



ENERGIZE YOUR LIFE!
EAT HEALTHY-BE ACTIVE

This newsletter is produced by the *Nutrition Education Network of Washington* to enhance communication and coordination among those who educate Washington families about nutrition and food. *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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To access past issues, go to
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This Month's Focus- *Part 1 of a Series on Policy, Systems, and Environment (PSE)*

For the next several issues of the *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators*, we will depart from our usual focus on a single topic. Instead, we are launching a series exploring "Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change" (PSE). This is a relatively new way of thinking about improving health in a community. For nutrition educators, it means expanding our vision beyond using direct education to influence an individual's food choice behavior. Now we also work with our community partners to make healthier food more available, or more appealing through promotional efforts, so that individuals are more likely to make the healthier choice.

As examples, sometimes a school district needs new policy to enhance healthier choices in its school cafeterias, and nutrition educators can be consultants in the policy writing effort (the "P"). Our community partners may have to adjust the food suppliers or promotional approaches they use to make healthier selections more accessible and appealing to customers and we can advise about these systems changes (the "S"). Where our work contributes to a more visible fruit and veggie display in a store or a walking trail in a neighborhood, we can say we have contributed to an environmental change (the "E").

In this issue we will lay the groundwork to understand the concepts of PSE. In the following three issues, we will share local examples of how agencies, organizations, and inter-agency collaborations have put each of these concepts into action to increase reach and influence in the community.

PSE is an evolving area of practice that aims to make healthier choices available to people where they live, learn, work, shop, and play. As nutrition educators in Washington State, we desire that the healthiest options for diet and physical activity are also the easiest and most abundant options.

A letter from Kathleen Manenica, Executive Editor, Energize Newsletter:

Dear Readers:

This is an exciting time for community nutrition. With the endemic concerns for obesity and diet-related degenerative diseases in all segments of our population, we must act beyond direct education of individuals and add public health strategies to our professional "tool kit." When applied, these approaches have proven to move populations towards positive health behavior change.

Over the past two years, federal legislation and collaboration between USDA and CDC have resulted in SNAP-Ed Guidance that has brought a "sea change" to our midst that facilitates movement towards our ultimate goal: the improved health and well-being of those we serve. By using PSE approaches, we increase the likelihood that individuals will make changes to support a healthy, active lifestyle in the communities in which they live, work, learn, eat,

shop, and play. To incorporate PSE means working in collaboration with societal leaders, community organizations, and businesses to increase the capacity to shift lifestyle norms. We hope you find the next three issues informative and relevant to your work in community nutrition with limited resource audiences. Incorporating PSE strategies into our work is a great reminder that...*It takes a village!*

What Is PSE (Policy, Systems, and Environment)?

PSE is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical, available, and appealing. Sometimes we hear a phrase that refers to this concept, "Make the healthy choice the easy choice." As nutrition educators, we are accustomed to giving the people we serve the motivation and skills to make more nutritious choices so that they may have healthier lives. With PSE, the big idea is that by changing laws and the physical landscape, communities can help its constituents live healthier lives. In particular, the focus has been on preventing obesity, but can also involve the prevention of other chronic health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.



Source: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies

Why is PSE Important Now?

We know that every good morsel of nutrition education that we provide can't make a speck of difference if healthy and affordable food options aren't available. PSE change makes those options more available by influencing laws, rules, and food and physical activity environments (such as markets, schools, city parks, and work places).

"P" Is for Policy

Policy change involves passing laws, resolutions, mandates, or ordinances. Government bodies, whether they are federal, state, or local, can make these policy changes. Organizations also make policy changes when they make a written statement about their position, decision, or course of action. These policy changes can have a big impact when made by organizations such as park departments, school districts, health professional organizations, and worksites. They greatly influence the food choices people can make every day.

Examples:

- Passing a law to create a tax on unhealthy food.
- Requiring that restaurants post the number of calories in each menu item.
- Establishing a policy to allow foods grown in school gardens to be served to students.

"S" Is for Systems

Systems change involves changing the rules or systems within an organization or business. This may mean changes in procedures and processes, which often have to do with personnel, resource allocation, access, and programs. Often systems changes and policy changes go hand-in-hand.

Examples:

- Establishing school rules for bake sales and fund raisers to align the foods with the school's wellness policy.
- Adjusting the school's schedule to put recess before lunchtime.
- Expanding food bank hours to increase accessibility to low income people who work during the day.

OUR MISSION: *The Nutrition Education Network* coordinates nutrition education efforts to communicate consistent, positive and relevant messages to increase awareness of healthful and enjoyable eating among low-income families. *Energize* is one way that *the Network* shares information and resources to accomplish this mission.

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“E” Is for Environment

Environmental change involves changing the physical space where health-related choices are made.

Examples:

- In a school cafeteria, placing appealing fresh fruit near the entry so that children will take fruit before other choices.
- In a restaurant, offering on the menu both standard portions and half-size portions.
- Installing lights at a neighborhood basketball or tennis court so that neighbors can safely exercise there in the evening.

What's the Difference between a Nutrition Education Activity and PSE?

Environment	Nutrition Education Activity	PSE Example
School	Teach a class on the nutritional benefits of the Fruit and Vegetable Food Groups.	Add fresh fruits and vegetables to the a la carte options in the cafeteria. Place a basket of grab-and-go fruit at the point of purchase.
Workplace	Make a bulletin board promoting a healthy snacking. Write a column in a company newsletter about the benefits of physical activity.	Establish a policy for the nutritional standards for foods sold in vending machines. Stock vending machines with healthy, affordable options. Add bicycle racks near the entrance to buildings.
Community	Provide direct education classes to residents living in a low-income housing complex. Promote a Bike To School Day among parents, students, and teachers.	Collaborate with community partners and residents of low-income housing units to build and maintain a community garden to increase access to fresh produce. Secure funding to ensure that children can safely bike to school by painting bike lanes on streets, fixing pavement, and adding signage.
Food Bank	Place a handout with a recipe and nutrition information in the client's bag or box.	Display and place fresh fruits, vegetables, and dairy at the beginning of the line, pastries and desserts at the end or off to the side.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Updated SNAP-Ed Toolkit – The recently updated booklet of obesity prevention strategies used by SNAP-Ed provides examples of how various aspects of Policy, Systems, and/or Environment can be used. Giving examples from various locations around the country, the toolkit shows helpful efforts and collaborations in schools, child care settings, in the community, and with families. The “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) Obesity Prevention Tool Kit” may be accessed at [SNAP-Ed Interventions Tool Kit](#).

WASHINGTON GROWN

Fresh This Month – Many vegetables in the cabbage family are available in the fall, and they are rich in vitamin C, folate, fiber, and phytochemicals. The proper family name is Brassicaceae or Cruciferae, but they're also called cole crops. Common examples of cruciferous vegetables grown in Washington State include bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, Napa cabbage, rapini (broccoli rabe), and Savoy cabbage.



Source: Washington State University

DID YOU KNOW?

Cruciferous vegetables get their name from a crucifer or cross-bearer, since their flowers have four petals that resemble a cross.



EAT TOGETHER EAT BETTER – Family Meals Focus

Because our readers have told us that Family Meals is a hot topic, in the May 2011 issue we began a small section on recent news relating to this topic and our long-standing signature program, Eat Together, Eat Better.

The Environment Matters at the Family Table – A new study shows that it's not enough just to encourage families to eat together, but to make the environment around the dinner table a positive one. Researchers laboriously coded mealtime interactions in families with children ages 6 to 12. They found that children who were overweight or obese had family meals that included more negative emotional interactions: hostility, poor quality interactions, little communication, and more controlling behavior from their parents. Mealtime

interactions in families with non-obese children were more warm and communicative. The authors of the study encouraged pediatricians and others who work with families to not only encourage families to sit down together, but to also focus on making the meal environment more positive. (Source: Berge, JM et al, “The protective role of family meals for youth obesity: 10-year longitudinal associations.” *Journal of Pediatrics*, September 27, 2014,

<http://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476%2814%2900777-X/pdf>.

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