

# EAT SMART, PLAY HARD CONCESSION STAND TOOLKIT

University of Missouri Extension

A step-by-step guide for making your school's concession stand better, and better for you.





# INTRODUCTION TO SMART CONCESSIONS

University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services work together to help schools and communities make the healthy choice, the easy choice. This toolkit is designed to assist parents and schools with making healthy, tasty and affordable options available in a place where students and their families often eat meals during the school year - the school concession stand. The goal of this toolkit is to help you provide tasty, affordable options for youth in school concession stands to help them eat smart and play hard. We recognize that many school concession operations are organized and staffed by volunteer parents, faculty and/or students with little spare time. So the Eat Smart, Play Hard toolkit applies simplified and easy strategies developed in parks to school concessions, combined with new tools specific for schools. Although adding healthier options to the concession menu may take a little teamwork up front, the rewards are worth it. Not only does it contribute to the health of Missouri children, but you may find it can lead to increased concession profits, too.

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## EAT SMART TO PLAY HARD!

**WHY OFFER HEALTHY OPTIONS AT YOUR SCHOOL'S CONCESSIONS?  
9 out of 10 Missouri athletic directors recommend athletes eat well to  
play their best!**

### **Increased profits**

When Eldon High School in Missouri introduced healthier items in 2015, they increased their profit by 70% over the previous school year!

### **Satisfied customers**

After healthy options were added in Liberty and Moberly, customer satisfaction rose by 24% in Liberty and 54% in Moberly!

### **Strong athletes**

Typical concessions offer few of the healthy options that athletes need for a competitive edge to fuel up and play hard.

## **Hear from a successful Missouri High School**

### **Secrets to success from Eldon High School's healthy concession additions:**

- Collected surveys to determine what healthy food items customers wanted to add. Popular items that were added included fresh fruit, veggies, nuts, baked chips and string cheese.
- Healthy items cost the same or less than unhealthy items.
- Items were promoted vigorously, including signage, social media, loudspeaker announcements and product placement.
- A part-time employee received an increase in pay to make supply runs and manage the concessions.

# PROVEN STEPS TO MAKE YOUR SMART CONCESSIONS A SUCCESS

## 1. CONCESSION ASSESSMENT

Start by reviewing what is currently sold in the concession stand and plan to build on your strengths. The ‘School Concession Assessment’ tool found on page 12 can be used to identify the healthy menu items, practices that are already in place and suggestions for improvements.

**REASSESS** - At the end of the year use the ‘School Concession Assessment’ to reassess and compare to the initial assessment. Celebrate your school’s progress and share the results with parents and school leaders.

**SCHOOL CONCESSION ASSESSMENT**

Item	Price	Quantity
<b>Does the menu include:</b>		
Fresh fruit		
Fruit (or vegetable or frozen or water or 100% juice or P.K.A. drinks)		
Vegetables (or healthy grains or chips or French fries)		
Whole grain not products (not no grain is the first ingredient on the label)		
Low fat dairy products such as cheese and yogurt		
Low fat and/or unsweetened beer, wine, and/or coffee or coffee with added fat		
Whole and/or seeds (in whole fat or calcium sweetener)		
Whole grains, soft-served		
Low fat milk (by more than 100 calories per container)		
Low fat 100% fat-free yogurt		
Low calorie beverages (no more than 40 calories per container)		
<b>Practices</b>		
Are healthy items (such as water) sold at a price lower than less healthy items based on weight		
Are healthy items more visible to customers than less healthy items (for example, is fruit visible at the concession window instead of only in the display)		
Are healthy items promoted or advertised in addition to being listed on the menu?		
Is junk food promoted or advertised in addition to being listed on the menu?		

**EAT SMART PLAY HARD**

## 2. SELECT HEALTHY ITEMS & GET CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

The assessment tool provides some general suggestions for healthy menu items. For more specific ideas check the ‘But What Can We Serve?’ section on page 6. Before you add the new items to the menu it is a good idea to make sure the items are what your customers want to buy. The best way to gauge customer interest is simply ask them. A simple poster board survey posted outside the concession stand while customers wait in line is an easy and effective way to get customer feedback. A ‘Sample Voting Form’ template can be found on page 13.

**Which tasty, new items should we add to the menu?**  
Place a check or sticker by items you would buy.

String cheese	
Grilled chicken sandwich	
Granola bars	
Apple slices & low fat caramel	
Fresh fruit	
Soft pretzels	
Other ideas?	

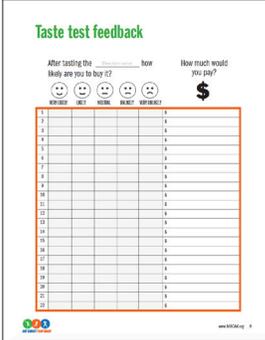
**EAT SMART PLAY HARD**

### STOP! BEFORE SELECTING NEW ITEMS, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- **Equipment and storage:** Make sure your concession stand has or can acquire the equipment needed to prepare or store new items if they are added to the menu. For example, if you add grapes to the menu, be certain that the concession stand has a sink to wash them before serving.
- **Food safety:** The last thing you want to do is make your customers sick with a food-borne illness, so consider things like using pre-grilled chicken instead of cooking raw chicken.
- **Purchasing:** Consider working with your school’s food service to purchase smaller quantities of perishable items such as fresh fruit and vegetables.

### 3. TASTE TEST NEW ITEMS

Taste test new items before adding them to the menu. This confirms that people will actually buy what they said they would during the feedback stage. Be sure to sample the actual product brand you plan to add. Taste testing is very important when adding processed or packaged foods such as granola bars, but is not always necessary for fresh fruits and vegetables that are very familiar to many people. Give customers the opportunity to provide feedback using the taste test survey template found on page 14.



The image shows a 'Taste test feedback' survey form. At the top, it asks 'After tasting the \_\_\_\_\_ item, how likely are you to buy it?' and 'How much would you pay?'. Below these questions are five smiley face icons representing a Likert scale from 'Very Likely' to 'Very Unlikely'. To the right of the scale is a dollar sign icon. The main body of the form is a table with 25 rows and 5 columns. The columns are labeled 'Very Likely', 'Likely', 'Neutral', 'Unlikely', and 'Very Unlikely'. The rows are numbered 1 through 25. At the bottom right of the form, there is a small logo for 'MOCAN' and the text 'www.MOCAN.org'.

### 4. SELL IT!!!

**Educate:** Get the support for healthy options from key people in the school community. School administrators, teachers, school club/organization sponsors and parents can all be excellent advocates for encouraging healthy choices. Coaches can be particularly influential in promoting healthy options - especially with student athletes. Use the 'Why Healthy Concessions' hand-out on the mocan.org website to build support. See the sample parent email on page 15.

**Pricing:** Make healthy affordable. If healthy food costs more, fewer people buy it. Try raising prices of less healthy food to increase profit and make healthy food more appealing.

**Placement:** Make healthy food more visible. Fruit is the number one most requested item and sells best on the counter near the check out. Put healthy items on top shelves or on the counter, where customers can easily see them. Make unhealthy food such as candy and chips, less visible by placing it behind or under the counter. See the 'Concession stand makeover' on page 10.

**Promotion:** Promote healthy items. Nix ads for unhealthy items like soda signs, clocks, etc. If a company offers signs, ask for healthy advertising - for example, ask for branding for bottled water instead of soda.

**Update menu:** Highlight healthy items with bold colors, larger print or pictures. Use a smaller font for unhealthy food and move to the bottom of the menu. See sample menu on page 11.

**Signs, social media, banners:** Get the word out about new healthy items. Remember that people who want healthier food may not be going to the concession stand because they don't want to buy candy or soda. Try signs in bathrooms, social media, or banners that will be seen when people enter the facility. Don't forget to post the menu on the school website. Consider posting pictures of local "celebrity" athletes with new items. Post the coach's poster found in the toolkit centerfold.

### 5. PASS A POLICY

School concession management is ever-changing and priorities can change with management. If you want the move toward healthy concessions to last beyond the school year, consider passing a school policy to make the changes stick. Ava, Missouri is one school district that has already passed wellness policy related to their concession stands. See page 15 for policy language.

## BUT WHAT CAN WE SELL?

YOUR SCHOOL HAS A WILL TO SERVE HEALTHIER FOOD. NOW IT'S TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE WAY. HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR POPULAR ITEMS THAT TASTE GREAT, ARE BETTER FOR YOU AND HAVE BEEN TESTED IN OTHER STANDS.

### FRUIT

- Fresh fruit is the most requested item. Try whole bananas, apples, clementines or oranges.
- Try pre-sliced fruit. Or, slice it yourself. One Eat Smart, Play Hard school uses an apple slicer to prepare it in front of the customer. It's attractive, fun and youth love it.
- Apple slices sell better when paired with low-fat caramel or peanut butter.
- Frozen grapes, bananas, berries and mango are always a hit.
- If you can't do fresh, freeze-dried fruits are also popular.
- Avoid "fruit snacks," as they are high in sugar and have little fruit.



### VEGGIES

- Though not as popular as fresh fruit, fresh veggies with low-fat ranch dip are a good choice. Try baby carrots, grape tomatoes or sugar snap peas.

### DAIRY

- Cheese: String cheese and other low-fat cheese sticks are a popular seller and are available in most grocery stores and buyer's clubs.
- Yogurt: Low-fat or fat-free yogurt are also good choices.

## ENTRÉES

- Try lean meat like poultry or lower-fat ground beef.
- Sandwiches with grilled chicken, pulled pork or pulled chicken are all good choices.
- Stick to lower-fat preparation methods such as grilling, baking or broiling.

## SNACKS

- Nuts: Try peanuts, almonds or cashews.
- Sunflower seeds are popular, especially for outdoor stands.
- Popcorn: It's a whole grain and can be a healthy item. Unfortunately, the cooking oil for popcorn is often full of trans fats and loaded with calories. Some brands of microwave popcorn are healthier.
- Soft pretzels: Try reducing the portion size for a healthier option.
- Chips: Look for baked chips in small portions.
- Granola bars: Be sure to taste test these! When customers say they want to buy granola bars they may imagine the kind that resemble candy bars. Pick granola bars and trail mix that have nuts, dried fruit or whole grains like oats as the first ingredient - not sugar.

## DRINKS

- Bottled water is usually the best seller.
- Others to try are 100% juice or low-sodium veggie drinks.
- Offer low-sugar sports drinks or avoid them altogether, if possible. Most sports drinks aren't much different than soda. Only in some conditions, such as running more than 60 minutes or severe heat, do sports drinks have a health or performance benefit.
- Milk: 1% or skim milk is always a good choice. Some endurance athletes benefit from chocolate milk post-exercise.

## SOURCING

Buying clubs are the most common source for school concessions, but consider working with your school's food service or check out online delivery services like Amazon Business Healthy School Store.



**9 out of 10**  
Missouri  
athletic  
directors  
agree...

***Athletes need  
to eat well to  
play their best.***



*Based on a survey of 235 Missouri high school athletic directors*

# SCHOOL CONCESSION MAKE-OVER





**EAT SMART PLAY HARD**

**EAT SMART**



GRILLED CHICKEN SANDWICH.....	\$2.50
STRING CHEESE .....	\$0.50
APPLE.....	\$0.75
CARAMEL/PEANUT BUTTER.....	\$0.50
NUTS .....	\$0.50
WATER BOTTLE.....	\$1.00
100% JUICE.....	\$1.00

HOT DOG .....	\$3.00
HAMBURGER .....	\$3.00
NACHOS W/ CHEESE.....	\$2.50
CANDY .....	\$1.00
SODA .....	\$2.00

# SCHOOL CONCESSION ASSESSMENT

This form will help you measure change in your school concession stand. Complete it before, and again after, you make changes.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by \_\_\_\_\_

	No	Yes	Quantity
<b>MENU</b>			
Does the menu include:			
Fruit: Fresh			
Fruit: Dried/canned or frozen (in water or 100% juice; no fruit snacks)			
Vegetables (not including potato chips or French fries)			
Whole grain rich products (whole grain is the first ingredient on the label)			
Low-fat dairy products such as cheese and yogurt			
Low-fat and unprocessed lean meats (not fried or cooked with added fat)			
Nuts and/or seeds (no added fat or caloric sweeteners)			
Water (plain, unflavored)			
Low-fat milk (no more than 200 calories per container)			
Juice (100% fruit or vegetable)			
Low-calorie beverages (no more than 40 calories per container)			
<b>PRICING</b>			
Are healthy items (such as water) sold at a price lower than less healthy items (such as soda)?			
<b>PLACEMENT</b>			
Are healthy items more visible to customers than unhealthy items? (For example, is fruit visible at the concession window instead of candy and chips?)			
<b>PROMOTION</b>			
Are healthy items promoted or advertised, in addition to being listed on the menu?			
Is unhealthy food promoted or advertised, in addition to being listed on the menu?			

# Which tasty, new items should we add to the menu?

Place a check or sticker by items you would buy.

**String cheese**

**Grilled chicken sandwich**

**Granola bars**

**Apple slices & low-fat caramel dip**

**Fresh fruit**

**Soft pretzels**

**Other ideas?**



# Taste test feedback

After tasting the                      (New item name) how likely are you to buy it?

How much would you pay?



1						\$
2						\$
3						\$
4						\$
5						\$
6						\$
7						\$
8						\$
9						\$
10						\$
11						\$
12						\$
13						\$
14						\$
15						\$
16						\$
17						\$
18						\$
19						\$
20						\$
21						\$
22						\$

## SAMPLE EMAIL/LETTER TO PARENTS

**Subject: New concession options**

In response to requests from \_\_\_\_\_ (School name) \_\_\_\_\_ (School name) parents, students and staff, \_\_\_\_\_ (School name) concessions has added tasty, new menu options that will help our students play hard and stay at the top of their game, mentally and physically. We believe it is important for students to have healthy options available at school-related functions to help them form habits at a young age that can last a lifetime. Making the healthy choice the easy choice helps students become strong, healthy adults. Ensuring that students have healthy options available at our school's concession stands is one way we can help.

Starting \_\_\_\_\_ (Date), these tasty, affordable items will be sold at our concessions.

*(List new items. Include photos if possible.)*

Thank you!

## SCHOOL POLICY

**Your school has several options for crafting a healthy concessions policy:**

**Gold standard:** The gold standard is to require that any foods or beverages made available to students on district property outside the school day meet Smart Snacks standards.

**Alternative:** If your school wants to start smaller and scale up, consider stipulating that 40% of the items sold at the concession stands (or choose your own percentage) will meet Smart Snacks standards.

**Advertising:** The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act governs marketing practices around food in schools so you can refer to this policy to ensure that unhealthy foods are not being marketed to students.

For more information about Smart Snacks standards go to:  
[www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks](http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks).

Find more resources at [www.MOCAN.org](http://www.MOCAN.org).



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Eat Smart in Parks is a project of University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.