

# WATER WORKS



**A Guide to Improving Water Access  
and Consumption in Schools to  
Improve Health and Support Learning**

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## Note

While we have attempted to provide the most up-to-date information and website URLs at the time of publication, some information may have changed.

# ACTION 3 - ENHANCE AND SUSTAIN YOUR WATER PROGRAM

Installing new water delivery options (or improving existing water sources) is an important first step in any water program. However, to further increase students' intake of water you may also want to conduct promotional and educational activities that highlight the benefits of drinking water. Further, to sustain your water program over time, you may want to incorporate language about water into your school's wellness policy. This section describes:

- common ways to promote water and educate students about the benefits of drinking water
- key messages your school can use in its promotional campaigns
- main content areas of water-related language for school wellness policies

## ENCOURAGE WATER CONSUMPTION THROUGH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION

### Key Messages About Water

The first step in developing the educational and promotional components of your water program is to decide what information about water you wish to convey to students. That is, what do you want students to learn about water? What messages might motivate students to drink more water and fewer sugary beverages? There are many messages your program might cover, several of which we outline below:

- **Water is good for students' health and performance:**

- Water has zero calories and no sugar



- Drinking more water and fewer sugary drinks can help prevent weight gain



- Drinking more water and fewer sugary drinks can help prevent dental cavities



- Drinking water hydrates students so they can perform their best



- Drinking water may improve cognitive function



- **Water is inexpensive:**

- Tap water costs less than 1 cent per gallon, making it considerably less expensive than other beverages



- Drinking tap water instead of one bottled beverage every day can save up to \$350 a year, which is enough to buy two iPod nanos



- **Water tastes good:**

- Especially when chilled, water is tasty and refreshing



- Infusing water with fruit, vegetables, or herbs is an easy way to make water enticing without adding calories



- **Drinking tap water instead of bottled beverages is better for the environment:**

- Drinking tap water saves energy because no plastic bottles need to be produced



- Drinking tap water reduces the number of plastic bottles that end up in landfills



- **Tap water is safe to drink**

- Tap water is tested for contaminants more often than bottled water, and in most locations is safe to drink



- **Water is easy to find**

- Tap water is available almost anywhere, including schools, restaurants, parks, community centers, and homes



## Promotional and Educational Methods

You will also need to decide *how* you will encourage water consumption. Here, we outline some commonly used methods of education and promotion. The method you choose will depend on what staff are available to help with implementation, how much funding is available, and your goals for the water program.

### Activities, Lesson Plans, and Curricula

You can incorporate information, lessons, and activities about water and other beverages into classroom activities in diverse subject areas, from science to the humanities. Lessons and activities can be tailored to specific age groups and then integrated into the curricula for school courses or for afterschool programs.

#### Benefits:



- Some existing materials meet state curriculum standards, and many can be modified to help support your school's educational standards
- Students are a "captive" audience as they are already in class
- When students take an active part in an educational activity they may be more likely to retain the information presented

#### Considerations:

- Teachers must be willing to incorporate activities into their lesson plans
- Limited instructional time may mean other topics take precedence
- Short activities and worksheets may have less of an impact compared to lesson plans of longer duration

### Supplemental Material

You can find examples of water-related lesson plans and activities in the supplemental material *Activities, Lesson Plans, and Curricula to Encourage Water Intake in Schools*.



## How to Use this Unit

Teacher Guide

"Our Water" teaches about water issues local to San Francisco, and supports CA State Standards for Grades 4-6. Most materials can be adapted for use in other regions. Although there is a suggested order, "Our Water" is flexible and can be used whole or in part. It takes approximately 2-3 weeks to complete this unit. (ESL/ELL Teachers: "Our Water" will better fit your students grades 7-12.)

### Student Fact Sheets & Comprehension Questions

Fact Sheets can stand alone or be used with the Lesson Plans, as noted. All Fact Sheets come with Comprehension Questions that support language arts development. If you are unable to make copies of fact sheets for your students, you can project the fact sheet onto the board with a computer projector, or have students read them online at: [SFWater.org/Education](http://SFWater.org/Education). Fact Sheets can be read in any order, but have been numbered in the sequence that makes the most sense:

1. Our Water	4. Recycled Water	7. Pesky Plastics
2. Hech Hechy	5. Desalination	8. Let's Save Water
3. What is a Drought?	6. Groundwater	

### Glossary

Use the Glossary as needed. It is also part of an Activity Sheet. Most words in the Glossary are found in the

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has developed a curriculum called "Our Water" to teach elementary students about water issues in the San Francisco Bay Area. The lessons support California State Standards. This is one example of an existing material you could adapt to use in your school.  
Source: [SFWater.org/Education](http://SFWater.org/Education)



## Videos and Songs

There are numerous videos and songs related to water and/or sugary beverage consumption. You can play these during class, at lunchtime, or in afterschool programs.

### Benefits:

- May be more fun or engaging than other activities
- Easy to implement, often requiring less time or funding to carry out than other activities

### Considerations:

- Schools or teachers may be unable or unwilling to show videos or songs (for example, if school lacks computers or projectors, or if school policies prohibit use of websites such as YouTube)

### Supplemental Material

You can find examples of songs and videos promoting water consumption in the supplemental material *Videos and Songs to Encourage Water Intake in Schools*.

### Get Students Involved

When you involve students in designing and implementing your educational and promotional activities, you not only get some extra hands to help with your program, you will also increase the likelihood that your materials and messages resonate with students. There are many ways to involve students in promoting water. For example, students can:

- make posters
- create music videos
- design logos for reusable water bottles
- help teach lessons about water in class or afterschool programs

You can also partner with students and teachers in your school's art, music, photography, and digital media classes to design and implement class projects promoting water consumption. For example, students can make water bottle logos in a digital media class, or even make reusable water bottles out of clay in a ceramics class.

Below is a snapshot of a music video made by teens in Oakland, CA. The rap song and video highlight the benefits of drinking water as well as the negative effects of drinking soda in a fun way that teens can relate to.



Oakland teens rap "Drinkin' That Water" to encourage their peers to drink more water and less soda. Source: <http://www.youtube.com/ch?v=FLqbrCnPJt>

## Posters

You can also promote water consumption, and educate students about water, using posters and flyers. You can hang signs around school, pass out flyers to students directly, or even mail information home to students and their families.

### Benefits:

- Posters can reach many students (e.g., if you hang a poster in the cafeteria, most students will see it)
- Usually easy to implement: you can simply hang up posters in visible locations

### Considerations:

- Posters and flyers may have limited impact if students do not pay attention to them
- Printing and distributing posters or fact sheets will incur costs



*Posters and flyers can be simple like this one, developed by the Redwood City School District, which reminds students to choose water first.*

### Supplemental Material

You can find examples of posters and flyers with information about water in the supplemental material *Posters to Encourage Water Intake in Schools*.

## DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT MODEL SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY LANGUAGE FOR DRINKING WATER ACCESS AND CONSUMPTION

School leadership and staff change over time. It is important that your water program is sustainable despite such changes. All schools participating in the National School Lunch Program are required by law to implement a school wellness policy. These policies are intended to help schools create and maintain a healthy environment for students, and must include goals and guidelines related to nutrition promotion and education. Incorporating language about water access and promotion into your school or district wellness policy will help support these broader efforts and sustain the positive changes you make as a part of your water program.

In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released a proposed rule, *Local School Wellness Policy Implementation*, suggesting that school wellness policies include language about where and when free drinking water will be provided during the school day and about the maintenance of drinking water sources.<sup>1</sup> Schools will need to revise their wellness policies soon, making now an ideal time to examine water-related language in your local school wellness policy.

The supplemental material *Model School Wellness Policy Language for Drinking Water Access and Consumption* provides model language your school can incorporate into its wellness policy to ensure both that water is available throughout the school day and that drinking water sources are regularly maintained.

(1) The proposed rule can be found at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2014-04100.pdf>. Specifically, the proposed rule suggests local school wellness policies include, "Policies regarding the availability and locations of free drinking water throughout the school day, including during the meal service as required by section 9(a)(5) of the NSLA and the frequency of regular maintenance on all water fountains to ensure hygiene standards for drinking fountains, water jugs, hydration stations, water jets, and other methods for delivering drinking water." As of press time, the proposed rule is open to public comment; see page 2 of the proposed rule for instructions on submitting a comment.

## The Importance of School Wellness Policies

Wellness policies are written documents outlining a school's goals and commitments related to student health and wellbeing. When a school makes these commitments formal:

- the school signals its commitment to the health and well-being of its students
- staff and students understand what rules and guidelines they must follow
- healthy changes to the school environment are sustained even as students and staff come and go
- rules and guidelines can be enforced

Incorporating language about water into your school wellness policy will help ensure your water program is sustained over many years.

## Key Content Areas of Water-Related Language for School Wellness Policies

Below, we summarize the main content areas of water-related language to include in school wellness policies. Ideally, your school would include robust policies within each of these categories.

### Content Areas for Water-Related Language in School Wellness Policies

- **Water Delivery Options**
  - Types of water delivery options and vessels for serving water
- **Access**
  - Location of water sources
  - Time water sources are available for students to use
  - Number of water sources
  - How water sources will be maintained
  - When and where students are allowed to use reusable water bottles
- **Promotion and Marketing:**
  - School activities to promote water consumption
  - School staff are role models of healthy beverage consumption
- **Education**
  - Information about the benefits of drinking water integrated into the formal curriculum
- **Safety and Quality**
  - Contaminants to be tested
  - Frequency of water quality testing
  - Plan for communicating results of water quality testing
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**
  - Outcomes to be measured
  - Frequency of monitoring
  - Plan for disseminating evaluation findings
  - Making improvements based on evaluation

### Essential Goals for Wellness Policies

- There is safe, free, and appealing drinking water that is accessible without restriction at all times during the day.
- All children have an equal opportunity to drink water.
- The formal curriculum includes education about drinking water-related issues, especially the health benefits of drinking water.
- Safe tap water is promoted over single-use bottled water.
- The drinking water policy is accepted and embraced by the whole school community, including school administration, teachers, food services staff, facilities manager, students and parents.

### Resource Spotlight

To assess the strength of your wellness policy, you can use the **Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity: School Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool**. Refer to the *Resources* supplementary material for a detailed list of resources, including weblinks.

### Supplemental Material

The supplemental material *Model School Wellness Policy Language for Drinking Water Access and Consumption* provides language for water access and promotion in schools that aligns with best practice recommendations. You can use these model policies as they are, or adapt them to meet the needs and priorities of your school.

## Case Study: Earlimart School District in Southern Tulare County, CA

Located in California's Central Valley, Earlimart School District is a K-8 district serving 2,000 students at four school sites.<sup>1</sup> In June 2011, the Earlimart School Board revised the local school wellness policy to strengthen and clarify existing policy language for healthy beverages.<sup>2</sup> The policy states that only the following beverages can be served at school: water with no additives; unflavored, non-fat or 1% cow's milk; unflavored non-dairy milk alternatives; and fruit or vegetable juice that contains at least 50% juice.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the policy commits the school to providing access to free, safe drinking water before, during, and after school; allows students to bring water into classrooms; encourages school administrators, teachers, and other staff to model drinking water; and states that the district will perform periodic maintenance and testing of all water fountains. With strong language that promotes drinking water and prohibits flavored milk and sports drinks, the Earlimart School District's wellness policy exceeds many state and federal requirements.



	<p><b>ALLOWABLE BEVERAGES</b> (Applies at all times, regardless of the time of day). Beverages may not contain added sweeteners – caloric or non-caloric – with the exception of non-dairy milk alternatives (e.g., almond, rice, soy milks).</p> <p>Additionally, no beverages may contain additives, including colors, flavorings, herbs, vitamins, and minerals (e.g., electrolytes), or stimulants (e.g., caffeine).</p> <p>Only the following beverages are allowed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water</li><li>• Non-fat or 1% cow's milk<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Must contain vitamins A and D and at least 25% of the Daily Value for calcium per 8 fluid ounces</li><li>○ Excludes flavored milks, including chocolate, strawberry and vanilla</li></ul></li><li>• Non-dairy milk alternatives<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Must contain vitamins A and D and at least 25% of the Daily Value for calcium per 8 fluid ounces</li><li>○ Excludes flavored milks, including chocolate, strawberry and vanilla</li><li>○ No more than 5 grams of fat per 8 fluid ounces</li><li>○ No more than 12 grams of caloric sweetener per 8 fluid ounces.</li><li>○ Fruit or vegetable juice that contains at least 50% juice</li></ul></li></ul>	
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(1) Earlimart School District. <http://www.earlimart.org>. Accessed February 24, 2014.

(2) California Project Lean Case Study: Earlimart School District Eliminating Electrolyte Replacement Beverages. [http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/docuser-files/Case%20Studies\\_Earlimart-Final.pdf](http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/docuser-files/Case%20Studies_Earlimart-Final.pdf). Accessed February 25, 2014.

(3) Earlimart School District Wellness Policy BP5030. <http://www.earlimart.org/files/user/1/file/Wellness%20Policy%20Earlimart%20BP5030%20FINAL%206%207%202011.pdf>. Published May 17, 2011. Accessed February 25, 2014.