

Soft Drinks and School-Age Children

Win with Milk Vending

Milk vending works! A pilot study was conducted in 2001 using 86 milk vending machines in middle and high schools in five regions of the country. Results show that 68% of the kids bought milk at least once and 30% bought milk at least once a week during the six-month long study. The average weekly sales per machine were 280 units. If you want to introduce milk vending in your schools, consider some of the things learned from these test schools.

Reasons kids like vended milk

- Portable, resealable, 16-oz. plastic bottles
- Very cold until dispensing - 37°F
- Freedom from waiting in lines
- Attractive containers
- Wide variety of flavors and fat contents
- Perceived as a cool beverage that kids get to select and buy
- Available throughout the day, before and after school

A few specifics on milk vending machines

- A vending machine costs about \$4,500. The maintenance and operational costs are about \$2,000 a year. Schools can make a profit of about \$2,300 - \$3,800 a year.
- The use of the colorful machine graphics, the got milk?[®] slogan and popular milk mustache teen celebrities are effective marketing strategies.
- Placement of the machines is important. High traffic areas with all-day access are optimal.
- The machines have a "Health Guard" feature. If the machine breaks down or loses power and the internal temperature goes above 40°F for more than 15-20 minutes, the machines automatically shut down and are unable to dispense milk.
- Vending machine milk did not take away from a la carte sales of milk - kids who bought vended milk indicated they would not have gone to the a la carte line. When asked what they would have purchased instead of vended milk, 37 percent of the students surveyed indicated carbonated soft drinks and 27 percent indicated fruit beverages.
- It's important to consider the school size, economic factors and machine access before deciding to install a milk vending machine. The minimum number of students needed to make it profitable is at least 750.
- There are a variety of models of operation for milk vending machines. These range from third-party operation to school self-operation. Key considerations in selecting the appropriate model include school size and volumetric potential. Be sure to research all options available to your schools.