



ENGAGE WELL

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Students have the capacity to challenge conventional thinking, advocate for policies and change the social norms about the state of health within their school. They play a unique and valuable role in advocating for healthier school environments that contribute to an effective and comprehensive wellness action plan.



POLICY

Policy Requirements

The CPS Local School Wellness policy recommends that schools engage students in a variety of school wellness efforts, including starting a Student Wellness Team or having a student representative on the School Wellness Team.

Why is student engagement important?

Students are powerful allies and key partners in normalizing healthy lifestyles as well as important levers in determining the future of school health and wellness policies. Engaging students in this process will benefit the school as well as the students.

Schools benefit from student engagement in the following ways:

- Gain access to new and innovative ideas, strategies, and perspectives from students
- Unveil new energy and enthusiasm for a healthy school
- Evoke positive change that results in a healthier school environment
- Increase opportunities for students to make healthier choices
- Increase sustainability and support of wellness based programs and initiatives

In addition, students can benefit in the following ways:

- Learn the importance of living a healthy lifestyle
- Develop leadership and advocacy skills
- Enhance decision making skills
- Improve communication skills
- Build self-confidence and moral character development
- Foster critical and creative thinking
- Gain a sense of ownership over school policies
- Learn conflict resolution and problem solving skills
- Reduce risky and unhealthy behaviors

What does student engagement look like?

Student engagement looks different across all situations, however, using a Positive Youth Development Model is highly recommended to ensure the best outcomes for the school and the students. A Positive Youth Development Model is focused on a set of intentional strategies and practices that welcomes and encourages youth voice and participation. Creating an environment that is supportive of this model will engage and motivate students to become more actively involved in their education and school community. While working in partnership with students can foster a variety of benefits, challenges will arise. Remember to invite the students to help find solutions in order to resolve any issue. As a result, this approach will warrant a greater student investment in learning and enrich the quality of the school culture.

How do I engage students using this model?

When engaging students in creating change for their school, it is very important that their role is clearly defined. Ideally, an open forum should be created for students and adults to learn from each other. This forum will foster a partnership between students and adults that is based upon mutual respect. The role of the student should be valued and recognized as an integral part of the mission. Students' voices, opinions, interests, and struggles should contribute to the objective.

How do I recruit students?

It is important that students are not overlooked or undermined as valuable participants in school wellness efforts. Recruiting students to actively participate requires creativity and persistence.

1. Start by engaging a core group of students who are passionate about making their school a healthier place.
2. Use social networking sites, school clubs, service learning projects and community groups/events to recruit students.
3. Initiate a dialogue with students to understand their perspective and concerns. Adults should take a step back and allow the students to discuss what health related topics they are interested in or have questions about. Do not make assumptions or generalizations. Try these activities to initiate dialogue with students:
 - Ask direct questions
 - Discussion groups
 - Surveys
 - Reflective writing
 - Ice breaker activities
4. Adults must be intentional in using the information collected as the basis of discussions or future projects. Conversations with students should always have a purpose that relates back to the subject or goal. Students tend to feel more engaged when they see their voice is being heard and their opinions valued.
5. It is imperative that the partnership between adults and students be built on mutual respect and trust. This means holding students accountable as well as holding yourself accountable.
6. Offer incentives for participation or include interesting and fun activities to help recruit and retain participation.
7. Students can act as the main source of outreach to recruit more students. Remember, *positive participation yields positive participation!*



TIPS TO HELP JUMPSTART YOUR STUDENT WELLNESS TEAM

Use these resources to help recruit, launch, and build your Student Wellness Team:

- Use an initial survey to understand how your students feel about their health and the environment in which they learn. This will also give you an idea about who might be interested in participating in the Student Wellness Team and in what capacity.
- Asset maps can be an effective way to understand the resources and tools that are available at your school to support the efforts of the Student Wellness Team. Asset maps identify all of the positive aspects of the school and its community that can be utilized to organize change. This will help guide an asset-based approach to creating a successful Student Wellness Team.
- Identify your school Wellness Champion and determine if your school already has a Wellness Team that students can support or collaborate with. The Wellness Champion may also serve as a supportive adult for the Student Wellness Team.
- Create an action plan that focuses on student input and student voice. This action plan should include SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely) and action steps directed at each goal. In addition to the action plan, creating group expectations will ensure your group is working together in the most effective ways.

How am I doing?

[Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation](#) is the most widely used tool to measure the level of youth engagement and involvement within a group. This tool is very straightforward and easy to use. Ask the students where they believe they fall on the ladder and compare their perception of their involvement to your own. You should always be aiming for the top tier of the ladder.

Remember to check in frequently with the students to reassess and reevaluate the level of participation in the Student Wellness Team.



RESOURCE

Mikva Challenge Teen Health Council Resources

Mikva Challenge is a local non-profit organization that develops youth to be informed, empowered, and active citizens. The Mikva Challenge Teen Health Council created the [Youth Wellness Team Toolkit](#) that provides great resources to help support your Student Wellness Team. This toolkit was created *for students by students!*

In addition, Mikva Challenge and the Chicago Department of Public Health present [Be You Media](#), an online blog of young Chicago voice on health and wellness.

BRIGHT
IDEAS

Bright Ideas for CPS Schools: Student-Led Wellness Efforts

Below are some practical suggestions to engage students in both small and large scale efforts to make your school a healthier and happier place to learn.

- Always have at least one student representative on your School Wellness Team.
- Create a youth led Wellness Team or youth based division of your School Wellness Team.
- Delegate a Wellness Chair on the Student Council.
- Host focus groups or create a forum or safe space for students to identify and discuss issues that are important to them.
- Encourage active transportation to and from school (i.e. biking or walking).
- Have students make daily or weekly healthy announcements.
- Allow students to create a wellness bulletin board to raise awareness about important issues or events.
- Ask students to create posters or flyers that promote healthy habits and display them around the school.
- Provide students with the opportunity to direct and perform skits or raps that focus on wellness related topics.
- Host (with the help of student organizers) events and activities that promote physical activity such as non-competitive sports events, dances or healthy fundraisers.
- Sponsor and support a youth led after school health club (i.e. walking club, fitness club, nutrition club).
- Ask students to create and lead classroom physical activity breaks or lunch time physical activity breaks.
- Offer a civic engagement class to focus on community wide health and wellness efforts.



RESOURCE

Additional Student Engagement Resources

Use these resources as a **guide to engage and support the invaluable work that students at your school can do to initiate a positive change toward a healthy school environment.**

Action for Healthy Kids: Students Taking Charge is a national movement of high school students putting their passion for eating right, being active and living healthy into making their schools a healthier place. Visit the Students Taking Charge website to download the Students Taking Charge Facilitator's Guide for more information.

Alliance for a Healthier Generation offers some great insight around empowering young people to take action around health and wellness.

After School All Stars provides a framework for youth empowered, health-based after school programming. This framework is primarily for elementary school children.

Girls in the Game is a local organization that provides and promotes sports and fitness opportunities, nutrition and health education, and leadership development to enhance overall health and well-being of girls. They offer a variety of programs to support your school community.

HYPE: Healthy You, Positive Energy is a youth campaign out of Philadelphia that is designed to engage students in setting and obtaining wellness goals. HYPE encourages middle school and high school students to get involved in making healthy changes in their schools and communities through Youth Wellness Councils.

ENGAGING PARENTS IN SCHOOL WELLNESS

Healthy, active and well-nourished children are more likely to attend school, be engaged and be ready to learn. And with strong family engagement, schools, together with parents, can help students achieve academically while being fueled by healthy habits that will last a lifetime. Although engaging parents can often be challenging for schools with many competing priorities, it's important to build a school culture that works thoughtfully and deliberately to form respectful, reciprocal relationships with families.

EngageWELL offers six ways to work with families on school wellness, to increase student health and academic achievement.



CPS Policy Guidance for Engaging Parents

The CPS Local School Wellness Policy recommends that schools engage parents in a variety of school wellness efforts, including serving on School Wellness Teams.

Why is it important for parents to be engaged in their child's school?

Studies have shown that students who have parents engaged in their school lives are more likely to have:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better student behavior
- Enhanced social skills

In addition, students who have parents engaged in their school lives are less likely to

- Smoke cigarettes
- Drink alcohol
- Become pregnant
- Be physically inactive
- Be emotionally distressed

How Chicago Parents Have Engaged in School Wellness

Parent voices can transform education and school environments. In Chicago, Healthy Schools Campaign and a group of parents from Chicago's Latino and African-American communities founded Parents United for Healthy Schools. Out of concern for health disparities and the skyrocketing rates of childhood obesity, Parents United brings together parents, educators and community leaders from across Chicago to speak up for school wellness from a social justice perspective. Since 2006, Parents United has garnered national recognition for its role in transforming food and fitness in Chicago's schools. Its good work has been honored by the White House, celebrated by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, one of the world's largest philanthropic private foundations, and applauded by local leaders such as Cook County Commissioner Jesus "Chuy" Garcia and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

CPS parents have been particularly key in helping their schools become "Healthy School Certified" and improve the food and fitness environment through Go for the Gold, a partnership of CPS and Healthy Schools Campaign which used the USDA's HealthierUS School Challenge, a key element of First Lady Michelle Obama's effort to address childhood obesity. By the end of the three year initiative, which successfully finished in Summer 2013, 120 schools received recognition from the USDA for meeting the HealthierUS School Challenge. As a result, over 90,000 students in more than 40 percent of CPS elementary schools are benefiting from significant improvements to school food, nutrition education, physical activity and physical education (PE).

Hundreds of parents have made a difference for children's health by becoming leaders in the effort to create healthy school environments. Thousands more have lent their support by signing petitions, attending meetings and speaking up for school wellness.

SIX WAYS TO WORK WITH FAMILIES ON SCHOOL WELLNESS

STRATEGY ONE: Provide Parenting Support

Help parents learn and understand how nutrition and physical activity affect their child's health and success in school. This step is critical to getting families involved in improving nutrition and physical activity opportunities at school, as well as supporting the implementation of CPS school wellness policies.

Actions schools can take:

Ask parents about their needs, interests and desired involvement. For example, your school may want to start out with a parent interest survey or fold one into an existing assessment that asks parents questions about their needs and interests. See the Parent Interest Survey on page 110.

Provide a variety of learning opportunities. Offer, or collaborate with nonprofits to provide, opportunities for families to learn about topics such as understanding child and adolescent development; the impact of nutrition and physical activity on a student's ability to learn; setting expectations for appropriate healthy behavior and academic performance, and healthy cooking/fitness tips. These opportunities can be a workshop dedicated to a topic or can be softly folded into already-planned activities, such as report card pick-up day. See page 115 for a Parent Communication Calendar that includes suggestions of workshop topics.

Connect classroom learning to the home. Provide parents the opportunity to relate directly to lessons taught in student health and PE classes. Have teachers, both PE and classroom teachers, commit to hosting one learning opportunity for parents to understand the content being taught to students.

STRATEGY TWO: Communicate with Parents

Schools should actively incorporate wellness information and healthy messages into existing communication channels such as school newsletters, report cards, school web sites, and so on. The most common interactive communication between educators and parent may occur during parent-teacher conferences, open houses and various school-based community activities. Of course, communication also goes beyond just words. A friendly atmosphere allows parents to openly communicate with schools about their children's health, wellness concerns and progress.

Actions schools can take:

Examine how the school currently communicates with parents and decide which channels will incorporate healthy messages and information about wellness activities. For example, add a "Wellness Corner" to the school's monthly newsletters in Spanish and English.

Use a theme-based approach for parent communication around health and wellness initiatives. For example, in the spring schools can focus on healthy summer beverages and fun physical activities, as students are getting ready for summer vacation.

Provide opportunities for two-way feedback from parents on health-related topics. Establish multiple mechanisms for gathering opinions from parents such as on-site suggestion boxes, annual parent surveys, parent/teacher focus groups and school-sponsored parent blogs.

Communicate with Parents Tool + Resources:

- Parent Communication Calendar around Health and Wellness – In the Resource Section, a template outlines a possible theme-based approach towards parent communication about health and wellness.

STRATEGY THREE: Provide a Variety of Volunteer Opportunities

Engaging parents as school volunteers is essential to building capacity in the community and ultimately improving health and wellness. Parents can enrich health and PE classes, improve the delivery of health services and help create safe and healthy environments for students.

Actions schools can take:

- Involve parents and guardians in writing the required Healthy Celebrations and Fundraising policy. Involving parents at the onset of the creation of new plans will create more parent support for these positive changes.
- Encourage parents to serve as mentors, coaching assistants, monitors, chaperones, and tutors for school health activities. Parents can be excellent role models for students by modeling healthy behaviors to incorporate into daily life.
- Accommodate a variety of parents' schedules and talents. Provide opportunities for parents to lead health and wellness activities with students on sports teams; to lead a lunchtime walk, or to lead an after-school health and wellness activity, such as school gardening. Offer volunteer work that can be completed at home. For example, enlist volunteers to coordinate phone call reminders about wellness events.

Provide a Variety of Volunteer Opportunities Tools + Resources:

- Parent Interest Survey: In the Resource Section, a survey is available for your school to modify and use to gauge parent interests, needs and skills about volunteering in the school.

STRATEGY FOUR: Support Learning at Home

Encouraging parents to maintain health and wellness activities in the home can increase the likelihood that students receive consistent messages at home and in school. Schools can support this learning through educational and community-based tools.

Actions schools can take:

Train staff to develop education strategies that involve parents in healthy learning experiences. Teachers can provide interactive health-homework assignments that encourage parent participation and increase the likelihood of health-related conversations with students and parents. Teachers can provide suggestions for health-related activities for families, including cooking dinner and packing lunch, shopping for healthy foods and exercising together.

Identify health promotion projects in the community that could involve parents. School staff can promote and advertise community health and wellness activities such as 5K's, walkathons, farmers markets, and community clean-ups for families to participate in together.

Encourage students to teach their parents. Students can be the most important tool to engage parents around health and wellness. School staff can energize students to show their parents the health and wellness tools they learn in school and encourage them to use these tools at home.

Support Learning at Home Tools + Resources:

- Parent Communication Calendar around Health and Wellness: In the Resource Section, a template outlines a possible theme-based approach towards parent communication about health and wellness.

STRATEGY FIVE: Empower Parents to be Part of Decision-Making

Principals can reach out through organizations that have existing relationships with parents, such as Healthy Schools Campaign or other community-based nonprofit organizations. Parents can also be tapped as resources in health and wellness decisions such as developing school health policies; emergency crisis and safety plans; health and safety messages; health curriculum; and beverage selection for school breakfast and lunches.

Actions schools can take:

Partner with a community-based nonprofit. Community organizations and nonprofits often have strong track records of working with parents and can be valuable allies and assist with leadership development of parents.

Create a parent-led wellness team. By working as part of a wellness team, parents can be the face of health and wellness initiatives in your school. The ideal team is parent-driven helping address parents' needs and concerns. The team can increase peer-to-peer interaction with other parents, creating a comfortable environment for parents to engage. Again, working with an experienced nonprofit organization such as Healthy Schools Campaign can make this happen.

Enlist parents in identifying school wellness and safety priorities. Parents have vital knowledge of communities' needs, and they should be used as a resource for insight into how these issues can be addressed. Create opportunities for focus groups to receive feedback from parents on community-specific needs that can be addressed by schools. Or use the Parent Interest Survey in the Resource Section.

STRATEGY SIX: Collaborate with the Community

The work of schools can be strengthened by organizations that support students' academic, physical, social and emotional development, as well as provide services and support to families and parents. School and district leaders must draw on all the resources of our city and neighborhoods: nonprofits and businesses; universities and community groups; faith-based leaders and government officials; philanthropists and activists.

Actions schools can take:

Create a system that links families to community health and social service resources, activities and events. Create a public bulletin area that allows families to search for community health and social service resources, activities and events.

Collaborate with community partners to provide health services at school that meet the needs of students and their families. Identify the health needs of students and their families (e.g. dental services, immunizations, health screenings, substance abuse treatment) and invite relevant community partners to talk with parents.

Encourage community businesses and organizations to sponsor service learning opportunities and other projects that enable students, staff and parents to contribute to the health of the school and community. Promote parent engagement through community-based events that encourage health and wellness. Encourage these events to be used as a "family volunteering" opportunity.

Collaborate with Community Tools + Resources:

- Steps to Creating a Wellness Fair – In the Resource Section, you will find a step-by-step guide to hosting a school wellness fair full of resources.



The third pillar of the Chicago Public Schools five-year action plan states:

For students to achieve at the highest level, the district needs engaged and empowered families and communities. Parents must be empowered as leaders who can advocate for their children and for all the community's children. Meanwhile, school and district leaders must be resourceful in identifying community partners who can support children's growth and learning.



Additional Tools And Resources

[Case Studies](#)

[Parent Interest Survey](#)

[Pulse Check: Your School + Parents](#)

[Parent Communication Calendar around Health and Wellness](#)

[Steps to Creating a Wellness Fair](#)

BRIGHT
IDEAS

Bright Ideas from CPS: Parenting Support

Madero Middle School: Helping Parents Be Role Models of Wellness

At Madero Middle School in Chicago, parents, school staff and Principal Jose Luis Illanes are all constantly looking for ways to create a healthier school environment. One of the parents in the Madero community suggested starting a series of healthy cooking classes for parents. Illanes liked the idea and began conversations with Jovita Flores of Parents United for Healthy Schools to begin the process of making that happen.

“I believe that as a principal, you have to be conscious about the importance of healthy eating so that you can promote it,” Illanes says. “I thought that it was something good for our families and was something that was going to change their eating habits in a positive way.”

Classes run once or twice a month, depending on participation, and always coincide with the Local School Council meetings, so parents who attend the meetings have easy access to class afterward. Between 40 and 50 parents from the community usually attend, and the classes are open to parents from other schools, not just Madero.

Flores says parents share beloved dishes from their traditions and culture, but then they also highlight ways to make simple ingredient substitutions that promote healthier eating.

“We wanted to make people aware of the importance of using healthy ingredients in their cooking,” Illanes says. “For example, let’s say if rice is part of the home cooking tradition, they can always have wild rice or brown rice instead of refined white rice, for more fiber.”

Two of the keys to making the Healthy Cooking Club successful: The classes were initially held in parents’ homes, until parents worked with Illanes to secure Madero’s culinary arts classroom, which the school had originally planned to get rid of. Also, in the first year of the Cooking Club, the school partnered with St. Anthony Hospital to supply an instructor and valuable wellness resources for parents. Now, parents have taken over the club. Parents United for Healthy Schools has assumed leadership, with parents from the community sharing their delicious, healthy recipes.

What advice do you have for other principals to engage families around integrating wellness education into the school day?

- Remember to be a role model. Flores advises principals to remember that they should work together and model healthy habits at home and at school.
- Schedule wellness-focused events on the same day as other meetings. The Madero Healthy Cooking Club classes were typically held on days where there was also a Local School Council meeting.
- Always put the wellbeing of students first. “We are living in a society and at a time when obesity is becoming a real concern,” Illanes says. “Anything we can do at the local schools to help parents develop a good conscience around healthy eating is part of our responsibility.”

What resources would you recommend on this issue?

- Illanes cites the work of Parents United for Healthy Schools as a powerful resource. “It’s a large group of people with ideas and resources to help schools,” he says.
- Flores advises principals to reach out to other community organizations. Partnerships with a local hospital, local chefs and culinary organizations have been particularly helpful.

BRIGHT
IDEAS

Bright Ideas from CPS: Provide a Variety of Volunteer Opportunities

Greene Elementary: Parents Unite for Community Health Fair

When parents share and implement ideas, they can help make entire communities healthier. In 2012, the parent-driven wellness team at Nathanael Greene Elementary School organized a school health fair, bringing together parents, students and community partners for this dynamic event.

The wellness team's members served as role models for other parents and provided resources to support families in making healthy choices at home. "It's really impressive to see the vision from the adults and their desire to make it real and do whatever it takes," Heidkamp says.

The fair highlighted the parent wellness team as a resource for the whole school. Parents, teachers and other school leaders look to the committee for information and encouragement in making healthy decisions for the school and students. They worked with community partners to bring in vision and blood glucose testing and with cafeteria staff to provide healthy snacks.

Students provided the entertainment for the evening, with presentations from the karate, soccer, yoga, and folkloric dance after-school physical activity programs. Heidkamp found combining the student performance with the health fair to be especially advantageous: proud parents would attend to see their children perform, leading to more parents participating and learning about these great wellness resources.

What advice do you have for other principals to engage families on integrating wellness education into the school day?

- Incorporate wellness into already popular school events. When Greene held a school science fair earlier this year, Heidkamp and parent organizers worked to include a wellness component. Integrating wellness into existing events makes the inclusion feel more natural and reinforces wellness as a cornerstone of school culture.
- Understand and respect the culture and traditions of the communities you serve. "Our communities bring a real history and tradition that we need to understand as part of creating change," Heidkamp says. "The first step is an appreciation of what is already there."

What resources would you recommend on this issue?

- Heidkamp says his greatest resources have been Healthy Schools Campaign, the parents at Greene who have been some of the school's strongest wellness advocates and other principals who have shared their experiences and ideas.



ADDITIONAL PARENT ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

TOOLS SCHOOLS CAN USE

Parent Health And Wellness Survey: How To Use This Tool

Purpose

This tool provides a snapshot of the types of wellness activities that interest parents.

Customizing The Survey

The survey is available in English and in Spanish. The survey can also be modified to fit your school's needs. Please feel free to add, modify and remove questions.

Who To Survey

Distribute the survey to a manageable but representative group of parents at large. Plan ahead and coordinate to conduct the survey at an existing meeting where parents are already in attendance. You can enlist the help of the Wellness Team to explain the purpose of the survey, distribute it and collect and analyze results.

When To Survey

We suggest that the Parent Health and Wellness Survey be distributed at the start of the school year so that activities and learning opportunities can be planned accordingly for the remainder of the school year.

Use The Data To Create A Plan Of Action

Survey participants expect to be informed about the survey results. With the help of your Wellness Team, collect and analyze survey results, then use the data to inform the types of parent wellness activities and learning opportunities that your school will offer throughout the year. Create your plan of action and share with survey participants and others.



FYI

Did you know?

Today's students are likely to eat more than 4,000 school meals by the time they graduate from high school. With each meal comes the opportunity to guide students toward a lifelong relationship with healthy food. Learn more at bit.ly/CPS-Pathways.



PLAN

HANDOUT: PARENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS SURVEY

	NOT INTERESTED	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED	NEUTRAL	INTERESTED	VERY INTERESTED	DON'T KNOW
OVERALL WELLNESS						
SCREENING PROGRAMS						
BMI-wellness testing (Body mass index, BMI, is a measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to adult men and women, and can be useful in gauging fitness levels.)						
Blood pressure checks						
Growth screening						
Vision/hearing screening						
FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS						
Emotional support						
Financial management						
Stress/anger management (e.g. understanding child and adolescent development, the impact of nutrition and physical activity on a student's ability to learn, setting expectations for appropriate healthy behavior and academic performance, and modeling healthy behaviors around healthy cooking and fitness tips)						
FITNESS						
Family fitness classes (opportunities for families to spend time together while being active and leading a healthy lifestyle by example)						
Presentations on fitness (tips for properly exercising)						
Learning about your student's PE program and how to reinforce the learning at home						



PLAN

HANDOUT: PARENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS SURVEY

	NOT INTERESTED	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED	NEUTRAL	INTERESTED	VERY INTERESTED	DON'T KNOW
ON-SITE FITNESS PROGRAMS						
Strength/resistance exercise program that improves muscle and bone strength. Free weights: Routines with barbells, dumbbells Strength training with bodyweight: exercises using little or no equipment like pushups, pull-ups, abdominal crunches and leg squats. Weight machines: Routines done inside the school's fitness center						
Flexibility exercise program that improves joint and muscle flexibility. Yoga Stretching Routines						
Exercise program that improves endurance and stamina, such as Brisk walking or jogging club Zumba, aerobics team sports (i.e. basketball, volleyball)						
NUTRITION						
Healthy cooking classes (healthy family meal planning, healthy snacks, and more)						
Weight management programs (diet and exercise)						
Presentations on nutrition, nutrition label reading						
Learning about the school meal program, including nutrition standards and menus.						
Strategies to reinforce classroom learning around healthy habits at home						



PLAN

HANDOUT: PARENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS SURVEY

	NOT INTERESTED	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED	NEUTRAL	INTERESTED	VERY INTERESTED	DON'T KNOW
PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMS						
During school hours						
After school hours						
Weekends						

Helping With School Wellness

Are you interested in these volunteer opportunities?

	DEFINITELY	MAYBE	I WOULD NOT VOLUNTEER
VOLUNTEERING TO IMPROVE SCHOOL WELLNESS			
Become a member of the Wellness Team			
Volunteer to monitor recess			
Volunteer at the annual Wellness Fair			
Help organize health-promoting fundraisers			
Help organize monthly health and wellness seminars or workshops			

Your input is very important to our school's success. Please provide any other interests or suggestions you may have for health promotion programs on the back of this page.



PLAN

PULSE CHECK: YOUR SCHOOL AND PARENTS

This is a quick and easy survey to assess how well your school is engaging and involving parents in school wellness activities. The checklist takes less than 5 minutes to complete!

Engaging parents in their children's school lives is essential to children's success in the classroom and to their overall health. Studies have shown that parent engagement in schools can promote positive education and health behaviors among children and adolescents. In addition, school efforts to promote learning and health among students have been shown to be more successful when parents are involved. How is your school doing?

	YES/NO	WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS	WHAT CAN YOUR SCHOOL DO?
ACTIONS TO CONNECT WITH PARENTS			
Does the school have a friendly, welcoming environment for parents to participate in and contribute? Do parents have a dedicated space in the school?			
Do school staff view parents as assets to their mission and, subsequently, as assets to the school wellness mission? Does the school mission reflect the importance of parent engagement?			
Is there an established school parent engagement plan? For example, the school established a parent engagement plan with the help of a dedicated team that assists in implementing, and continually improving the school parent engagement plan. This plan would include parent activities, workshops and outgoing communication around health and wellness for the entire school year.			
Does your school ask parents about their skills and talents, as well as needs, interests regarding the health of their children, healthy family lifestyles, and other wellness topics parents may be interested in learning more about? See the Parent Wellness Interest Survey in the Resource Section.			
Does your school ask parents how they would like to be involved? Does the school provide a variety of volunteer opportunities (e.g. encourage parents to serve as mentors, coaching assistants, monitors, chaperones, help with phone call reminders, school fundraising)?			



PLAN

PULSE CHECK: YOUR SCHOOL AND PARENTS

	YES/NO	WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS	WHAT CAN YOUR SCHOOL DO?
Does the school have clear, consistent communication channels that encourage parents to get involved? For example, the school has a parent event and communication calendar for the entire school year announcing events and helpful information. Please see the following sample communication calendar.			
Is school staff required to create a parent engagement plan for their respective classrooms? Do school staff members develop and implement family-based education strategies that involve parents in discussions that relate directly to lessons taught in-class and in PE class (e.g., homework assignments that involve parent participation and health-promotion projects in the community)?			
Does the school involve parents on the school Wellness Team and/or other school groups dedicated to helping the school make decisions that improve the health and wellbeing of students?			
Does your school offer or collaborate with nonprofits to provide parents with seminars, workshops, and information on health and wellness topics, such as understanding child and adolescent development; the impact of nutrition and physical activity on a student's ability to learn; or workshops that relate directly to lessons taught in health education and PE classes?			

PARENT COMMUNICATION CALENDAR AROUND SCHOOL WELLNESS

AUGUST

Theme: Get parents on board! Kick off the School Year in a Healthier Way

by setting parent expectations about school wellness initiatives and the required wellness policies.

- As part of the back-to-school days, inform parents about the required wellness policies, especially the fundraising, celebrations and rewards requirements. This is also a good opportunity to lay out the health and wellness activities that will be available regularly throughout the year, and what health and wellness curriculum students will be experiencing.
- Having beginning of the year staff meetings? Conduct a meeting dedicated to parent communication around health and wellness for teachers. Delegate tasks to staff related to health and wellness communication. For example, establish who will write a health and wellness section of the newsletter.

Suggested Workshop and Activities:

- Invite parents to join the school Wellness Team, along with the Local School Council, to create the required Healthy Celebration and Fundraising Plan. This plan will guide the school's efforts in promoting healthy fundraisers that minimize the use of candy and snacks for fundraising purposes. Host an informative and action-planning workshop on the topic.
- Distribute the Parent Health and Wellness Survey, found on page 102.

SEPTEMBER

Theme: Healthy and Ready to Learn

Establishing a school environment that encourages all students and their families to make healthy eating choices and be physically active throughout the school year.

- The beginning of the year is a great time to inform parents about upcoming and regularly scheduled wellness activities, such as workshops, wellness team meetings and health screenings. By providing learning opportunities for parents to learn about and practice healthier lifestyles, schools can engage families in the school's nutrition education initiatives and expand parent awareness, support and involvement around the nutrition education goals in their child's school, as well as create a greater understanding of the wellness policy requirements the school must adhere to.
- Nationally, the month of September is designated as a time to raise awareness about childhood obesity and the importance of fruits and veggies, whole grains, and family fitness. Through multiple channels communicate to parents this month's national campaigns and how they can help celebrate them at school or at home. For example, send home tips on how to incorporate more fruits and veggies at home, plus a list of fruits and vegetables that are in season.

Suggested Workshop and Activities:

- Healthy Students are Better Learners Workshop: Have school staff host an interactive workshop with parents on how childhood obesity negatively impacts the child's quality of life and school performance.

- **Healthy Cooking for You and the Family:** Invite families for a night of healthy cooking. Demonstrate how a favorite household recipe can be made healthier.
- **Yoga and You:** Host an introduction to yoga class for parents and demonstrate how teachers can incorporate yoga in the classroom, too.
- **Family Fitness:** Promote family fitness day as an opportunity for families to exercise together! Bring in a personal trainer to demonstrate workouts that families can do together and give more information on the importance of physical exercise.

OCTOBER

Theme: What's for Breakfast and Lunch? Understanding the School Meal Program.

The issue of healthy school meals is of great importance given that more than 85 percent of Chicago Public Schools students are low-income and qualify for federally subsidized meals, with many of these students relying on schools for most of their meals.

- Through the school's communication channels send information to parents on the [nutrition standards](#) for school meals and how they can encourage their child to eat more of the fruits and veggies at school and at home.
- As part of National School Lunch Week, which is celebrated in October, invite parents for a tour of the cafeteria or an opportunity to learn more about the school meals program, and perhaps even sample the school meals! You may want to even organize a Take your Parent to Lunch day. Follow this link, to get a downloadable summary of the CPS School Meal program: bit.ly/CPS-Pathways.
- Be sure to communicate with parents in the newsletter, calendar and through social media to reinforce celebration policies; provide alternatives to unhealthy food and beverages at Halloween parties; and suggest healthier ways to celebrate the holiday at home.

Suggested Workshop and Activities:

- **School Food 101:** Create a learning opportunity for parents to learn about the school meal program by inviting a representative CPS Nutrition Support Services to come speak at your school. In particular, have CPS highlight the farm-to school efforts in the school meal program.
- **Take your Parent to Lunch Day:** Invite parents for a tour of the cafeteria or an opportunity to learn more about the school meals program, and perhaps even sample the school meals!
- **Healthy Halloween Fall Festival:** Instead of the usual candy-filled Halloween celebrations, invite parents to help the school host a no-candy Halloween Fall Festival where the eighth graders create different stations with activities and games, such as face painting, hula hooping, a bean-bag toss, "guess the body part," and a scarecrow photo station. Students buy tickets for the different activities or a wristband which will give them unlimited access to all the activities.



National Campaigns

National School Lunch Week October 13-19
schoolnutrition.org

NOVEMBER

Theme: Connect Healthy Classroom Learning to the Home

Parent-teacher conferences are this month. This is a great time to have teachers utilize face-to-face communication to tell parents about health and wellness initiatives in their classrooms and invite them to be a part of it. This also provides an opportunity for parents to ask questions!

Suggested Workshop and Activities:

- Provide parents the opportunity to relate directly to lessons taught in student health and PE classes. Have teachers, both PE and classroom teachers, commit to hosting one learning opportunity this month for parents to understand the content being taught to students, but also to engage them in learning about tips for better nutrition and physical activity.

DECEMBER

Theme: Healthy Celebrations Make for Life Lessons

Remind parents about the school's policy on healthy celebrations. Give guidance to parents on finding a fun focus, other than food, at celebrations. When schools reinforce healthy habits in the classroom, students learn consistent lessons that can last a lifetime.

Suggested Workshops and Activities:

- In a pre-holiday newsletter, reinforce healthy celebration policies for holiday parties, as well as health and wellness activities that will be coming up after the holiday break.
- Have classroom teachers invite parents to support the classroom celebration plan by designating tasks and responsibilities.

JANUARY

Theme: A Healthier New You! Commit to Being Fit.

The new year has started! Motivate parents to get reinvigorated and on track with their wellness goals by generating excitement for upcoming events, fundraisers, and more.

Suggested Workshops and Activities:

- Halfway through the school year is also an excellent time to gain feedback from parents on how school and staff members are promoting health and wellness to students and families. Hold an evening meeting that allows parents to talk face-to-face with teachers and staff to provide feedback.
- New Year's resolutions are popular during this time of year, so create resolutions around health and wellness for your school and families. Promote these goals through existing communication channels and provide a documentation system so families can show their progress. Provide prizes for families who meet these goals!

FEBRUARY

Theme: School Fundraising That's Healthy for Our Community and the Bottom Line

School fundraising sends a strong message that can either support or detract from school-wide wellness efforts. Experience shows that schools have many options for successfully raising money while keeping school wellness a priority — without relying on sales of unhealthy foods. Invite parents to support a health-promoting fundraiser! February is designated Heart Month by the American Heart Association, perhaps the school can sponsor a "Jump Rope for Hearts" event with the help of parents.

Suggested Workshops and Activities:

- Invite parents to organize a healthy fundraiser. Ideas can include any number of [Fill in the blank!]-athon, a healthy kids dance or creating and selling edible fruit arrangements.

MARCH

Theme: The Benefits of Breakfast: Health & Academics

The month of March features National School Breakfast Week. Research shows that eating breakfast is critical to student health and learning. There is significant evidence of positive academic effects due to breakfast consumption. Schools experience improvements in standardized test scores and improvements in school attendance in addition to other outcomes that create positive learning environments. The federally-funded School Breakfast Program is a cost-effective strategy to help all students learn, grow, and achieve. Invite parents in for breakfast to learn how they can make sure their student is eating breakfast, not only on standardized testing days but for the entire school year.

Suggested Workshops and Activities:

- National School Breakfast Week: Hold a morning event so parents can eat with their children and hold a brief discussion with families on the importance of breakfast and how it can improve academic performance. Work with your school dining manager to send tip sheets home with students that provide info for making and eating a healthy breakfast every day.
- National Nutrition Month: Utilize email and social media to promote national nutrition month. Incorporate nutrition into all of your contact with parents. Hold a seminar on nutrition standards and how these can be met in a low-cost, efficient way.

APRIL

Theme: Greening our Schools for our Kids and our Planet

Green schools save money, conserve energy and water, and foster better-performing, healthier students. In the month of April, focus on how the school community can enhance environmental education and civic engagement. Great ways to involve the community and students in developing a respectful and admiring relationship with our planet include: growing a garden, hosting a recycling fair, or starting a no food waste initiative. Incorporate information on environmental education this month as we move into the spring months. Hold an event, or promote events that serve as volunteer opportunities for parents and students to celebrate Earth Day and the environment. Provide information on the benefits of protecting the environment on an individual, family and community level. Include what your school is doing to improve the school environment.

Suggested Workshops and Activities:

- The ABC's of School Gardens Workshop: April is a great time to start thinking about a summer garden. Provide parents with an overview of the benefits and responsibilities of a school garden, and decide if the school would like to have one.
- Host a Recycling Drive a Green Fundraiser, such as selling energy efficient light bulbs or similar items.
- Inquire about CPS programs that aim to decrease school meal food waste and increase healthy food access, such as Love Food Hate Waste.



National Campaigns

National Environmental Education Week April 14-20

Earth Day April 22

MAY

Theme: Active Communities, Healthier Students

May is the month to promote physical activity! National Bike Month, National Physical Education Week, National Physical Fitness and Sports Month and Bike to Work Week are all held in May. The weather is also getting warmer, so now is a great time to get parents to school where they can engage with their children in physical activity events. Hold a walkathon and offer informational seminars to parents on physical activity-related topics

Suggested Workshop and Activities:

- Organize and invite families to take the Presidential Active Lifestyles Award Challenge, along with their students. The challenge is for six short weeks, and the school will be more active, making better food choices and feeling great. Adults commit to meeting the daily activity goal of 30 minutes of physical activity a day, at least five days a week, for six weeks. Students commit to meeting the daily activity goal of 60 minutes of physical activity a day, at least five days a week, for six out of eight weeks. As an alternative, they can count daily activity steps using a pedometer (girls' goal: 11,000; boys' goal: 13,000).
- Physical Education Workshop: Invite parents to experience a PE class with their kids and provide information about PE and the benefits to academic performance.
- Family Fitness: Promote family fitness day as an opportunity for families to exercise together! Bring in a personal trainer to demonstrate workouts that families can do together and give more information on the importance of physical exercise

JUNE

Theme: Celebrating Success

It's important to celebrate the health promoting journey your school has embarked on this year. Provide an opportunity to celebrate success and for parents to share feedback and offer suggestions concerning school wellness for the next school year. Also share ideas with families to enjoy the sun and stay healthy for the next few months, while school is out.

Suggested Workshops and Activities:

- Wellness Party: Throw a celebratory event for all those involved in the school's wellness efforts. Have fun relaxing activities planned, as well as delicious treats available.
- Communicate to families about resources for physical activity, along with health and wellness



National Campaigns

Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
www.aafa.org

National Bike Month
Bike to Work Week May 13-17
bikeleague.org

National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
fitness.gov

National Physical Education and Sports Week May 1-7
aahperd.org

programming over the summer.

- Inform families about free summer meal programs funded by the USDA that will be operating at hundreds of sites, including public schools, community and recreation centers, churches and parks. Even after schools close their doors to prepare for the new school year, many other public sites remain open through August. For information about locations and dates in your area, contact the Illinois Hunger Coalition at 1-800-359-2163 or visit the [CPS Summer Food Program website](#).

10 STEPS TO HOSTING A SCHOOL WELLNESS FAIR

A school wellness fair can be a great way to engage the whole school community around promoting a healthy lifestyle. Here's a quick guide to the basic steps required.

1. Form a team, including parents, staff, school dining managers, the school nurse, and others to determine the purpose and goals of the Wellness Fair. Be sure to establish a budget.
 - a. Work with your wellness team to establish the health needs of your school and of the surrounding community. What are services that are lacking that this wellness fair could provide? Make sure your fair will be an activity-oriented health fair –this type of fair will inspire more learning than a passive look-and-see wellness fair. Topic choices are limitless.
 - b. Delegate responsibilities, including those related to site logistics, parking, partner/vendor recruitment, communication materials, volunteer recruitment, refreshments, room setup/breakdown/cleaning, contracts and donations.
 - c. Establish a timeline, as well as a regular meeting time for the wellness fair team to check-in periodically.
 - d. Will you be applying for a grant to fund your health fair? Be sure to research potential funding opportunities.
2. Determine the date and confirm the location with your school principal and staff.
 - a. When deciding on the date with your wellness team, make sure it coincides with another event that parents have to attend. For example, report card pick-up, parent-teacher conferences, a school performance, play or sporting event.
3. Invite community partners.
 - a. The Wellness Fair should include organizations in your community that help improve wellness. See the list below of local Chicago organizations that have participated in fairs and the list of CPS Food and Fitness Partners who may be willing to participate and host activities at the fair.
 - b. With your established wellness team and those helping arrange the event, be sure to plan fun activities and presentations for all age groups, and make it family-friendly. Make sure to provide healthy snacks! Some ideas for activities include:
 - i. Physical Activity: Have a local aerobics, fitness, or karate expert provide a free, participatory activity, such as beginning step aerobics, or a workshop on the advantages of strength training, etc. Try contacting your local YMCA for this and other related programs. Ask the PE Teacher or a sports trainer to explain how to find a person's target heart rate, teach participants about safely exercising in heat and cold extremes and explain age-appropriate exercises.

ii. Nutrition: Have a mix of activities and exhibits that teach the community about proper diet, cutting down fat and reading food labels. Some ideas include having an interactive Sugar Awareness table where student and adults guess how much sugar is in popular drinks and snacks. Nearby, host a healthy snack table that showcases easy and fun recipes for healthy eating. Teachers and students from different grade levels can take turns staffing different tables. Work with your school dining manager to utilize produce that is being served in your school's cafeteria to highlight the healthy foods kids are eating! Provide samples.

4. Contact health screening vendors.

- a. Determine the number and type of vendors your location can accommodate to increase access to health screenings.
- b. Maintain communication with vendors during the entire planning process with telephone calls and emails. Make sure to send a written email outlining everything that was agreed upon at the start, send a reminder a few days before the event and a thank-you note after the event.

Here are some organizations that have participated in local health fairs:

- The American Heart Association
- The National Alzheimer's Association
- The American Cancer Society
- The American Diabetes Association
- Chicago Health Corps
- Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC)
- The Center for Disease Control
- Chicago Department of Public Health
- Illinois Department of Health Services
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Chicago (LISC/Chicago)
- University of Illinois Extension Program
- Curves
- Loyola University Chicago
- Athletico
- Action for Healthy Kids
- Cook County Health Department
- Chicago Christian Center Mobile Clinic

Vendors that provide free health screenings in Chicago:

- CVS Pharmacy
- Walgreens Pharmacy
- American Kidney Fund
- Chicago Department of Public Health and partner health clinics
- Mobile clinics can be great for wellness fairs. Search for local Chicago mobile health clinics for dentistry, immunizations or other needs. Plus! Many local hospitals and universities may be willing to offer their services and resources.

5. Create the action and staffing plan for the Wellness Fair and effectively communicate it to all.

- a. Plan to accommodate the needs of your community partners and health screening vendors. Will your partners need any supplies, access to an outlet or have special requests? Make sure to ask them what they will need the day of the event.
- b. Create a staffing and volunteer plan for the day of the wellness fair. Always keep the school principal informed about the plan. Responsibilities to be delegated include designating a main contact for partners, another for vendors, and another for volunteers; providing refreshments in the morning or afternoon; setting up; cleaning up; giving out event bags; and distributing and

collecting evaluation forms. Designate volunteers evenly throughout the space to make sure any questions are answered and challenges are solved.

6. Spread the word! Promote the wellness fair

- a. Use your preferred method of communication with parents and community members to promote the wellness fair. Include information about the time, location, and what health services will be offered. Post details about the wellness fair in the school newsletter and get in touch with local news outlets to publicize on the radio or newspaper.

7. Finalize logistical efforts, including those related to:

- a. Send out a confirmation to vendors and partners. Make sure to include directions and parking information, and where to check-in when they arrive at the event. Confirm donations and material delivery options (i.e. where to unload on the day of the event or where to ship).
- b. Confirm the room set-up and materials, including vendor display/table layout, event bags, signs, trash cans, reserved parking, time the room is accessible to volunteers and other tasks.
- c. Confirm that A/V equipment is set up, if needed. This can include a podium, microphone, and audio visual equipment.

8. Create an evaluation for wellness fair participants.

- a. First decide on the purpose of the evaluation (i.e., what should be learned from the evaluation), and confirm that an evaluation is necessary.
- b. Second, create a plan for distributing and collecting surveys from wellness fair participants.
- c. Lastly, gather survey results and share with your team, discussing implications for next year.

9. Have fun at the wellness fair!

- a. Smile. The day has finally arrived and all the school's hard work has come to fruition. Make sure to enjoy the fair and remember it's about improving school and community wellness.

10. Say thank you

- a. Be sure to send out thank you notes to all those that made the wellness fair possible. A simple note goes a long way, especially if the school does an annual fair.

Helpful Hints:

- Start planning early, and form the planning committee a year in advance.
- Pay attention to small details, including those related to trash cans, water locations, electrical outlets, smoke alarms, lost and found items, and name tags.
- Have a backup plan for last-minute vendor cancellations or no-shows. Always have a co-chair on the planning committee, and plan knowing you will probably lose some members of the committee during the planning process.
- If this is your first health fair, pay special attention to getting the word out about it in your community. Vendors and organizations that participate rely on having people with whom they can interact. Poor attendance should be avoided as much as possible.
- Prepare a binder of vendors, evaluation forms, timelines for each planning step, sample letters, publicity materials and lessons learned to help with future planning efforts.