Top 15 Ways an Elementary School Can Be Healthy

Use this checklist to ask about wellness at your school and advocate for change!

- Does school allow and promote walking or biking to school?
  - Walking or biking to school, where possible, is a great way for parents and kids to be active together!

- Are students rewarded with non-food rewards?
  - Is candy used to reward? If so, suggest creative alternatives like No Homework Passes, Line Leader Pass, stickers, pencils, extra library time, or Sit with Teacher Pass for lunch.

- Is child receiving physical education and physical activity during the school day?
  - Kids in SC elementary schools should be receiving 90 minutes per week of PE and 60 minutes per week of physical activity like recess...a state law!

- Is recess revoked for disciplinary issues or missed school work?
  - Recess should never be withheld or used as punishment.

- Is a nutrition education component taught each week
  - This can be taught in PE, the classroom, by the school nurse, guidance, cafeteria, or even as part of morning announcements! It is state law!

- Are teachers and staff modeling healthy behaviors?
  - Children mimic adult behavior and learn by example.

- Are healthy celebrations the rule (or the exception)?
  - Many schools have implemented guidelines around cupcakes and individual parties and ask parents to only provide food for their child instead of an entire class.

- Are fundraisers for the school promoting unhealthy food?
  - Bake sales dominating your school day? Students can be engaged to create new fundraisers (like Hat Day) to avoid food sales.

- Do you received information about health and safety efforts?
  - Check out your school website, district website, principal newsletter or social media to learn more about efforts at your school and how you can help!

- Is the school safe for kids with food allergies?
  - Cafeterias and classrooms can adjust to meet a student’s needs.

- Does the school have a wellness policy and committee?
  - If not, check your school district and offer to create a school version.

- Is there a school garden on-site? Is it used/maintained?
  - Gardens can be great tools to teach math and science standards, and items grown can be used for student taste-testing activities. Garden clubs can also form as an after-school activity.

- Are healthy meals served by the school food service?
  - Look for the presence of high calorie (flavored) milks, vegetable and fruit offerings, and vegetarian options. Ask for variety, and go in and sample lunch (and share a meal with your child)!

- Is the school playground open during non-school hours?
  - Technically called “joint use” or “shared use”, school playgrounds can serve the community and promote physical activity.

- Is water allowed during the school day?
  - Students should be allowed to have a water bottle in the classroom; water is the healthiest choice!