



Inspiring health, wellness, and
better learning.

PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL DISTRICT'S NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM EXPANDS FOCUS TO SERVE MORE AND HELP REACH WELLNESS POLICY GOALS

*Progress Report to be Released at Feb 7 Wellness Event
Validates Research Connecting Student Wellness to Academic Performance*

PHILADELPHIA—(February 4, 2019)—[Eat. Right. Now.](#), a federally-funded nutrition education program within the School District of Philadelphia, will officially release a report today that highlights the impact of student wellness on academic performance.

The report will be released at Clara Barton Elementary School during a “Wake Up to Wellness Celebration,” where program leaders and partners will share information about its progress and expansion plans. As part of the expansion, the current name (Eat.Right.Now.) will be officially changed to “Eat Right Philly” (ERP).

Along with the report release, students, teachers, principals, and other wellness-focused nonprofits will come together at Barton Elementary for a celebration that recognizes 20 years of work that has helped to improve health and education outcomes for students in Philadelphia public schools. The celebration will kick off with a produce stand, coordinated by Eat Right Philly team and Share Food Program, which regularly visits the school on Thursdays throughout the year and offers average savings of 50% off the retail cost. Additionally, a hands-on cooking class will be held.

The morning program will end with the ERP team engaging students in movement exercises that are part of ERP’s wholistic approach to overall wellness.

Eat Right Philly, funded by [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education](#) (SNAP-Ed), is designed to educate, support, and inspire healthy choices and healthy schools in Philadelphia. The goal of SNAP-Ed is “to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current US Dietary Guidelines and the USDA Food Guidance System.”

The recent passage of the [2019 Farm Bill](#) strengthened SNAP-Ed programs with such measures as technical assistance and the sharing of best practices to continue to deliver strong results for children and families with limited food resources.

According to research, overall wellness, eating right, and staying active are crucial to student academic performance. Particularly when students are facing poverty and food insecurity, when they are not physically active, and when they don’t eat a healthy breakfast, they are more likely to have higher rates of absenteeism, more behavioral problems, more developmental delays, and lower grades and test scores. In Philadelphia, where a 25% poverty rate ranks highest of all big cities in the United States, Eat

Right Philly is working against these challenges, supporting students and their families on the pathway to wellness.

“We can’t afford to ignore the connection between learning and health,” said Program Director Lauren Nocito. “Healthy, active, and well-nourished children are more likely to attend school, be ready to learn, and stay engaged in class—and Eat Right Philly promotes success in the classroom through overall wellness.”

Beginning in 1999, Eat.Right.Now. became known for providing engaging nutrition lessons, healthy food tastings, and tailored programming in the classroom. But the program has expanded its focus in the 2017–18 school year to address education and environmental change—including making healthier Policies, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) modifications to cultivate healthy learners and healthy learning environments—and has embraced a new name to more accurately capture its mission.

“We’ve dropped the word “now,” because our program isn’t just focused on the here and now,” said Nocito. “More than ever, our goal is to promote learning readiness and develop lifelong behaviors that will empower students with the tools they need for a lifetime.”

Eat Right Philly gives schools the support they need with a three-step process. First, ERP connects with the school and seeks out a “wellness champion” or an organized group like an existing School Advisory Council (SAC). This person or group can serve as the wellness team. Most often the group includes the Health/PE teachers, School Nurse, Principal or any other people with a vested interest in improving health outcomes of students.

After looking critically at the school’s current situation using the School Health Index, the team decides on a plan of action to provide tailored support to schools through education, resources, promotions, training, and technical assistance. [A recent report](#) from the School District’s Office of Research and Evaluation shows that Eat Right Philly has been instrumental in helping individual schools meet Wellness Policy Guidelines and create healthier environments with action items designed to meet students’ nutrition and physical activity needs.

The Eat Right Philly team is made up of District staff who support a subset of schools across the city, while also coordinating the work of several SNAP-Ed funded community partners, including the [Food Trust](#), [Einstein Medical Center](#), [Drexel University](#), [Health Promotion Council](#), [Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative](#) (University of Pennsylvania’s Netter Center for Community Partnerships), and [Vetri Community Partnership](#). The program reaches more than 93,000 students in 215 public and charter schools, many of which serve students whose families depend on SNAP for food resources.

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About Eat Right Philly

Eat Right Philly (ERP) educates, supports, and inspires improved school wellness and culture so School District of Philadelphia students and their families can live a healthy lifestyle and achieve their fullest potential. Programming is made possible through SNAP-Ed funding. The ERP team is led by District staff that serves as the convener and hub of the Eat Right Philly work across the District, working with other providers as a group effort to help schools meet their needs on their path to increased wellness.

Using their three-step program, ERP creates tailored initiatives for schools to engage students in wellness-enhancing activities such as nutrition lessons, healthy food tastings, and more recently, activities to address making healthier policies, systems, and environmental modifications for students.