



everychild.onevoice.®

Dear PTA Officers, Members and Prospective Volunteers,

Our children are living in some very challenging times. As you have already heard from many sources, health and education are inextricably linked so there is much we can do. There is still much work to be done to make schools healthier places – from the food students eat in the lunchroom to the nutrition lessons taught in the classroom and the opportunities for physical activity and play during the school day. Historically, some local units have not only done some very focused health activities but they have intentionally shared their work and outcomes with other units.

Plan to entice new volunteers and constituents with a quick survey that includes a list of the projects you are considering and an opportunity for them to mention their passions, e.g. landscaping, dental health, healthy cooking, farming, nursing, film makers, photographers, law enforcement etc. First time volunteers who may have decided to give a block of time connected to a particular project, can be paired with experienced PTA members in order to learn how the mission and guidelines of the PTA connect with their particular passion and/or resource.

Here are some select ideas for you.

School Health Index - PTA's are strongly encouraged to work with the school team to complete the free School Health Index (SHI) developed by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI/training/index.htm>

The School Health Index (SHI) is a self-assessment and planning guide that enables schools to:

1. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of their school health promotion policies and programs.
2. Develop an action plan for improving student health.
3. Involve teachers, parents, students, and the community in improving school policies, programs, and services.

The policies and practices recommended in the School Health Index are derived from CDC's research-based guidelines for school health programs, which identify the policies and practices most likely to be effective in improving youth health risk behaviors. The SHI currently addresses five health topic areas, including:

1. Physical activity
2. Healthy eating
3. Tobacco-use prevention
4. Unintentional injury and violence prevention (safety)
5. Asthma

How to get copies of the SHI? You can interactively complete, download, print, or order copies on the CDC Web Site at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI> or request a copy by email at cdc-info@cdc.gov or by phone at 1-800-CDC-INFO.

TIME is the main cost associated with implementation of the SHI. Many schools have done it with no funding at all—merely getting some dedicated time (perhaps part of a staff development day or teacher workday) for the school health team to come together to complete the self-assessment modules and create

an action plan. Some schools have received a small amount (\$500-\$1,000) of seed money to pay for substitute teachers, refreshments, and materials for their SHI team meetings. Once schools have developed their action plans, many have been able to implement some of the actions with no funding at all. For activities that might require some funding, many schools have used their SHI results to help obtain money or donated resources/time from community organizations, local businesses, state/local agencies, etc. It takes about 6 hours to collect information. Remember this is a team effort. Hopefully, the school nurse will be a part of the team that should also include teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members. The SHI is a means of contributing to school health promotion by providing specific opportunities to involve key stakeholders in the assessment process and inviting them to help shape plans to improve school programs. The SHI will help the school determine its own strengths and weaknesses solely for the purposes of self-improvement. PTA's encouragement to use this tool and to work on an action plan that is consistent with PTA mission is part of the reason that this has been included in your Local Unit Packet options.

There are a few questions that are targeted toward school level. For example, the elementary school SHI includes questions about recess and hand washing which are not included in the middle/high school SHI. The middle/high SHI asks about tobacco cessation services. Also, there are certain questions that are included in both versions but reflect different requirements for the school levels. For instance, the elementary school SHI suggests a total of 150 minutes of physical education per week, whereas the middle/high school SHI suggests a total of 225 minutes per week.

The SHI is a wonderful way to update and customize the health, safety and wellness plans for you school. If not this year – next year, identify two or three PTA workers who want to volunteer for this ONE project, which will take less than 10 hours of their time. School Nurses across the nation have utilized this tool as part of their school nurse specialty course work. If this is the case then the PTA representatives would want to learn when and what was decided and which action plans could they best involve their energies with.

About Apps for Healthy Kids <http://www.appsforhealthykids.com>

The Apps for Healthy Kids competition is a part of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign to end childhood obesity within a generation. Apps for Healthy Kids challenges software developers, game designers, students, and other innovators to develop fun and engaging software tools and games that drive children, especially tweens (ages 9-12) – directly or through their parents – to eat better and be more physically active.

- Potential impact on target audience
- Quality, accuracy, and content of message
- Creativity and originality
- Potential for further development and use
- Potential to engage and motivate target audience

PTAs are encouraged to promote this contest at their schools for NEXT year. Start NOW. Review the contest winners that will be announced in August of 2010 and be encouraged to be in the winning group in 2011. Monitor the Apps website for next year's contest submission dates.

The Quick & Easy Guide to School Wellness is a multi-media how-to guide filled with comprehensive information, practical advice, tools and resources to help you take action. Can be downloaded free of charge at <http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org>. Healthy Schools Campaign has launched a holistic, school-based plan to make wellness a part of every child's school experience. They have provided leadership education to over 150 nurses across Illinois in to improve health and wellness outcomes in the school community. PTAs are encouraged to connect with the nurse assigned to your school /school district and find out how together we can work to impact health and wellness in the school community.

Wellness Policy – have you seen yours? On June 30, 2004, President Bush signed the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 into law, which contains a local school wellness policy provision, an important new tool to address obesity and promote healthy eating and physical activity through changes in school environments.

The wellness policy provision requires every school district that participates in the federal school meals programs (as the vast majority do) to enact a wellness policy by the first day of the 2006-2007 school year.

The school district policies must address:

- goals for nutrition education
- goals for physical activity
- nutrition guidelines for all foods available at school
- goals for other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness
- plans for evaluating implementation of the policy

The development of the local school wellness policies must involve:

- parents
- students
- school food service staff
- the school board
- school administrators
- the public

Ask your principal if you can read yours and find out if there is a PTA member on the district Health and Wellness (and green) committee. In addition, PTAs are asked to join the students in speaking up for better school food by urging your Congressional leaders to support a strong, well-funded reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, making healthy meals a priority every day. Your participation will be welcomed.

http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/programs/school_wellness.html

The Quick and Easy Guide to Green Cleaning in Schools- Five Steps to a Healthy School Environment.

This FREE downloadable guide is available at the Healthy Schools Campaign website

<http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org> Answers to the question – How to know if it's green and ways to institutionalize your green cleaning program are included.

Let's Move – Outside <http://www.letsmove.gov>

Let's Move will give parents the support they need, to help children/ tweens/teens to be more physically active. Join First Lady Michelle Obama, community leaders, teachers, doctors, nurses, moms and dads in a nationwide campaign to tackle the challenge of childhood obesity. This web site contains an action plan and strategies for solving the problems of childhood obesity within a generation.

Here is an idea to consider from Oak Park, Illinois. School PTAs can start a walking club at lunchtime. Students with permission from their parent or guardian will agree to wear a clearly visible, identifying nametag around their neck - that is given to them at the start of the walks around the school building. Parents and/or family caregiver volunteers are stationed at checkpoints around the building and document how many times the student or teacher walkers go around the building. Non- food incentives are given to the winning walker periodically (every week, month or semester- the choice is yours). Local vendor donations can be requested on school letterhead. Photo clearances are needed if photos of winners with the donated incentive are shared as part of the thank you note to the donator, which also should be on school letterhead and signed by PTA president as well as the school principal. This focus on increasing

exercise is low cost and is consistent with Healthy People Goals for the nation emphasis on non-competitive physical activity.

National Health Observances Tool Kits are available at <http://www.healthfinder.gov/nho/JanToolkit.aspx>

Live Well, Learn How. Parents, grandparents and family caregivers need to stay healthy in order to provide for their children, students attending school. One way to increase awareness of this process is to use monthly National Health observances. This website includes over 1,600 health topics from the most trusted sources – from a-z. It is a great source of information and ideas to use in your school community.

SNAP (School Network for Absenteeism Prevention) is a hands-on hand-cleaning initiative for middle schools that's designed to help keep students in school and learning by improving overall health through promoting clean hands. PTA volunteers are needed to sustain accountability to hand washing practices as a daily expectation and not just something that is done for — show or when there is an impending epidemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that hand washing is the most important thing you can do to keep from getting sick <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing>. Schools can use the SNAP program to increase student and staff hand cleaning and help them stay healthy.

SNAP offers a FREE educational poster-toolkit that:

- Makes it easy to incorporate clean-hands education into middle school curricula.
- Foster teamwork.
- Provides new ideas that support national education standards.

PLUS...It gives student teams a chance to gain national recognition!

Over the last seven years, 21 schools have earned national recognition and cash awards totaling over \$29,000! Will your school earn top recognition next year?

Get your school involved by downloading the SNAP Toolkit today. <http://www.itsasnap.org/index.asp>

Plan to share what your schools are doing as it relates to hand washing – especially before lunch and snacks during the school day. Our concerns include the high schools!!!