



Pick a **better** snack™ **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Pick a **better** snack™ was developed through a partnership of the Iowa Nutrition Education Network, Iowa Departments of Education and Public Health, Iowa State University Extension and the Iowa Dietetic Association. The program was patterned from the same concept as the Pizza Hut **Book It!**® National Reading Incentive Program. With **Book It!**®, children contract to read a certain number of books each month, depending on the grade level, and parents verify the achievement with their signature. When the verified reading list is returned to school, the student receives a coupon for a free personal pan pizza at Pizza Hut – dine-in only.

The purpose of Pick a **better** snack™ & ACT is to encourage children to try a variety of fruits and vegetables as snacks. The “& ACT” was later added to encourage physical activity. Pick a **better** snack™ & ACT includes four seasonally available fruits and vegetables featured each month. The BINGO-type card includes three snack ideas for each fruit and vegetable along, serving size information, and tips on selection and storage. The card gives twelve suggestions for seasonally appropriate physical activities that can be done at school or at home. A “BINGO” is accomplished when the child completes one row of the card, vertically, horizontally or diagonally. The parent is asked to sign the card verifying that the child ate the fruit and/or vegetable and participated in the activity as marked off on the card. The child receives an incentive item for the completed card indicating that he or she has explored the featured fruits and vegetables and activities of the month. “Ask Me About” stickers that display the fruit or vegetable of the month are given to children who taste the featured fruit or vegetable. “I Can” stickers, with a picture of the physical activity pictured on the bingo card, are given to students to encourage involvement in a variety of physical activities.

RETAILER ROLE

The child and parent will take the completed card to the participating retailer and redeem it for an incentive item. The ideal incentive item would be one of the four produce items featured the following month since parents may not purchase produce items that they are not sure their child will eat. Focus group research conducted in Iowa identified “unfamiliarity” and fear of waste as barriers to fruit and vegetable use. (Schafer, E. and Nelson, D. *Social Marketing Research: Recommendations for Delivering Nutrition and Physical Activity Messages to Low-Income Caregivers of Children Aged 2-12 Years*, March 1999).



Each participating grocery store is encouraged to have a designated *Pick a Better Snack* display featuring the snack of the week. The display should include consistent signage with the **Pick a better snack™ & ACT** program along with snack ideas and buying information. Coordinating weekly ads with the snack of the week at the local store level would be ideal.

SCHOOL ROLE

If your school is using **Pick a better snack™ & ACT** for the first time, it may be useful to introduce the program in selected classrooms, grade levels, and/or daycare homes. The classroom teacher or daycare provider issues **Pick a better snack™ & ACT** cards each month. A letter is sent home to parents explaining the details of the program. Sample letters along with the monthly BINGO cards are available at <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/pickabetersnack/>

Participating schools are encouraged to work with school food service personnel to offer the snack of the week on the lunch line and with physical education teachers to include activities from the list of twelve suggestions sometime during the month. Daycare providers are encouraged to include the snacks and physical activities from the **Pick a better snack™ & ACT** cards in their menus and recreational playtime. Summer participation is encouraged. The summer months' cards can be handed out at the end of the school year or downloaded from the web site.