

**Mary Jo Tuckwell**  
**Talking Points**  
**Congressional Briefing – May 10, 2007**

Background

- I am Mary Jo Tuckwell, Food and Nutrition Director for the Eau Claire School District located in northwestern Wisconsin, and responsible for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program at North High School.
- Eau Claire North High has 1600 students, of which 35% are eligible for free or reduced meals. Every afternoon hungry student's "Grab & Go" their fresh fruits and vegetable snacks from a mobile kiosk in the hallway.

Benefits to Students

- Our students are truly excited to grab their healthy fruit and vegetable snack, which is packaged and ready to eat to fit their active lifestyles. Almost immediately, the students increased their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Our students have indicated a strong desire to see the program continue. Additionally, my food service employees have observed that students are now much more likely to select the fruit and vegetables served at lunch. Students are also purchasing more fruit and vegetables in our ala carte program.

Benefits to Families

- Parents have told me that while grocery shopping with their teenagers, they have been asked to purchase a new fruit or vegetable for family meals and snacks. Parents also say they are purchasing more fruits and vegetables for their families. Our parents are very supportive and want the fruit and vegetable snack program to continue.

Benefits to School

- The Program has also been a welcomed addition to North High's efforts to create a healthier school environment as encouraged by our district Wellness Policy and the school's participation in the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Results in Wisconsin

- Our state's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack program reaches 14,000 students in 25 elementary, middle and high schools in both rural/urban settings. More than 53% of these schools have more than 50% of their students eligible for free or reduced meals. This program is so important to Wisconsin because our statewide data suggests that 75% of our high school students were eating less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables day.

- Participating schools report that their students are eating more fruits and vegetables as a result of this program. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program is creating a new demand and acceptance among student customers for fruits and vegetable offered in the school lunch program. Student acceptance is especially important as schools begin to revise their school lunch meals to be consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines.
- Teachers and administrators speak positively about how the healthy F/V snacks are reinforcing the nutrition education children receive in the classroom. Teachers are designing classroom lessons involving fruit and vegetable snack preparation to increase student skills in making healthy snacks at home. Parents are making and sending healthier snacks to school.
- The Wisconsin program has flourished thanks to a highly collaborative and committed group of health and education professionals. The Wisconsin Partnership for Activity and Nutrition, a 170 member organization of public health professionals, educators, non-profit organizations, and legislators, actively supports the F/V snack. The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health also advocates for increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among students.
- The University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire has funded a comprehensive evaluation of Wisconsin's F/V snack program. Currently, researchers, Drs. Eric Jamelske and Lori Bica, are collecting and analyzing data from the 25 funded schools and 15 control schools. Results from the first 3 months of the F/V snack program indicate that participating students are significantly more willing to try new fruits and vegetables if served in school. This data is supported by my experience at North High School where students are requesting more fruits and vegetables be offered in the cafeteria and, in fact, choosing them more often with their school lunch. In addition, our evaluation data demonstrates that participating students are significantly more willing to choose fruits & vegetables over chips and candy for snacks.

### Summary

- The Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program is making an immediate difference in the health of 14,000 children in Wisconsin. They are eating more fruits and vegetables and developing healthier eating habits. In addition, we believe our comprehensive program evaluation will document the impact that the Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program has on developing positive attitudes and creating healthy food behaviors that are so essential to stemming the tide of childhood obesity. We are committed to making a difference in our children's health. Wisconsin parents, schools and health professionals are counting on your help to expand funding for this effective program that is fostering healthy eating behaviors among our youth.