

Letter to the Editor, "The Packer"
July 20, 2007

Dear Editor --

I agree with the message in your 7/16/07 editorial "Don't give up on the kids." Sure, some programs designed to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in schools have not worked as hoped, but others are working very well. Plus, key insights regarding the essential ingredients for success are beginning to emerge.

The fresh produce industry has important work to do in order to accelerate progress in shifting U.S. dietary patterns, especially among kids. Perhaps first and foremost, schools, food service staff -- and parents -- need reliable access to fruits and vegetables that taste really good, that are appealing, and that are fresh and ripe. Too many kids get turned off to fresh produce early, and for good reason. We need to develop and grow smaller apples and peaches, and other fresh produce items, so that a single fruit is not so intimidating to a five year old. We need to get more creative when incorporating fresh produce, nuts, and dried fruits into snacks, main courses, and deserts. And the no brainer of all times -- lets get the soda out and the fruit juice and milk into vending machines on school grounds.

Chuck Benbrook
Troy, Oregon