

# Engaging Families and the Community

Community agencies are often eager partners with schools. They can bring invaluable time, expertise, and resources to the table. Additionally, the school community has strengths it can share to improve the community. Each community will have its own strengths and weaknesses and those points should be discussed. For example, schools should discuss with parents and community members ways to increase physical activity within that specific community.

## **Example Activities of On-Going Programs:**

*These programs are planned and organized to take place consistently over the course of the school year. Schools can implement a variety of programs to provide the students, families, and community with the chance to receive health-related information and to participate in wellness events. The programs should be on-going and incorporate opportunities that address the needs of the community members. All programs should aim to encourage healthy habits within the community by considering the strengths and weaknesses specific to that area.*



- Invite parents and community members to help create a school vegetable garden.
- Produce Market: student-run produce market set up at various times during the week or at special events, such as Home and School Meetings/ Report Card Nights.
- Inclusion on nutrition education in periodic newsletters, school newspapers, email updates, school website, or other print publications.
- After school programs for parents and children to discuss topics like healthy cooking, label reading, dealing with diseases (such as diabetes and heart disease), weight loss, heart healthy, MyPyramid, etc.
- Schools can invite local guest speakers to discuss health and wellness topics with the community. They can sponsor a “Distinguished Speaker Series” to include individuals in the field, such as professionals, coaches, and athletes, to be held at school and open to the public.
- Schools can engage in outreach efforts by creating newsletters about health and wellness to be sent to families of students as well as local organizations and businesses, encouraging the community to adopt a healthier lifestyle.
- Schools can sponsor events for families and community members to encourage physical activity. This can include walks/runs for charity, field trips to nature parks or trails, intramural sports for parents and adults, etc.
- The school can partner with the community to create a “community cookbook” of healthy recipes provided by families and community members.
- An after-school student group can be formed to research nutrition and exercise topics and create a wellness newsletter to be sent home throughout the year to families and community members.

## **Example Activities of One-Time Events:**

*These events are planned and organized to take place periodically throughout the school year. Schools can incorporate a variety of one-time events into their calendar in order to provide the students' families and the community with different opportunities to get involved. The events that are organized over the school year should address a variety of topics that are relevant and of interest to both the families and community members.*

- Invite parents and community members to a school health fair that provides information and visual displays about different health-related topics. The benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables, the importance of eating whole grains, diets that improve various health conditions, increasing physical activity, how to read food labels, and other topics can be addressed.
- Involve parents and community members to a “walk to school day” event. Encourage adults in the area to join the students in their walk to school to promote the benefits of increasing physical activity and to encourage more safe walking routes in the community.
- Host a Community Breakfast by inviting parents or other community members to prepare/share a healthy breakfast with the students. Parents can provide recipes or healthy breakfast items to encourage the community to make healthier food choices at breakfast and to promote breakfast-eating as an essential way to consume enough nutrients for the day.
- Take the Whole Grain Challenge by creating teams of students and parents to canvas community restaurants and survey how many establishments offer whole grains. This is an important way to encourage the community to take action and to promote healthy food choices when dining out.
- Include wellness segments during Home and School meetings that can be conducted by school staff or an outside guest speaker. These meetings are valuable opportunities to provide many parents with nutrition and physical activity information. Topics to address healthy eating at home, how to prepare healthy family meals, how to make healthy food choices at restaurants, how to read food labels, and other health-related topics can be discussed.



# Partners in Educating our Children

*Groups and organizations are available to provide resources for schools to promote nutrition or physical activity. Some groups are also willing to partner with schools to provide wellness-related events, education, or programs.*

## **Community Agencies or Organizations:**

- Colleges
  - Agriculture
  - Culinary
  - Dental
  - Kinesiology
  - Nursing
  - Nutrition/ Dietetics
  - Pre-Med
  - Public Health
  - Physical Therapy
- County recreation department
- Culinary associations
- Dentists' offices
- Doctors' offices
- Health centers
- Hospitals
- Local businesses
  - Sports clubs
  - Sports equipment stores, bike shops, running stores, health food stores, etc.
  - Restaurants
- Seniors' organizations or groups



## **Specific Organizations:**

- American Diabetes Association  
(610) 828—5003
- American Heart Association
- Mid-Atlantic Dairy Council
- PA Horticultural Society
- Archdiocesan Parish Nurse Program
- Pennsylvania Dietetic Association
- Philadelphia Dietetic Association
- Philadelphia Health Management Corporation
- Pottstown Wellness Center  
(Grant received by that school)
- The Food Trust
- USDA Regional Office