



# Students Take Charge!

**Empowering students to make changes in their environment to improve their health.**

Policy, systems and environmental change (PSE) is a new approach to both reach a wider audience and optimize health in a community. Health programs have traditionally focused on individual behavior with the assumption this will result in positive change. Without practical, readily available healthy options, however, behavior change is difficult. PSE provides this added dimension for change. It is a sustainable way to connect and reinforce important messages in a variety of settings. In schools, empowering students to create changes in their environment may lead to long-lasting, positive behaviors consistent with a healthy lifestyle.

**POLICY-** establish rules that influence daily decisions. Examples: policy states that schools must provide a fruit and vegetable with lunch; schools must adhere to the nutrition requirements for vending and a la carte foods.

**SYSTEMS-** influence how the policies are carried out. Examples: food service provider alters the menu to meet the new policy requirements; creating a system to ensure that vending and a la carte foods are in compliance with the policy.

**ENVIRONMENT-** change to the physical environment. Example: fruit and vegetable options are added to the cafeteria or serving line; a salad bar is added to the cafeteria; highlighting the healthiest food options at point of purchase locations in the schools.

What idea(s) do you have for PSE in your school to share at your next staff or Wellness Committee meeting?