Schools & School Districts
Program Guide
Thank you for being a Let’s Go! partner and for your commitment to help improve the health and well-being of your community. This is your guide to getting started.

Let’s Go! is a community engagement initiative working to create environments that support healthy eating and physical activity. We use evidence-based strategies to improve the policies, practices, and environments that influence behavior change.

If you have questions about the information in this guide, please email info@letsgo.org.
The Role of Schools & School Districts

Obesity is a complex, chronic disease. Overweight and obesity continue to have a major impact on the health of the entire population, from infancy to adulthood.

School systems can play a critical role in preventing childhood obesity.

Schools have more continual contact with students during the first two decades of their life than any other institution. It is critical that schools, the district and the school nutrition programs collaborate and engage students in the work to have the greatest impact.

Let’s Go! helps:

- **School Districts** to adopt and implement strong wellness policies that support healthy eating and physical activity practices.
- **School Nutrition Programs** increase the nutritional quality of food served, make the healthy choice the easy choice and improve the perception of school meals.
- **Individual Schools** to bring the district wellness policy into practice and engage students in the process.

School systems are in a unique position to help students learn and practice healthy lifestyles during this formative time and establish healthy habits for years to come.

Let’s Go! is designed to help you and your staff to:

- **ASSESS & PLAN** using the Let’s Go! Self-Assessment to measure strengths and identify opportunities for growth.
- **PROMOTE** Let’s Go! program messages.
- **TAKE ACTION** using program tools, resources, and community connections.
- **SUSTAIN** environments by adopting policies that meet state and federal mandates and support healthy eating and physical activity.
- **COLLABORATE** with students, schools and departments for greater impact across the district.
- **HIGHLIGHT SUCCESS** with stories, photos, and videos.
Before You Get Started
Before you begin implementing the evidence-based strategies of the Let’s Go! program, here are some things to consider:

1. Focus on Healthy Behaviors
   It’s important to remember that the focus should be on healthy behaviors and not on weight.

2. A Team Approach is Essential
   Engage students and staff at all levels in the school district. Using a team approach encourages everyone, including young people, to understand they have a role to play.

3. Staff Attitudes and Beliefs Matter
   Talking about healthy behaviors requires patience, empathy and cultural sensitivity. To be successful in these conversations it is important for you and your staff to:
   - Reflect upon any implicit weight bias and stigma you may have—challenge your assumptions.
   - Recognize that each student and family/caregiver’s behavior is shaped by their own culture and experiences.

4. Youth and Adult Partnerships are Powerful
   Acknowledge that young people have effective, creative, and community-driven ideas to encourage environmental change in their schools, communities and personal lives and are eager to discuss these ideas with adults.
   Young people feel empowered to push for environmental change when they have voice and choice and can help build youth buy-in with new changes. Research shows that youth desire to be a part of making change that impacts the world around them.

5. Be Inclusive
   Consider what your school and district currently does to ensure that it is a safe, accepting, and welcoming environment for students and staff who have overweight or obesity.
   Ensure that all students, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities are part of your Let’s Go! work. The program is designed to make sure every student can benefit regardless of ability, race or socio-economic status.
The Program Messages

5-2-1-0 for Children
The Let’s Go! 5-2-1-0 program helps children and youth to establish healthy behaviors:

The 5-2-1-0 messages are:

Small Steps for Adults
The Let’s Go! Small Steps program encourages adults to make one small change at a time. These small changes can add up to big improvements in health.

The Small Steps messages are:

Your Partnership with Let’s Go!
Let’s Go! provides materials and training to you and your staff to enable you to promote healthy eating and physical activity with students and families. Your partnership with Let’s Go! includes:

1. Program Assistance
   Let’s Go! is here to help you get started with the program.

2. Tools and Resources
to offer students and families/caregivers and to support staff.

3. Training and Development
   opportunities for you and staff members.

4. Regular Communication
to keep program information, tools, and resources at your fingertips.

5. Celebration
   for every achievement whether big or small.

6. Connection
to local and national organizations and other sites working to improve the health of children and families.
Program Messages & Strategies
The Let’s Go! 5-2-1-0 program messages are the behaviors to encourage. To support this we have developed evidence-based strategies which align with national recommendations to increase healthy eating and physical activity.

MESSAGES

5 or more fruits and vegetables
Emerging science suggests fruit and vegetable consumption may help prevent weight gain, and when total calories are controlled, may be an important aid to achieving and sustaining a healthy weight.

MESSAGE RATIONALES

2 hours or less of recreational screen time
Watching too much television and use of other screen media is associated with an increased prevalence of overweight and obesity, lower reading scores, and attention problems.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

1 hour or more of physical activity
Regular physical activity can help children and adolescents improve cardiorespiratory fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing other health conditions.

Prioritize Strategies

0 sugary drinks, more water
High intake of sugar-sweetened beverage consumption among children is associated with overweight and obesity, displacement of milk consumption, and dental cavities.

STRATEGY RATIONALES

Limiting unhealthy choices and providing healthy ones can improve students’ behavior, focus, academic achievement, and attendance. Too much junk food and an unhealthy diet can slow down child learning.

Rewarding children/youth with food, even healthy foods, encourages eating outside of meal and snack times and can lead to poor eating habits.

Limiting unhealthy food; provide healthy choices.

Prohibit the use of food as a reward.

Limit recreational screen time.

Too much screen time puts children/youth at risk for lower reading scores, attention problems, and learning difficulties.

Provide opportunities for physical activity.

Active children/youth tend to be healthy, which leads to better learning. Regular physical activity reduces feelings of anxiety, stress and depression, and increases self-esteem.

Limit or eliminate sugary drinks; provide water.

Water provides a low-cost, zero-calorie beverage option and is a healthy alternative to sugary drinks. Drinking water is associated with a number of health benefits, it can improve children/youth’s readiness to learn.
The Let’s Go! Champion and Team
Every registered Let’s Go! School will identify a person to champion environmental and policy change that supports healthy eating and physical activity practices. Additionally, forming teams to support the work is important for success.

The Site Champion
Ideally, the Site Champion is someone who is at the location regularly, has a good sense of site operations, is committed to improving the health and wellness of students, families, and staff, and can help advocate for the adoption of the Let’s Go! Strategies.

Role of the Site Champion
The Site Champion is an advocate for change. They lead their school through the process of assessing needs, setting goals and sharing the Let’s Go! messages with students, staff, and families. Additionally, they work to bring meaningful collaboration between their school, district wellness efforts, the school nutrition program, and help create space for youth ideas and involvement.

The Wellness Team and District Wellness Committee
Site Champions need support! A Wellness Team can consist of teachers, staff, parents, students and anyone else interested in supporting the work. A district wellness committee may include representation from all schools, departments, the school board, and student population.

Role of the Wellness Team
Establishing a Let’s Go! team helps your site set goals, share program messages, and provide insight for the Let’s Go! Self-Assessment each year. A team approach results in greater engagement and implementation of the Let’s Go! Strategies.

Role of the District Wellness Committee
District Wellness Committees work to adopt and implement strong wellness policies and build collaboration and alignment across the individual schools and other school departments in leading environmental change in the community.

We’re here to help create sustainable environmental and policy changes that make the healthy choice the easy choice.
Let’s Go! is an annual program that supports sites interested in working towards environmental and policy change. The program can be woven into your existing structure and support you to build and sustain a healthy environment.

**Implementing the Let’s Go! Program**

Let’s Go! is an annual program that supports sites interested in working towards environmental and policy change. The program can be woven into your existing structure and support you to build and sustain a healthy environment.

**START HERE**
to join the program and follow these steps each year.

**Assess & Plan**
- Use the Let’s Go! Self-Assessment to determine strengths and opportunities for growth.
- Develop a plan, identify resources and community partners needed to achieve your goals.

**Promote Messages & Partnership**
- Share messages with staff and students/families.
- Build a team and gain leadership support for launching your plan.

**Highlight Success**
- Celebrate every achievement whether it is big or small.

**Sustain**
- Ensure district wellness policy complies with state and federal mandates to support a healthy environment.
- If modifications are needed, work with Let’s Go! to help adopt changes.

**Collaborate Across the District**
- Participate in, or help to establish, a district wellness team to build consistency.
- Connect with individual schools, students, the school nutrition program, and school departments to look for opportunities to support one another, share ideas, and leverage resources for mutual projects.

**Take Action**
- Implement your Let’s Go! goals.
- Communicate with team, staff and students regarding progress.
Resources and Program Materials
Let’s Go! has tools and resources to help increase healthy eating and physical activity at your site.

Let’s Go! Website
Utilize educational materials and communication templates to share with staff and families at LetsGo.org.

Let’s Go! Learning
Explore available on demand trainings, including the Let’s Go! Self-Assessment at LetsGoLearning.Thinkific.com.

Promotional Tools
Share 5-2-1-0 messages and your partnership throughout your site.

Site Champion Checklist
Use this checklist to help ensure you stay on track with your Let’s Go! work.

GETTING STARTED
☐ Identify a Champion
  - Determine who at the site will be your lead for this work.

☐ Build a Team
  - Gather support to take action in this partnership.

ONGOING EACH YEAR
☐ Assess your Environment & Create a Plan
  - Use the Let’s Go! Self-Assessment.

☐ Promote Messages & Partnership
  - Ensure 5-2-1-0 posters are displayed and in good condition.
  - Communicate your partnership with staff and families.

☐ Use Let’s Go! Resources and Program Tools
  - Use educational tools and communication templates to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.
  - Participate in professional development opportunities to learn more about healthy eating and physical activity.
  - Invite Let’s Go! to your team meetings to provide ongoing support.

☐ Celebrate Success
  - Share stories, photos, and videos with staff and families.
  - Acknowledge individual and team contributions in creating healthy environments.

Need help finding something? Contact us at info@letsgo.org.
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