

# Teen Nutrition Council Guidance

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We hope Power Up! inspires you and your students to apply lessons beyond the classroom to effect positive change in the environment. One example of how to extend Power Up! concepts is through participation in or development of a Teen Nutrition Council.

## Teen Nutrition Council

A Teen Nutrition Council can take many forms, but its core is made up of a group of student ambassadors led by teachers, administrators, and/or community members working together to promote healthy activities and behaviors to their peers, in school, and in their community.

Teen Nutrition Councils provide input and strategic support to shape programs and initiatives to increase the healthfulness of their immediate and extended communities. If you or your students are interested in building a Teen Nutrition Council, consider the following options:

### Join an existing nutrition or wellness council

There may be existing programs in your community to connect with and join. To find out if a Teen Nutrition Council or similar initiative exists in your community, contact the following types of organizations for potential participation:

- Local governments (city or county)
- Community organizations (YMCA, Boys and Girls Club)
- Other schools or school districts

### Create your own Teen Nutrition Council

If there aren't any existing programs in your school or community, consider starting your own council! Here are some considerations to keep in mind when developing a program of this nature:

- **Who will participate?**
  - The council can be comprised of students only, or may have representatives from school faculty, staff, parents, and/or other community members. Determine whether this will be a student organization or a broader effort involving adults committed to supporting students' efforts.
- **How will student members be selected?**
  - Determine how members of the council will be selected. Potential options could include:
    - Nomination by teachers
    - Student vote
    - Student volunteers
  - Consider whether you are able to offer incentives to students for participation. Potential incentives could include:
    - Extra credit in class
    - Community service credit
    - Gift card from a local business (this would require coordination with local businesses for donations)
  - Determine the membership expectations for Council members
    - Number of meetings attended
    - Length of council terms
    - Expected time commitment to council activities

- **What is the structure of the group?**
  - *Number of members:* Depending on the size of the school and level of activity desired, you may want to include anywhere from 5 – 15 students.
  - *Student eligibility:* Determine whether you want broad representation of the student body (e.g., students from all grades), or if participation in the council is limited to students who are/have participated in a class using Power Up!
  
- **What are the goals for the organization and how will success be measured?**
  - Set goals for the council at the beginning. Have the students help decide what you're trying to accomplish and how it will be measured. For example, is the primary goal to increase student awareness of the benefits of healthy behaviors or add opportunities to make healthy choices?
  - Potential metrics could include:
    - Number of school events
    - Specific changes to school environment or cafeteria
    - Student participation in sponsored initiatives
  
- **What types of activities do you want to plan?**
  - School Environment Improvements
    - Build a school or community garden
    - Help create a healthy menu for extracurricular school activity (dinner dance, athletic banquet, etc.).
    - Post calorie and key nutrient information about cafeteria menu items
    - Post infographics and tip sheets around the school that focus on healthy eating and active lifestyles for teens.
    - Create a series of "Move More" tips and share as part of morning announcements
  
  - Events
    - School or community events that promote healthy choices, including but not restricted to:
      - Host a farmers market at the school
      - Organize a walk or bike to school day
      - Organize a school fundraiser based on sponsored participation in obstacle course, 5K walk, mini Olympics, etc.
      - Engage cafeteria staff to participate in a recipe makeover contest
  
  - Presentations
    - Presentations to local schools and community organizations on the Council's mission and work in the community as well as the importance of healthy decision making
    - Presentation from local businesses on healthy behaviors (e.g., a gym trainer, supermarket nutritionist, or doctor)
  
  - Community Service
    - Participation in local community service initiatives, such as volunteering at a food bank or after school program aimed at healthy and safe outdoor activity

A Teen Nutrition Council is what you and your students make of it. Power Up! is meant to instill life-long behaviors to make smart and healthful decisions for oneself and the larger community. A Teen Nutrition Council is a great way to continue the lessons learned within the classroom and begin to apply them to the larger environment.