Welcome Back! This monthly newsletter features Iowa schools that are making it happen, highlights resources, and provides ideas on how to make wellness the easy option. A new year provides a fresh start and new opportunities! As an adult you have an important influence on the lives you reach everyday. You can do many simple things to help students develop healthy habits. I encourage you to set some goals this year that will impact the wellness environment at your school. Some ideas include: nutrition education lessons, classroom physical activity breaks, or serving on the district’s wellness committee. Be Well!

Hillis Elementary - Des Moines

Starting last school year, on Wednesdays, Hillis Elementary students have the opportunity to engage in hands-on wellness education. Lessons include: healthy snacks, yoga, composting, and working in the school garden.

In the spring they invited families to attend an ECO Hour Exhibition to showcase the lessons they have learned and celebrate a year’s worth of ECO hours! For more information contact Principal Sloan elizabeth.sloan@dmschools.org

Pinterest Idea of the Month!

Looking for new snack ideas to have at home? Try Crunchy Apple Sandwiches! Mix up granola and peanut butter or yogurt and spread between two thick apple slices for a hearty, fruit sandwich. See attachment for link.

School Lunch Hero Day!

Don Oviatt Elementary School in Norwalk showed their appreciation to nutrition staff during School Lunch Hero Day. Photo submitted by: Leigh VanderHolt, School Nurse
Schools + Parents = Student Health

Communication is Key: Incorporate wellness messages into all communications with parents. The school mission, newsletter, website, report cards and more are perfect places to feature the sentiment that healthy students are better learners.

Provide Volunteer Opportunities: Engaging parents as volunteers is essential to creating change in the community and ultimately improving the food and fitness environment. Parents can help by serving as mentors and volunteers for school health activities, leading sports teams or gardening clubs and more.

Empower Parents to Be a Part of Decision-Making: Make sure parents are aware of the district’s wellness committee and how they can be a part of it. Parents can be the face of health and wellness initiatives in your school and increase peer-to-peer interaction with other parents. See attachment for external link.

School Food Waste Reduction

Food waste is a concern for many schools. Various stakeholders need to be engaged to create a successful food waste reduction program. Students need to be frequently reminded of how to build a school meal. Students are generally compassionate people. Any type of food waste reduction program during school meals should not:

- Pressure students to donate to please others
- Encourage students to take food they do not plan to eat
- Prevent students from eating foods they selected for their meal

For ideas on how to increase consumption and reduce food waste and reduce food waste in your school visit www.educateiowa.gov and search “food waste.”

Birthday Celebrations

Birthday celebrations are often an area of discussion each school year. The following excerpt is from Ankeny Community School District’s preschool handbook. If a policy starts at preschool it is easier to sustain the practice into the elementary years.

“Due to the dietary needs and restrictions of many preschoolers, students are encouraged to bring a book or toy to share with the class as a birthday celebration and are not encouraged to bring edible items. Any items brought for members of the class will be sent home unopened.”

For additional non-food reward and celebration ideas, see attachment for link.

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