



Dear Administrator/Community Leader,

Across the country, Healthy Kids Challenge (HKC) is helping schools, youth programs, and communities support kids and families in making healthy eating and physical activity choices a habit!

With more than 95% of American youth ages five to seventeen enrolled in school an average of 900 hours per year, you are aware of the important role schools and youth programs play. On the flip side, many of you are experiencing how difficult it is to put required Wellness policies into action.

In a preliminary analysis (August 2006) of local Wellness policies collected from 112 school districts in 42 states, Action for Healthy Kids found only half of the newly approved policies met all of the minimum guidelines for nutrition and physical education required by the federal government. The analysis also found

- 40% did not specify who was responsible for implementation
- 19% did not address implementation or evaluation
- 18% did not include goals for physical education
- 14% did not specify goals for nutrition education

HKC can help you meet Wellness guidelines.

It is not enough to put Wellness policies on paper. To be effective, it is necessary to put the policies into action.

HKC recognizes factors that complicate your efforts to make policies effective.

All of the following are perceived as barriers to actions:

- School food service budget pressures
- Facility needs
- Staffing needs
- Scheduling and academic demands

Barriers are magnified when state and local authorities impose restrictions that are even tighter than the federal Policy Guidelines. These very well justified restrictions place an additional burden on the school/program.

Even when the barriers are problem-solved and the policies are put into action, we occasionally see a backlash from parents who are unhappy with the changes made, such as a middle school in Florida whose parents were upset that adding P.E. reduced elective options for band or in Texas where it is reported that some schools are opting out of the reimbursable meal program so as not to have to follow strict state lunchroom rules.

HKC helps problem-solve barriers and determine feasible policies and actions. Building awareness, support, and ownership. HKC recommendations help create an appealing environment for change.

HKC assists you in looking at what exists and identifying feasible actions based on your resources. At the onset, HKC makes recommendations to create awareness and build support and collaboration to get everyone on board with healthy change. HKC ideas incorporate social marketing techniques to help develop appeal for healthy change. In addition, HKC helps to build staff wellness which is a cornerstone for role modeling healthy change *and* for increasing the potential for reduced employee absenteeism and health care costs.

HKC is credible and builds effective outcomes for all children.

HKC's recommendations are built on a solid foundation of CDC school health guidelines and best practices.

HKC helps build the academic potential of ALL children. Most children, regardless of their BMI, are not making healthy food choices or getting enough physical activity. At all ages, today's children are less active, consume more fat and sweetened beverages, and eat fewer healthy foods, especially fruits and vegetables, than their predecessors. Many normal weight children are undernourished, resulting in impaired learning.

HKC recommendations address another emerging concern, eating disorders. CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (2005) found a large number of high school students use unhealthy methods to lose or maintain weight. A nationwide survey found that during the 30 days preceding the survey 12.3% of students went without eating for 24 hours or more; 4.5% had vomited or taken laxative; and 6.3% had taken diet pills, powders, or liquids without a doctor's advice. Without simple training, healthy messages can become distorted and lead to body image problems and eating disorders. HKC ideas and support focus on building

- a healthy body image
- skills for healthy balance of eating choices and physical activity
- a supportive, yet guilt-free environment for healthy eating and physical activity choices

HKC is not a curriculum.

Incorporating a health curriculum is ideal and encouraged, but such a curriculum requires a block of time and is not the sole answer to healthy change. Healthy Kids Challenge helps with ideas to integrate awareness, learning, and practice into core curriculum and other daily practices. The ideas and messages don't become outdated and are appealing and easy. This approach helps to create a consistent environment rather than one in place just 6 weeks out of the year.

HKC's teacher idea booklets focus on healthy behaviors using six healthy message themes:

- Fruits & Veggies Every Day - The Tasty Way
- Breakfast GO Power
- Active Play Every Day
- Snack Attack
- Discover Smart Servings
- Drink Think

HKC is a commitment to:

- **Developing a supportive environment for healthy eating and physical activity choices.**
- **Improving each child's potential for academic excellence by**
 - Creating awareness and appeal for healthy choices
 - Integrating healthy choice skill building and physical movement into daily practices—in and out of the classroom
 - Increasing healthy choice options
- **Building staff wellness and increasing your potential for reduced healthcare costs and the number of healthy role models for kids.**

With HKC there is MUCH to gain! Join us to become a Partner in Health for Kids!

For more information about how HKC can help you, go to www.healthykidschallenge.com or call Director Vickie L. James, RD, LD at 1-888-259-6287,