TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTS

Handout Packet for
Transforming the School Environment:
Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change

Handout #1: Key Points and Notes
Handout #2: Definitions
Handout #3: Taking Action
Handout #4: Additional Resources

“When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.”

— Benjamin Franklin
Handout #1: Key Points and Notes

Warm-Up Activity:

If you could make one change in your school to improve the overall health of students and staff, what would it be and why?

Program Change:

- activity/event that targets individuals or select groups
- activity/event that focuses on short-term knowledge or behavior change
- activity/event with a definite beginning and end

Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change:

- affects a larger portion of the population
- utilizes strategies that are long-term, sustaining, and integrated into existing infrastructures
- results in more sustainable improvements
- typically involves people in decision-making positions
- supports the practice of healthy behaviors

NOTES:
**Handout #2: Definitions**

**Program Change** is a new activity or event that targets individuals or select groups to bring about a short-term change in their knowledge or behavior. Programs tend to have a specific beginning and an end.

Examples of program being used in a school or district:
- A taste-testing demonstration
- “Biggest Loser” or Biggest Winner staff wellness challenge
- Red Ribbon week

**Policy Change** is a written statement of an organizational position, decision, or course of action at the legislative or organizational level. In schools, these changes can come from the federal, state, district, or school level.

Ideally, policies describe actions, resources, implementation, evaluation, and enforcement. Policies are important because they set the context for widespread change. They create the conditions under which systems changes and environmental changes can flourish.

Examples:
- Federal — Local education agencies are required to create a local wellness policy to establish a school environment that promotes students’ health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity.
- District — School system requires all schools to conduct a health-related fitness assessment for students in grades 4–12.
- School level — School policy prohibits fund-raisers that incorporate unhealthy food.

**Systems Change** typically focuses on a change to the infrastructure or on instituting a new process or procedure to ensure a healthier site. A systems change would be part of an organization’s norms and expectations. Systems changes alter how the organization or network of organizations conducts business.
Examples:

- Procurement of locally grown produce for school meals (Farm to School)
- Providing all staff and students with two 10-minute physical activity breaks during the day
- Providing universal breakfast for all students in the district

**Environmental Change** involves a physical or structural change. It is typically visual and observable, but an environmental change can also be economic or social.

Economic environmental change is the presence of financial disincentives or incentives to encourage a desired behavior.

Social environmental change is a positive change in attitudes or behaviors about policies that promote good health or an increase in supportive attitudes regarding a health practice.

Examples of environmental change:

- Purchasing Grab-n-Go carts to provide breakfast to students in the morning (physical)
- Increase in acceptance of limiting high-sugar treats as rewards in the classroom across a school or district (social)
- Charging higher prices for less healthy vending machine drink or food items (economic)
### Handout #3: Taking Action

**EXAMPLE**

**Decrease consumption of sugary drinks at school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Create a “sugar display” showing the amount of sugar in different types of beverages. Place the display in a prominent location where all students can see it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>District/school policy stating sugary beverages will not be allowed for consumption during school hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>School vendors will be required to stock only non-sugary beverages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Purchase water dispensers and place them throughout the school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCHOOL CHANGE — (refer to Handout #1: Warm Up Activity)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout #4: Additional Resources


Disclaimer: This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number NU38OT000315, funded by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health, School Health Branch, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.