

# New York City Healthy Schools Initiative 2016 - 2017

The New York City Healthy Schools Initiative is a Health Department program that promotes healthy and equitable school environments. It is led by the Center for Health Equity and can support schools through the following:

## School Wellness Council

A School Wellness Council is a group of staff, parents and students interested in improving the health and well-being of the school community.

### *How the Health Department can help:*

- Support the establishment of a School Wellness Council to develop or strengthen the wellness policy
- Identify school wellness champions, schedule wellness meetings and help School Wellness Councils set goals

## School Wellness Policy

A School Wellness Policy is a detailed plan to guide a school's efforts to support healthy eating and active living for students, staff members and families. It helps schools apply the Department of Education's district wellness policy to the school's unique health needs and goals.

### *How the Health Department can help:*

- Work with schools to develop strategies for increasing physical activity and improving food options
- Provide examples of School Wellness Policies
- Connect schools with resources and programming that support their wellness goals

## Active Living

Daily physical activity and physical education (PE) improve academic achievement. They also improve attention span, classroom behavior and attendance. Schools can promote physical activity through active transportation to and from school, physical education, active recess, classroom physical activity breaks, and before- and after-school physical activity programs.

### *How the Health Department can help:*

- Provide guidance for active recess policies
- Work with schools to develop strategies for increasing physical activity
- Connect schools with resources that support daily physical activity

## Healthy Eating

Serving only plain milk and eliminating chocolate milk from school meals can significantly reduce the amount of sugar children consume daily. Children who drink chocolate milk twice a day or more consume about 80 grams of added sugar each week. This is the equivalent of more than 6 pounds of sugar per child each year. Principals can promote healthy eating in their schools by removing chocolate milk from the menu and serving plain (unflavored) 1% or skim milk instead.

### *How the Health Department can help:*

- Meet with the principal and SchoolFood manager to develop a collaborative plan to remove chocolate milk
- Provide a letter template for principals to send to the SchoolFood manager
- Develop a strategy to help teachers, students and parents understand the benefits of removing chocolate milk

## NYC Excellence in School Wellness Awards (ESWA)

Each spring the NYC ESWA celebrates schools that have created a culture of wellness. Award criteria include eliminating chocolate milk, ensuring that all children get 30 minutes of physical activity during the school day (not including recess), having a School Wellness Policy and Wellness Council, and addressing children's mental health.

For support in any of these wellness areas or for more information about the NYC ESWA please contact [healthyschools@health.nyc.gov](mailto:healthyschools@health.nyc.gov).



Center for Health Equity