

Background

Digital marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and adolescents is pervasive and undermines healthy eating.¹ Expanded use of electronic devices and remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased rates of childhood obesity, greatly impacted student learning, and exacerbated pre-existing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities.² Given the lack of federal protections, state and local policy interventions to limit digital food marketing in schools and on school-issued devices are needed.

Methods

We reviewed the literature on use of devices, educational technology, industry practices, school standards for digital devices and instructional materials. Several key informant interviews were conducted, and we determined how state policies apply to digital food marketing during education and via school-issued devices. We used legal research to identify policy gaps and promising areas for policy intervention. Recommendations were reviewed by experts before finalizing.

Results

Based on the literature review and legal research, four areas for potential practice and policy intervention were identified and we developed policy language that can be used by state and local education authorities.

Practices to Reduce Digital Food Marketing

Practice	Policy & Practice Mechanisms
<p>Content Filtering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include food-related content as a content filter category on school networks and school-issued devices. ● Utilize robust ad-blocking technology on school networks and all school-issued devices ● Prohibit downloading of food-related apps on school-issued devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State School Nutrition Policy ● Acceptable Use Policy ● Content Filtering Policy ● School-Issued Device Settings ● School Wellness Policy
<p>Digital Instructional Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do not use digital materials with food and beverage marketing or recommend their use by students ● Utilize a robust student privacy policy to minimize the collection of student data by digital materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State School Nutrition Policy ● School Wellness Policy ● Approved List of Digital Materials ● Private Contracts with Vendors ● School-Issued Device Settings ● State, School District or School Student Privacy Policy
<p>Communication with Parents & Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicate school-related and student activity-related information to parents and students on school-dedicated platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State, School District or School Electronic Communication or Social Media Policy ● School Wellness Policy
<p>Student-Owned Device Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand student-owned device polices to prohibit use during lunch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State, School or School District Cell Phone or Electronic Device Use Policy ● School Wellness Policy

Implications

Practices and policy recommendations were selected because they can be carried out by state and local education authorities and can be incorporated into policy mechanisms that already exist in many school districts.

Me enjoying my 3rd AriZona
A friend: Don't you think you've had enough?
Me: DoN't YoU tHiNk YoU'VE hAd EnOuGh?



Acknowledgements: We wish to thank Faith Boninger and Josh Golin for their invaluable help throughout this project . We also wish to thank Alex Molnar, Marlene Schwartz, Jim Siegl, Steven Smith, and Jennifer Emond for reviewing the draft policy and practice recommendations and. We thank Bridget Brett and Stephanie Benton for their help reviewing the literature. This project was funded by Healthy Eating Research, a national program of RWJF.

References

1. Chester J, Montgomery K, Kopp K. Big Food, Big Tech, and the Global Childhood Obesity Pandemic..
2. Jenssen BP, Kelly MK, Powell M, Bouchelle Z, Mayne SL, Fiks AG. COVID-19 and changes in child obesity. *Pediatrics*. 2021;147(5)