

Contact one of Montana's  
**HealthierUS  
Award Winners**



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**For More Information:  
The USDA HealthierUS School  
Challenge**

[http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/  
HealthierUS/index.html](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/HealthierUS/index.html)

**The Healthier Montana Menu  
Challenge**  
[http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/  
healthiermt.html](http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/healthiermt.html)

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Montana's  
**Award Winning  
Tips**

For Success in Achieving a  
**HealthierUS School Challenge Award**



**Montana Team Nutrition Program**  
[www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/index.html](http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/index.html)



# 4 Easy Steps

to Meeting the Challenge Criteria

## 1 Meeting Menu Criteria

- Offer a wide variety of fruits & veggies
- Offer a legume (a dried bean or pea) once a week in menu items such as chili, burritos, baked beans, or tacos.
- Offer a whole grain product every day (Gold) or three times per week (Silver/Bronze). Ideas include: brown rice, whole wheat roll or tortilla, Sun Chips and from-scratch recipes.
- Learn how to identify and purchase a true whole grain product and/or prepare a true whole grain food item from scratch by checking out the HealthierUS School Challenge Whole Grain Resource <http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/HealthierUS/wholegrainresource.pdf>
- Cooperation amongst food service staff and food vendors to introduce new food items is essential.
- Consider the use of a seasonal cycle menu to simplify your menu planning process and to ensure that the menu criteria are met each month.
- Sample menus which meet the menu criteria along with a list of sample a la carte items are available <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/healthiermt.html>, listed under “Helpful menu resources.”

## 2 Participation Requirement

- **Involve students.** Get them excited about the changes with taste-testing. Get their input for new menu items through a school meals committee.
- **Teamwork required.** Get your entire kitchen staff, school staff and administrators involved.
- **Parent support and leadership** is crucial.
- **Spread the word.** Create and maintain effective communication amongst the cafeteria, classroom teachers, parents and the community.
- **Promote your healthy school meals program.**

## 3 Nutrition Education

- **Make nutrition education a priority.** The criteria require that nutrition education is provided in at least half of the grades within an elementary school, but best to offer in every grade.
- **Provide as much nutrition education as you can** through the school lunch menu, bulletin boards in the cafeteria (in conjunction with the classroom teachers), and articles in the school newsletter. Resources for copy-ready articles include: Healthy Families Media Packets: <http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm> and Eat to Be Fit Handouts: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/Health/fit.html>.
- **Check out the Nutrition Education Resources** for School Food Service and teachers at <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/nutritioned.html>
- **Teach by healthy role modeling.** Get a commitment from school staff to eat healthy and be active at school.

## 4 Physical Activity

- **Make physical activity a priority.** Regular physical activity is important for children to maintain good health, to keep fit, and to assist them with achieving academic success.
- **Regularly scheduled physical activity** via health enhancement classes for each grade is essential. Strive for 150 minutes per week.
- **Include additional opportunities for students to be physically active** such as walking programs, after school programs for all students, Jump Rope for Heart, Big Sky Fit Kids, intramurals, open gym time before or after school, summer programs, etc.
- Check out the *Ten Easy Ways a School Can Increase Physical Activity Opportunities for Students* resource at <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/resources.html>, located under the General Resources list.

### Additional Tips and Advice

- The application takes time and patience. Plan for the application process to take at least 6 months from start to finish.
- Be active on your school's Wellness Committee.
- Purchase and serve local foods as you are able.
- Last but not least pat yourself and your staff on the back for a job well done. Receiving an award is a rewarding adventure!

Contact the Montana Team Nutrition Program ***prior to*** completing the application process.

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