

**National Governors Association Expert Policy Panel Proceedings
Proposed Addendum**

Addendum to Page 17;

Policy Recommendation: Ensure that free fruits and vegetables are offered and available throughout the school day.

The need to increase fresh fruits and vegetables in our school meals has been recognized as an important step in improving children's nutrition and overall health. Improving access to fruits and vegetables is also a notable strategy in the prevention of childhood obesity. Many children consume two-thirds of their food in the school setting by participating in the National School Lunch Program (breakfast and lunch). In a recent pilot study, California increased their reimbursement rate by 10 cents per breakfast meal in an effort to increase fresh fruit consumption. 69 schools that participated in this program were evaluated and found to have successfully added locally grown fresh fruit to the breakfast meal. This resulted in a 2% increase in participation of the school breakfast program and a 136 percent increase in overall consumption of fresh fruit. Therefore, increasing fruit and vegetable availability through inclusion in school meal patterns appears to be a viable option.

We recognize that to increase fresh fruit and vegetable availability in Wisconsin schools would realistically require increasing the reimbursement rate by 15-20 cents per meal to cover the cost of one additional serving of a fruit or vegetable. This may not be feasible within this current economic environment, which is why we recognize the need for innovative ways of obtaining fresh fruits and vegetables to increase consumption in school meals. **Therefore, the Expert Policy Panel advises the following actions to address the recommended policy:**

1. Continue to support funding for the efforts of the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection's (DATCP) Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program. The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin is crucial for determining how to support schools in the purchasing and procurement of foods locally, including fresh fruits and vegetables. The Program is currently funding specific projects that are working to address common farm-to-institution issues, which includes determining how to create local and regional distribution systems for local produce. Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin can also provide technical assistance to schools interested in procuring locally grown foods.
2. Continue to support funding from *Serve Wisconsin* for the efforts of DATCP, the Department of Public Instruction, and the Department of Health Services in piloting 10 farm-to-school projects in Wisconsin utilizing AmeriCorps members to help with the procurement, education, and promotion of locally grown foods. The results of these unique efforts can help inform other school districts on how to procure foods locally. Moreover, these efforts will inform the 56 Wisconsin elementary schools that are currently participating in the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (funding through the 2008 Farm Bill) and are attempting to procure local produce for the program. A small percentage of students (17,087 students) in Wisconsin are currently participating in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which increases student access to fruits and vegetables via a snack during the school day. Preliminary

evaluation of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack program indicates that students participating in this program are more likely to try fruits and vegetables when offered in school meal programs. Thus, improving overall consumption of fruits and vegetables.

3. Support State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster's request to provide additional state aid to increase the state match reimbursement rate by 2.5 cents (from 4.26 to 6.76 cents) for Wisconsin schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. This increase would decrease the amount school boards are transferring from educational funds to school nutrition funds by approximately 50 percent.
4. In addition to State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster's 2009-2011 biennial budget request, an incentive-based reimbursement of an additional 2.5 cents per meal is needed to further improve the nutritional quality of school meals. Eligibility for the additional reimbursement would be contingent upon addition of whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables to school meals.