healthy and are "the anchor" of comprehensive school nutrition services that improve children's nutritional status, health and academic performance, according to an updated joint position paper from the Society for Nutrition Education (SNE), American Dietetic Association (ADA) and the School Nutrition Association (SNA).

The updated position paper, published in the November/December issue of the *Journal of [Nutrition Education and Behavior](#)* (JNEB), represents the official stance of SNE, ADA and SNA:

It is the position of the American Dietetic Association, School [Nutrition Association](#) and Society for Nutrition Education that comprehensive, integrated nutrition services in schools, kindergarten through grade 12, are an essential component of coordinated school health programs that will improve the nutritional status, health and [academic performance](#) of our nation's children. Local school wellness policies may strengthen comprehensive nutrition services in schools by providing opportunities for multidisciplinary teams to identify and address local school needs.

The joint SNE/ADA/SNA position paper was written by Sheila Fleischhacker, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (SNE); Marilyn Briggs, University of California – Davis (ADA); and Constance G. Mueller, Bloomington (Ill.) Public Schools District 87 (SNA).

"School-based nutrition education and promotion can help advance

student academic performance. Integrating comprehensive nutrition services within the school environment, including educational activities in the classroom, healthful food choices throughout the school campus, and reinforcement in the home and community, has been shown to improve children's dietary intake," the authors write.

"Food and nutrition practitioners are well poised to deliver integrated and comprehensive nutrition education and promotion programs that reflect a multi-level approach utilizing innovative and evidence-based strategies," says SNE President Tracy Fox, MPH, RD. "This position paper provides a roadmap to ensure that adequately funded comprehensive nutrition services are not just the 'gold standard' but the only standard in place in schools across the country."

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