

**Statement
Of
Bud Heller
At
Congressional Briefing
On
Addressing Childhood Obesity in the 2007 Farm Bill:
Benefits of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program
May 10, 2007**

I'm Bud Heller, the Food Service Director for Edgewood Elementary School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak about the benefits of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program in my school.

I. Background Information

Edgewood Elementary School has been fortunate to have the fresh fruit and vegetable snack program for 3 years. First, I want to tell you that as a food service director for 22 years, I think the FFVP is the best program I've ever seen. Our school has 306 elementary students; 58% are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals; this program allows us to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to children who may have limited access to them at home. At Edgewood Elementary the FFVP is offered as an afternoon snack in the classroom. 145 schools in PA applied for the snack program; thankfully, we were selected.

II. Benefits of the Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Program to our Students, their Family's and our School

Benefits to Students

- The program introduces students to fresh fruits and vegetables as a healthy snack for their bodies.
- The program increases the variety of fruits and vegetables that students eat; students are exposed to fruits and vegetables they've never tried before. They are eating fruits and vegetables such as red bananas, multi-colored sweet pepper strips, snow peas, kiwi, star fruit, and jicama, to name a few.
- Because the students taste the new fruits and vegetables around their friends, they are more likely to try and accept them and discover that they do enjoy the new tastes.
- The program not only increases the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables in the class room, but in the school cafeteria and also at home. We've noticed that when students are exposed to fruits and vegetables that they get in the classroom, they are more likely to choose and eat them when offered at lunch time as a part of the reimbursable meal. As a result, students are

receiving additional servings of fruits and vegetables.

- We have also noticed that the fruit and vegetable snack helps to improve student attentiveness and prevent distractions due to hunger at times when students would otherwise be hungry and have low energy levels. The snack has replaced less healthful snacks students may bring to school.

Benefits to Families

- Parents have reported the children asking them to buy the fruits and vegetables they've tried at school.
- A school cafeteria worker over heard a student in a grocery store ask her mother to buy papaya because she had it in school and like it.
- A grandmother told the principal that her granddaughter now prefers to eat her vegetables raw rather than cooked because they taste better.
- Parents continue to tell the principal and teachers how surprised they are to see their child eat and enjoy vegetables at home.

- The benefit of the program carries over to the rest of the family who in turn eat more healthy fruits and vegetables in their home.

Benefits to School

- Our school Principal, Dr. Angela Tuck, is personally involved in the snack program. Dr. Tuck puts the healthy snacks on a cart and wheels the cart to each classroom delivering their snack for the day.
- The program has created a positive atmosphere in the school. Teachers feel the attendance is greater on days that fruit and vegetable snacks are provided.
- Our program includes nutrition education that reinforces the value of eating the fresh fruits and vegetables. Students learn what nutritional value is in the fruit or vegetable that they are eating and how that helps the body.
- The program helps to provide interactive and fun classroom learning activities. This is also incorporated into the core subjects such as math, geography, and health.
- Handouts with recipes are given to the students to take home showing parents how to prepare the

fruits and vegetables that they eat in school. It is a program that benefits everyone.

III. Benefits to all 25 Pennsylvania Schools

As I mentioned, we were selected from 145 schools in PA that wanted this program. Schools continuously contact the PA Dept of Education asking to participate. When schools participate in the Fruit & Vegetable snack program they want to keep it.

- Our state's fresh fruit and vegetable snack program reaches 10,779 students in 25 schools representing elementary, middle and high schools in both rural and urban settings. The majority of these schools have more than 50% of their students eligible for free and reduced price meals.
- Schools participating in the program are reporting changes in eating behavior and consumption of fruits and vegetables among students and their families. The Pennsylvania Department of Education hears that students are asking for fruits and vegetables to be brought in for their celebrations such as birthday parties. And local grocery stores are reporting increased sales of certain fruits and vegetables after they are served at school as part of the FFVP.
- Schools report the program increases fruit and vegetable consumption not only in the classroom, but at home and in the school cafeteria too. Also, as a

result of the FFVP, students are being exposed to new fruits and vegetables they previously have not tried.

- Schools have the opportunity and are encouraged to work with local farmers, orchards/ growers and businesses to obtain their fresh fruits and vegetables. Partnerships are formed with Cooperative Extension, local dietitians and chefs to provide nutrition education activities.

Summary

Because we feel so strongly about this program, our district applied and received a grant from the Pottstown Health & Wellness Foundation to expand the FFV Program to our four elementary schools in the district. We are now providing this wonderful program to all five of our elementary schools.

Once again, I want to reiterate, as a food service director for 22 years that has worked with many, many new programs, the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program is the one that I want to keep, **because it works.**