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## Tips for Working with School Programs

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ADA members can focus on child nutrition in a variety of settings. This tip sheet offers suggestions for effective involvement with local districts in today’s complex and sometimes highly charged school nutrition environment. Enroll to be a Kids Eat Right **Campaign Volunteer** and learn of opportunities to be engaged in school policy and environmental change efforts. Visit [www.kidseatright.org/volunteer](http://www.kidseatright.org/volunteer) to learn more.

- ✓ **Be sensitive.** Schools are sometimes under close scrutiny and intense pressure regarding meals in the cafeteria and other aspects of nutrition on campus. You may be one of several community members who have approached them about “fixing” the weight and nutrition problems of their students. School personnel usually have packed schedules and may not be able to meet immediately.
- ✓ **Be informed.** Find out what is currently happening with nutrition and wellness in the district. Many districts have made significant changes and it’s crucial to know about them. Review the district website to see what is posted regarding the local school wellness policy and past meetings. PTAs/PTOs and other community groups/coalitions may already be working on creating a healthier school environment. Becoming active in an existing group is a great way to get up-to-speed quickly.
- ✓ **Be respectful.** Start by introducing yourself to the school nutrition (or food service) director. This individual may be an R.D. and/or an S.N.S. (School Nutrition Specialist, a credential from the [School Nutrition Association](#)). Once you have established a professional connection, ask how you might be able to help with their ongoing nutrition enhancements – in the cafeteria, the classrooms, and the campus. Ask about:
  - **School health fairs or other nutrition and physical activity events.** Multiple opportunities exist for nutrition-related information and/or activities, perhaps in partnership with community organizations, such as [Action for Healthy Kids](#) or the local American Heart Association office.
  - **Events sponsored by PTAs, PTOs, or a local school foundation.** Offer to provide a short presentation for one of their regular meetings. Explore opportunities to have a nutrition booth or game at a carnival or other community event.
  - **Healthier US School Challenge Awards.** If a school has received one of these awards, it may need some assistance to get the word out to the wider community. If they want to apply for one, you may be able to support their efforts with technical assistance or nutrition education resources.
  - **Let’s Move** initiatives. Since First Lady Michelle Obama announced her campaign to raise a healthier generation of kids, **Let’s Move** has offered a number of contests. Your school may just need some technical assistance and RD power to get involved in one of these efforts.

To learn more about school nutrition opportunities – as a volunteer or as a career option, join your ADA colleagues in the School Nutrition Services DPG: [www.snsdpg.org](http://www.snsdpg.org) for networking and professional education opportunities.

