

Documenting the Range and Quality of Existing Preschool Food Policies in Connecticut

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Research Questions

- **What is the current status of nutrition related policies and practices in CT preschools?**
- *What factors predict the quality of these practices and policies?*
- *How do interview and observational data correspond to self-report data?*

Rationale for this project

- K-12 School Wellness Policies due to federal and state efforts
- Collaboration with Connecticut State Department of Education
- USDA Team Nutrition for the Department of Education to create a series of workshops and an Action Guide to create preschool wellness policies

CT K-12 School Wellness Policy Report Card 2008



Connecticut State Department of Education School Wellness Policy Report

School District: Guilford Public Schools

Policy Date: 8/21/06

Participated in Healthy Food Certification¹

Comments Section: Yes

2006-2007: Yes 2007-2008: Yes

Summary of School Wellness Policy Scores

Policy Category	Comprehensiveness			Strength		
	District Score	State Score ²	DRG Score ³	District Score	State Score ²	DRG Score ³
Nutrition Education	78	65	60	56	44	40
School Meals	15	40	35	15	30	28
Other School Food and Beverages	76	67	69	69	48	55
Physical Education	41	44	40	35	31	30
Physical Activity	60	50	45	40	31	32
Communication and Promotion	58	45	39	58	31	30
Evaluation	83	59	58	67	38	34
Overall Policy Score	59	53	49	49	36	36

Large statewide director survey



2008



Preschool Director Survey
89% response rate

- Sent to all CACFP participating preschools
N = 277
- Food groups chosen for meals and snacks
- Characteristics of foods (e.g., lowfat, whole grain)
- Eating environment and staff behavior
- Health curriculum and staff training
- Communication with parents
- Physical activity time, environment, and practices
- Written nutrition and physical activity policies
- Barriers

Also collected

- Menus

1	2	3	4	5
ALL BEEF HAMBURGER ON ROLL (1EA)	TERIYAKI CHICKEN STRIPS (2EA)	BAKED CHICKEN NUGGETS (1EA)	BAKED ZITI W/ MARINARA & MOZZARELLA CHEESE (1/2C)	TACO BOWL (1EA)
BABY CARROTS (1/4C) W/ D/WIP, PEACHES (1/4C) & KETCHUP	TOSSED SALAD (1/4C) W/ DRESSING, MULTI-GRAIN RICE (1/4C) & PINEAPPLE TIDBITS (1/4C)	SWEET YELLOW CORN (1/4C), WHEAT BREAD (1EA), ORANGE SLICES (2EA) & KETCHUP	FRESH VEGGIE TRIO (1/4C) W/ D/WIP & PEARS (1/4C)	BEEF CRUMBLES (1/4C), CHEDDAR CHEESE (1TSP), LETTUCE (1/4C), MEXICAN RICE (1/4C) & BANANA (1/2EA)

- Staff and Parent Handbooks



- Currently developing coding systems to quantify information

In-depth subsample

- Randomly chose 40 preschools
- Director interview (mirror survey items)
- Site visit
 - Meal observation
 - Physical activity observation
 - Examine environment for messages about nutrition and activity
 - Assess caregiver behaviors and practices



Centers report having written policies that address

- 74% Nutrition standards for food brought from home for meals and snacks
- 70% Nutrition standards for food brought from home for onsite celebrations
- 53% Staff use of food as a reward
- 49% Types of food and beverages staff consume in front of children

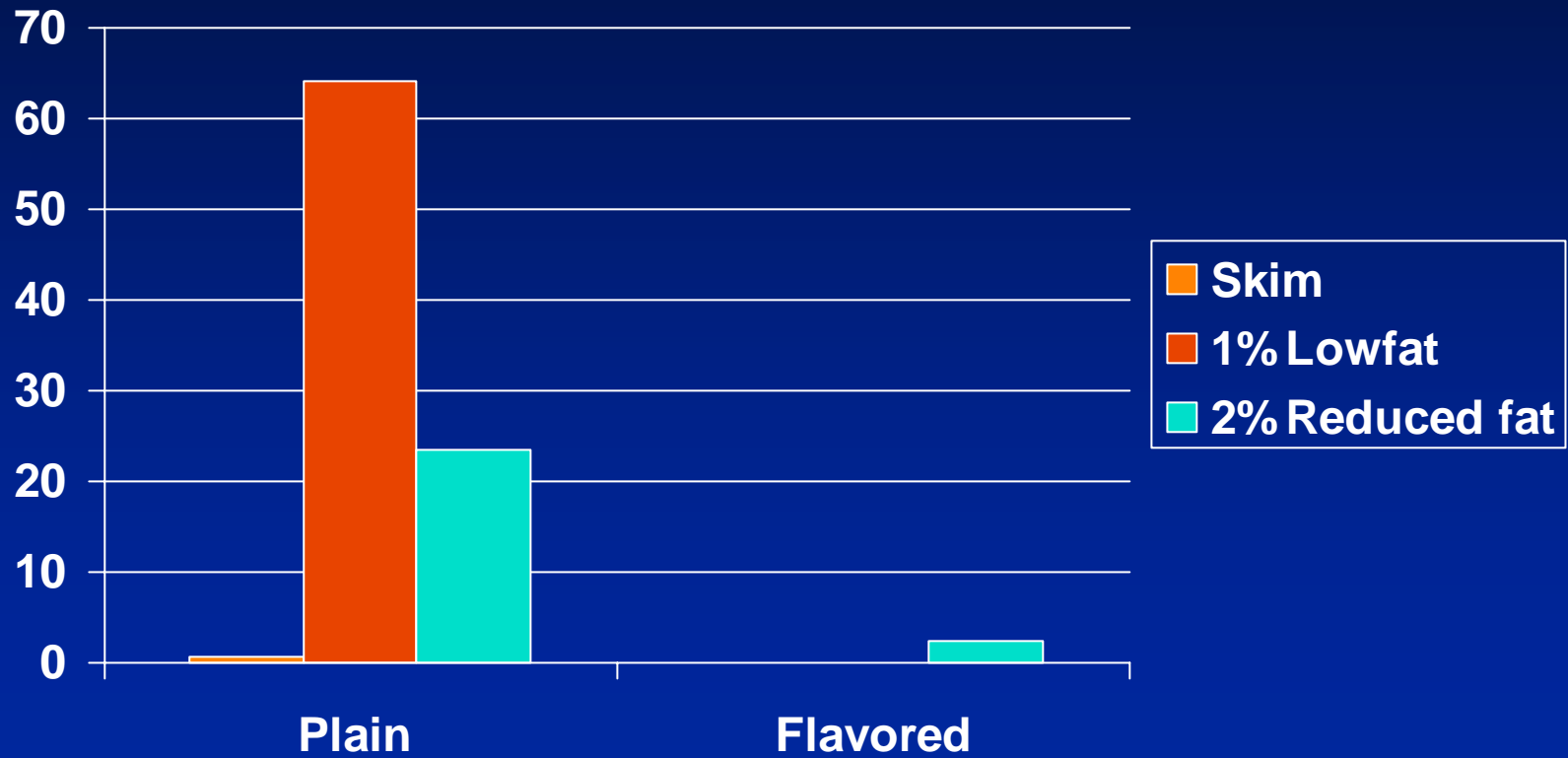
Lack of policies addressing

- Setting maximum serving size limits
- Portion sizes of each serving
- How to manage seconds
- How to help children self-regulate

Whole Grains

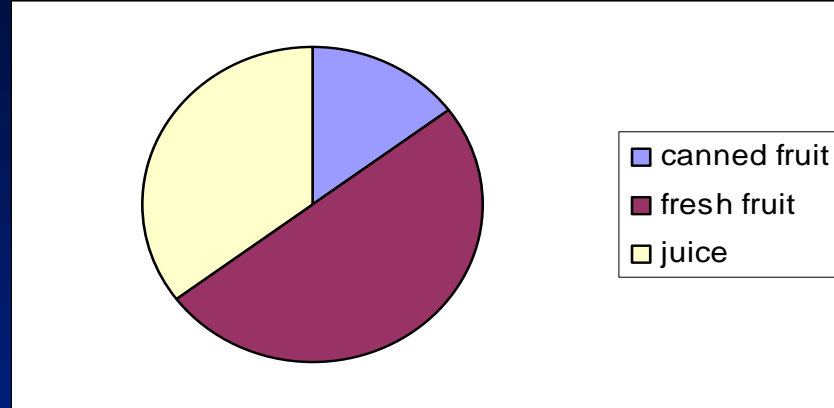
- 76% Whole grain cereal
- 42% 100% whole grain bread
 - *“100% whole wheat or whole grain; the only flour ingredient on label is whole wheat or other whole grain flour”*
- 22% Whole grain crackers
 - *“whole grains are the first ingredient”*
- 15% Brown / whole grain rice or pasta

Milk

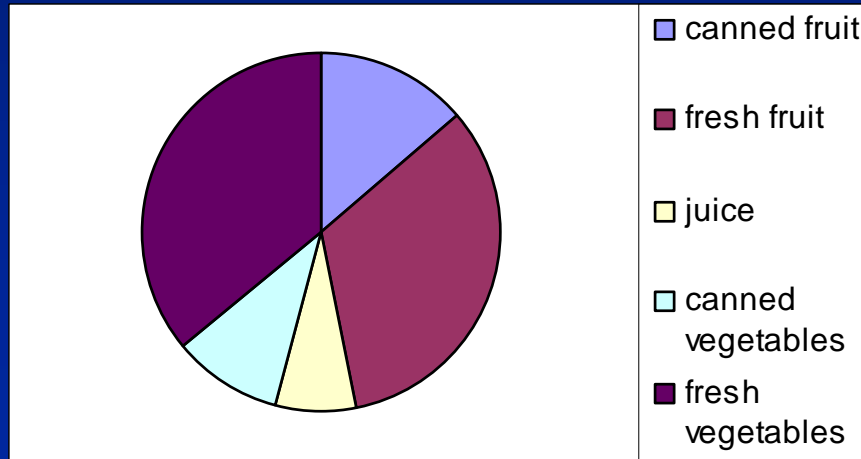


Fruit, Juice, and Vegetables

- Breakfast

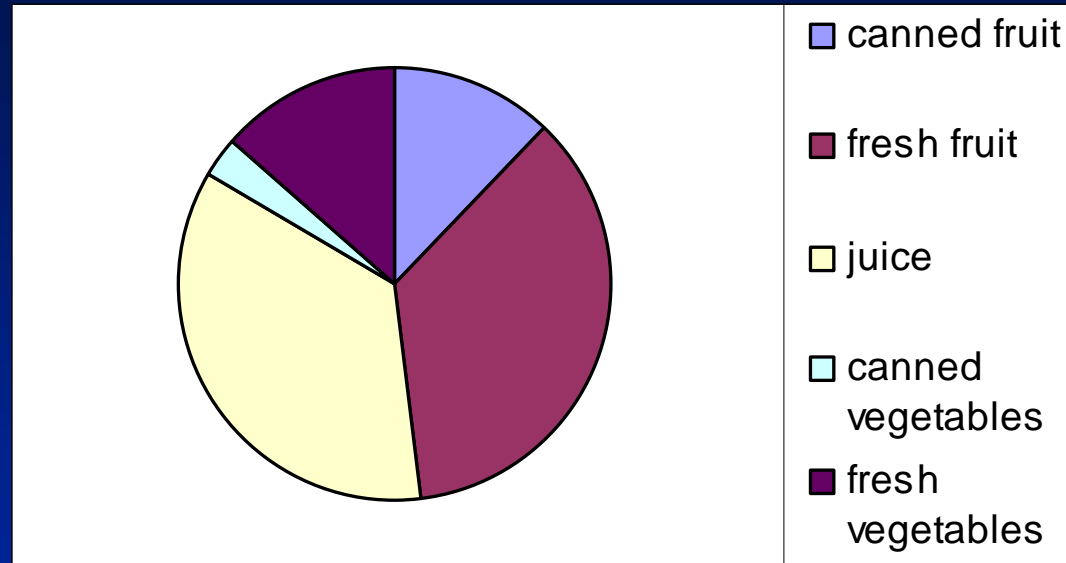


- Lunch



Fruit, juice, and vegetables

- Snack



Policy Recommendations

- Educate parents about AAP daily limits
- Do not serve juice at all in CACFP
 - If that is not possible, allow juice to be diluted with water to decrease caloric density
- Only allow canned fruit packed in water or juice
- Only allow skim or 1% milk
- Only allow unflavored milk

Reported barriers

- 41% Insufficient funds
- 17% Limited time to teach nutrition
- 17% Lack of support from parents and families
- 15% Limitations of food service provider or vendors
- 9% Inadequate food preparation or storage facilities

Policy Implications

- Federal regulations for the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP)
 - Increase reimbursement rates
 - Strengthen nutrition standards
 - Require written wellness policies
- State legislation
 - Strengthen CACFP standards beyond federal law
 - Provide monetary incentive for compliance
- Policy implementation via licensing through CT Department of Public Health