

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action

A Best Practices Guide

Second Edition



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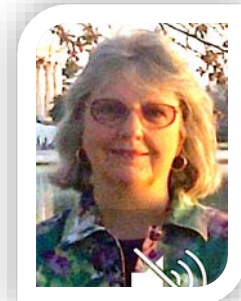


CENTER for NUTRITION in SCHOOLS
CONNECTING FOOD, HEALTH, AND LEARNING

Message from the UC Davis Center for Nutrition in Schools & UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program



On behalf of the Center for Nutrition in Schools in the UC Davis Department of Nutrition, we are pleased to introduce the first edition of ***The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action: A Best Practices Guide***. This tool is a valuable resource to assist local educational agencies in implementing the evidence-based, multi-component Shaping Healthy Choices Program. The best practices and strategies included in this tool are based on the first-hand experiences of researchers and community members



involved with the implementation of the program over the course of several years. We are confident that you will find this tool useful when developing your Shaping Healthy Choices Program implementation plan, and look forward to hearing the exciting results and success stories.

Sincerely,

Sheri Zidenberg-Cherr, PhD
Co-Director, Center for Nutrition in Schools
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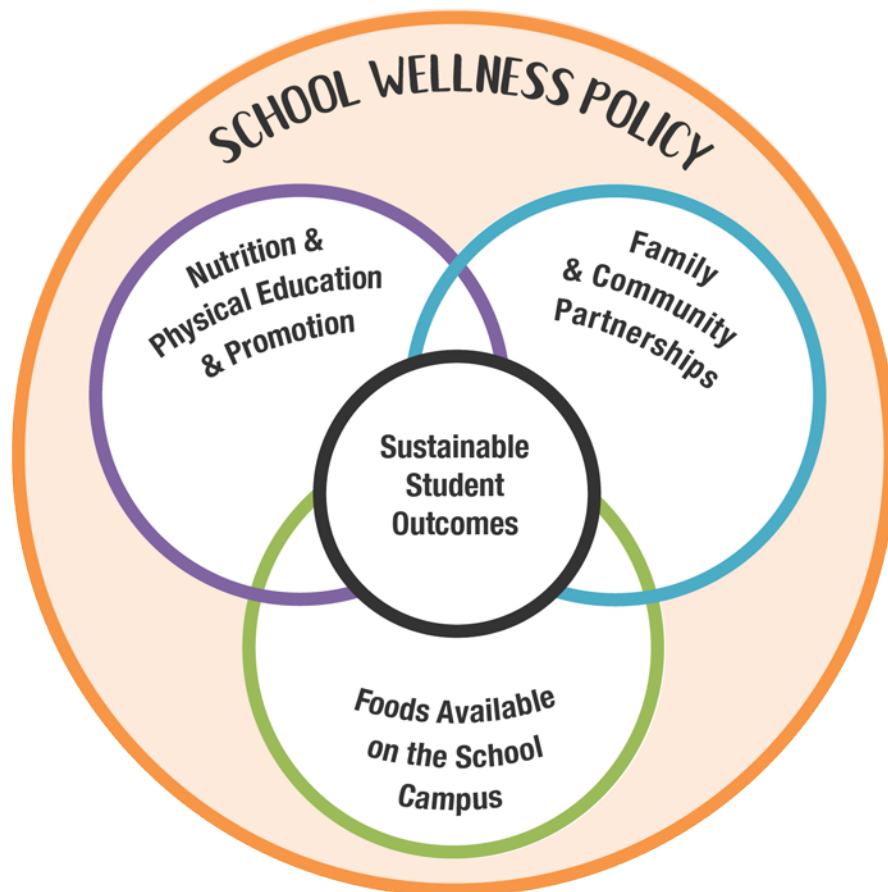
In partnership with the Center for Nutrition in Schools in the UC Davis Department of Nutrition, the UC CalFresh Nutrition Education program has made the Shaping Healthy Choices Program one of the signature school-based programs. Not only does the Shaping Healthy Choices Program include high-quality, evidenced-based nutrition curriculum, but it also goes beyond the classroom to integrate a coordinated approach linking the classrooms, with gardens, the lunchroom, and school wellness policies. It provides a framework to address policy, system, and environmental strategies (PSEs) engaging students, parents, and school leadership. ***The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action: A Best Practices Guide*** is a helpful tool in introducing and implementing the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. I am pleased to provide this new resource to future Shaping Healthy Choices Program schools and implementing agencies.

A Best Practices Guide is a helpful tool in introducing and implementing the Shaping Healthy Choices Program. I am pleased to provide this new resource to future Shaping Healthy Choices Program schools and implementing agencies.

Sincerely,

David Ginsburg, MPH
Director, UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program

Introduction



Shaping Healthy Choices Program Spotlight Shaping Healthy Choices Program Background at a Glance Facilitator Tips: How to Get the Most from this Best Practices Guide

Shaping Healthy Choices Program Spotlight

Over the past several years, the Shaping Healthy Choices Program research team has worked closely with a variety of implementing agencies. Listed below is a collection of program highlights expressed in the words of program implementers.

“Something unique about the [Shaping Healthy Choices Program] is that it has allowed [UC CalFresh nutrition educators] to truly become members of the school community....at the end of the school year, several pages in the school yearbook were dedicated to [our UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Team].”

~ **Nutrition Educator from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties**

“The teaching style of [Discovering Healthy Choices] is very effective – students became used to the open-ended questions as the curriculum progressed, and they become more engaged over time. When they discover the knowledge, it is more impactful than just telling them. This method is a better way to gauge

understanding in the students, and I find I am using this approach in other areas”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Butte Cluster**

“Students really enjoyed [the garden], and took ownership”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Placer and Nevada Counties**

“After the garden was established, [all of the teachers, students, parents, and garden volunteers] painted rocks and used them to decorate the garden. It was a fun and creative process to do after the accomplishing work of pulling the garden together”

~ **Nutrition Program Manager from Butte Cluster**

“Students and teachers loved the [Cooking Up Healthy Choices] recipes! Some students would take the recipes home and cook them with their families.”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Butte Cluster**

“Kids were engaged when using produce from the garden in the cooking demonstrations. They really liked using kale and any vegetable that connected with their countries”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Butte Cluster**



Shaping Healthy Choices Program Spotlight



“Building on existing partnerships was important. The school was already getting seedlings from a certain farm, so we were able to strengthen the relationship with them [through the Shaping Healthy Choices Program].”

~ **Youth, Families, and Communities Advisor from Placer County**

“We talked with the food service director about going in and setting up a time that worked for her. We met with her and she explained what she wanted. We validated all of the work she had already put into the lunch program and tried to implement some of her new ideas.”

~ **Community Education Supervisor from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara**

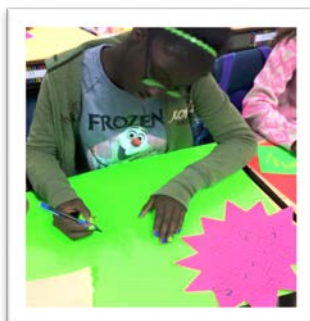
“For our community event, we hosted a farmers market. This was

done in partnership with the food bank three separate times. They donated hundreds of pounds of produce – each student was able to take home 10lbs! Also, students from the Shaping Healthy Choices Program were involved in doing the food demos from Shaping Healthy Choices Program at one booth.”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Butte Cluster**

“The health fair was very successful – major successes were the community partnerships – not just donations of gifts and gift cards, but having BelAir come to the fair and dedicate their time. They wore their BelAir shirts, which helped students recognize their group. This showed students that the larger community cares about their health.”

~ **Nutrition Educator from Placer and Nevada Counties**



“A large majority of the sixth-grade students that received the *Discovering Healthy Choices* curriculum were excited to devote their lunch period to start a wellness committee. They assessed their schools using the SHC² assessment tool to help generate ideas. For example, they helped create lunchroom signage. This was an effective way to get the younger students excited about school wellness since they really look up to the sixth-graders. Next steps include connecting them with the district-level wellness policy committee.

~ **Program Supervisor from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties**

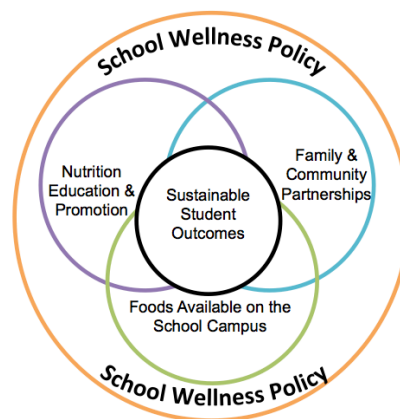
Shaping Healthy Choices Program Background at a Glance

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program is designed to improve children's health through a multi-component, school-based approach.

Program Components

This program integrates activities within four overlapping components (listed below), all working together to sustain positive health outcomes.

1. Nutrition and Physical Education & Promotion
2. Family & Community Partnerships
3. Foods Available on the School Campus
4. School Wellness Policy

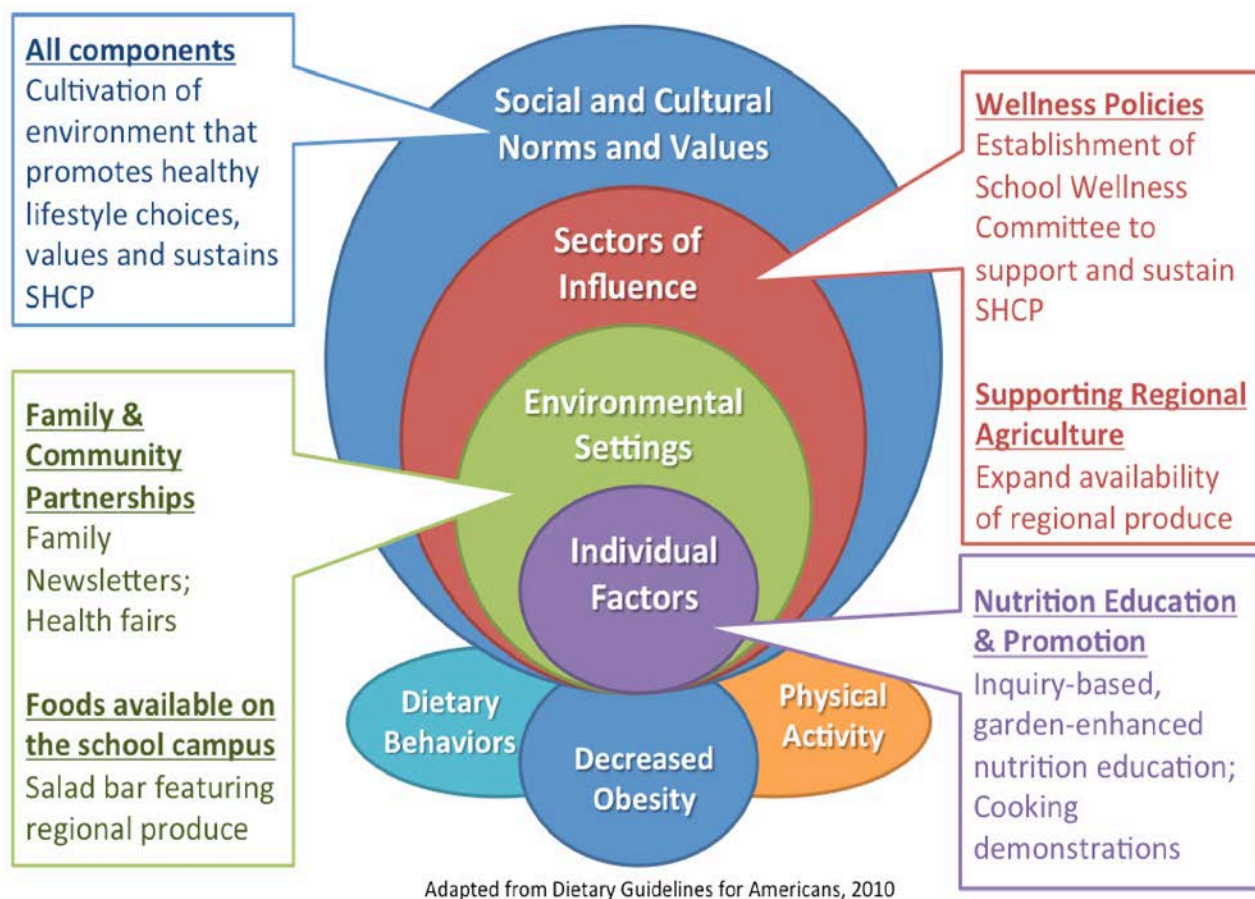


Program Activities

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities (listed below) were designed to reinforce one another.

1. Nutrition education (***Discovering Healthy Choices***)
2. Cooking demonstrations (***Cooking Up Healthy Choices***)
3. Physical activity education (***Healthy Choices in Motion***)
4. Family newsletters (***Team Up for Families***)
5. Instructional school garden
6. Salad bar
7. Regionally procured produce
8. School-site wellness committees
9. Community health fair

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program activities were designed to target each level of the Social Ecological Model shown below (adapted from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010).



Student individual factors like knowledge and skills are addressed through classroom education using a learner-centered, inquiry-based curriculum that features garden-enhanced activities, and cooking demonstrations.

Changes to environmental settings are accomplished through family newsletters that feature positive nutrition-related parenting practices, connections to the classroom lessons, and recipes from the cooking demonstrations. This program also recommends the use of community health fairs to bring together community partners like local farmers, 4-H, and other local organizations.

The Shaping Healthy Choices Program also includes activities aimed at changing the school food environment, such as the installation of salad bars in the lunchroom.

Sectors of influence was addressed by increasing regional produce available in the salad bar to improve community relationships with regional farmers, and by establishing a school wellness committee at each intervention site to support and sustain the Shaping Healthy Choices Program.

Finally, all of these intervention activities integrate to influence social and cultural norms by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and values.

Program Evaluation

An extensive evaluation of the impact of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program on a number of student outcomes was conducted in several schools. Data analyses showed an increase in student nutrition knowledge and physical activity, improvement in student dietary behaviors, and a decrease in Body Mass Index Percentile.¹

Potential Benefits for Students

- ❖ Increases nutrition knowledge and use of critical thinking skills
- ❖ Improves dietary patterns and physical activity
- ❖ Improves overall health

Potential Benefits for Schools

- ❖ Helps fulfill federally mandated district wellness policies
- ❖ Adheres to Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards
- ❖ Assists with the fulfillment of HealthierUS School Challenge requirements

References

1. Scherr RE, Linnell JD, Smith MH, et al. The Shaping Healthy Choices Program: Design and Implementation Methodologies for a Multicomponent, School-Based Nutrition Education Intervention. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*. 2014;46(6):e13-e21.

Facilitator Tips: How to Get the Most from this Best Practices Guide

Purpose

The program development team worked closely with principals, teachers, food and nutrition services, and other school community partners to identify barriers and facilitators experienced during program implementation. *The Shaping Healthy Choices Program in Action: A Best Practices Guide* provides evidence-based best practices and strategies developed through the first-hand experiences of researchers and community members involved with the implementation of the program over the course of several years.

Audience

This best practices guide was designed to reach a wide variety of audiences interested in implementing the Shaping Healthy Choices Program at a school or other organization.

Potential implementing stakeholders and agencies include:

- ❖ Teachers
- ❖ School administrators
- ❖ Nurses
- ❖ Cooperative Extension Programs
- ❖ Public Health Departments and additional Local Implementing Agencies
- ❖ Members of a community organization
 - Girl or Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, 4-H, or other youth group

Regardless of level of experience working in communities, this best practices guide will provide useful information for successful program implementation.

Best Practices Layout

Activity Title. The activity title introduces the reader to the Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity that will be addressed in the section.

Background Information. This introductory section, separated from the rest of the chapter by a shaded box, provides a brief research-based background addressing why the activity was included as a part of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program.

Introduction. This section includes more specific information about the Shaping Healthy Choices Program activity.

Program Connections. A hallmark of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program is the comprehensive nature of the program. The “Program Connections” section of each chapter explains how each activity overlaps

with the other program activities. While the program may be initiated with any activity, all program activities were designed to overlap.

Materials and Preparation. Depending on the activity, a section with recommended materials needed to prepare for each activity may be provided.

Implementing the Activity. This section also varies depending on the activity. It may focus on tips regarding the facilitation of the curriculum, the building of the garden, or the action steps for wellness committee meetings.

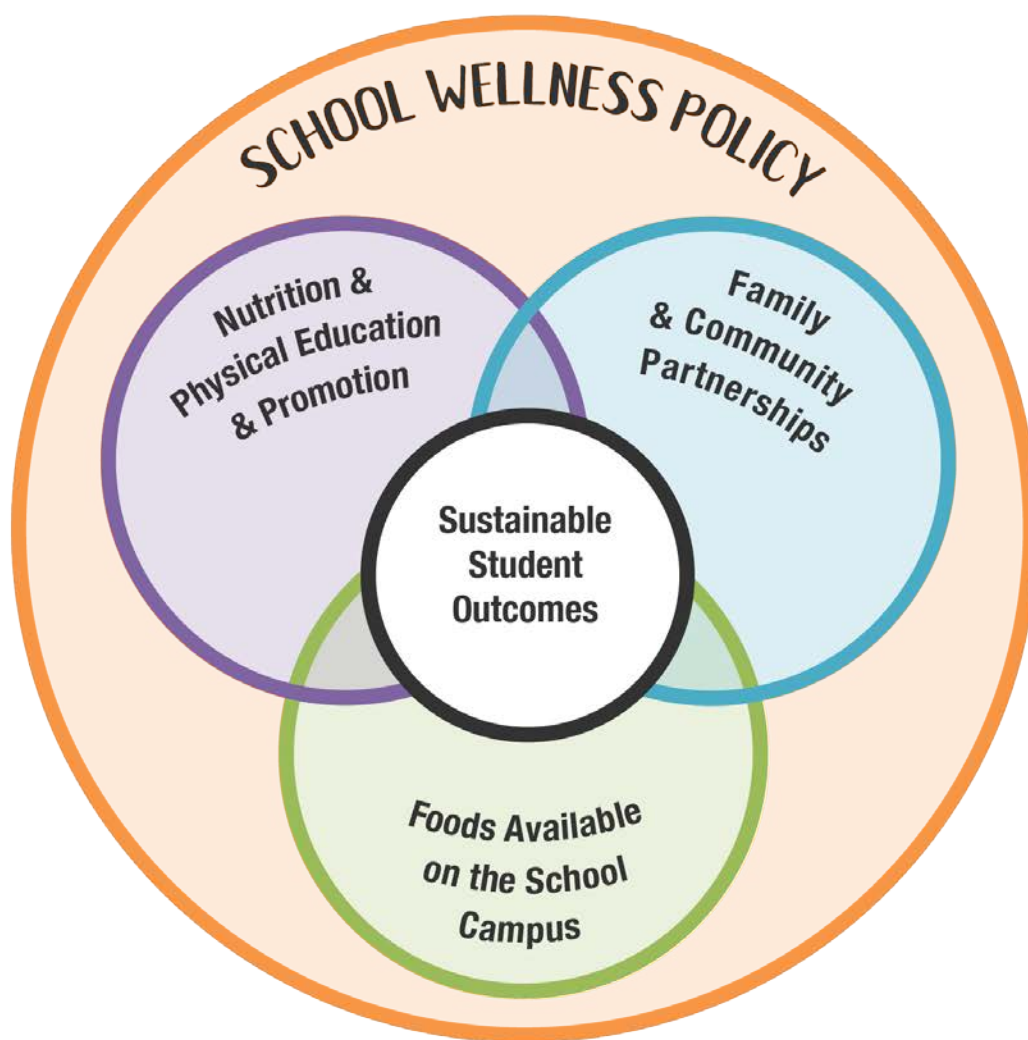


Shaping Healthy Choices Tip! Best practices tips from researchers and community members will be provided in each section of this guide. These tips are simply evidenced-based recommendations to consider when implementing each program activity.

Additional Resources. This section includes any useful website links or appendices such as funding request templates, sample open-ended questions, and other useful resources.

References. This section provides a list of references cited in the background section of each chapter.

Bringing it all Together



Key Findings to Consider for Future Implementation of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program

Bringing it all Together: Key Findings to Consider for Future Implementation

The implementation of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program in a number of school sites through the years have resulted in positive outcomes, and these results varied based on several factors. The following are the key findings to consider for future implementation of this program.

Emphasize fidelity of the curriculum

Variation in student outcomes between Shaping Healthy Choices Program schools is tied to the level of fidelity of implementation of *Discovering Healthy Choices* (i.e., the extent to which nutrition educators followed curriculum procedures). Fidelity to curriculum procedures is a critical component to the success of this program. Training and professional development should emphasize the importance of adherence to curriculum procedures.

Focus on a multi-component strategy

Variation in student outcomes between counties is consistent with the level of program implementation. For example, when cooking demonstrations were not implemented as part of the nutrition education, vegetable identification did not improve. This indicates that cooking demonstrations are an important component of the Shaping Healthy Choices Program to cultivate student recognition of vegetables. Additionally, it is important that the implementation focuses not only on direct nutrition education, but also places an emphasis on enhancing foods available on the school campus, establishing family and community partnerships, and empowering school stakeholders to apply the school district's wellness policies through the formation of school-site wellness committees. Training and ongoing support should underscore the importance that when implemented together, all program activities form an infrastructure that promotes healthy diet and lifestyle choices while fostering a healthy school environment.

Build strong relationships

Greater improvements in student outcomes are linked to the existence of strong relationships between program staff and multiple school stakeholders including administrators, food and nutrition services personnel, teachers, and other members of the school community. Establishing these partnerships is critical so that participating school community members can support and participate in the implementation of program activities. As a result, they are more likely to engage in improving the social norms and cultural values to support a healthy school environment.



