



Toolkit:

Promoting Health and Wellness During the Back to School Season

Prepared for Missouri Foundation for Health
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In 2013, Missouri Foundation for Health established the Healthy Schools Healthy Communities initiative to address childhood obesity in select areas of the state. HSHC brings together schools, community organizations, businesses, parents and other residents to increase access to healthy food and physical activity where our kids live, learn, and play. This toolkit was originally developed as part of the initiative and has been adapted for statewide use.

Talking Points

As children and families head back to school, we know that health is top of mind. Many students will be taking their annual physicals to get ready for sports while others may be focused on getting organized and finding their weekly school routine. It's also an important time of year for families to eat healthy and stay active with busy schedules. During the "back to school" season, there will be opportunities to connect with teachers, school administrators, and other educators about healthy habits. Below are some suggested talking points that can be used to have these important conversations.

- We hope your summer has been filled with sunshine, lots of activity, and healthy meals. As we head back into a new school year, we are focused on keeping up the healthy momentum. We want to continue to build a healthy future for our kids and our community throughout the next school year.
- We know that healthy students are better learners. Kids who don't eat enough healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and dairy products, tend to have lower grades than their peers.¹
- It will be important for our students to avoid being given food as a reward at school. We should ensure that they are offered healthy snacks during birthday or other school celebrations.
- Research shows that children who are at a healthy weight perform better at school than overweight or obese children.²
- Research shows that students who are physically active are more likely to have better grades and school attendance, and have an easier time focusing and staying on task.³
- Children spend up to half of their waking hours and consume up to 50 percent of their total calories at school. We must focus on providing healthy foods during the school day to give kids the best chance to live healthy.⁴
- Obese children are at increased risk of being bullied and suffering from depression, while a healthy diet and physical activity in childhood is associated with better mental health.⁵
- Teachers, staff, and school administrators play such an important role in building a healthier future in our community. When teachers are choosing water instead of sugary beverages, and walking on the track before or after school, students take notice. Thank you for setting a good example for our students!
- It will take our whole community—inside and outside of school buildings—working together, to make a difference in our kids' lives.

¹ Health and Academic Achievement. (May 2014) *National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf

² Wu, N., Chen, Y., Yang, J., Li, F. (April 19, 2017). Childhood Obesity and Academic Performance: The Role of Working Memory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8: 611. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00611.

³ Health and Academic Achievement. (May 2014) *National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf

⁴ Story, M., Nannery, M., Schwartz, M. (March 2009). Schools and Obesity Prevention: Creating School Environments and Policies to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. *The Milbank Quarterly*, 87(1): 71-100. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0009.2009.00548.x.

⁵ Segal, L. M., Rayburn, J. & Beck, E. E. (August 2017). The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America. Retrieved from <https://stateofobesity.org/childhood-obesity-trends/>

Social Media

Use these sample posts to promote healthy behaviors at the start of the school year. Feel free to tweak the language of the Facebook post to fit your needs and be sure to enter community-specific information where indicated. And you can use your own photos too!

As you head back to school, give your body the fuel it needs to stay focused all day long. #HealthyFutureMO



[Download image](#)

We know the school year is a busy time for families. Healthy snacks can keep you energized throughout the day! What are your favorite healthy snacks? #HealthyFutureMO



[Download image](#)

Prepare healthy snacks ahead of time to make busy school days a breeze. You'll feel better and have more energy! #HealthyFutureMO



[Download image](#)

Starting your morning with a healthy meal is key to staying focused throughout the day. We want to know your favorite way to fuel up for the school day. Tell us in the comments below! #HealthyFutureMO



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As we head back to school, we want to thank our teachers for helping our kids have a healthy environment to learn in, and creating a #HealthyFutureMO for all of us.



 [Download image](#)

Walking or biking to school is a great way kick-start your morning and keep you energized throughout the day. Join in the fun and get your school year off to a healthy start! #HealthyFutureMO



Start your day the healthy way!

 [Download image](#)



READY, SET, RIDE!

 [Download image](#)



PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD!

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Engaging Coaches

Coaches are often role models and leaders in a community. Kids listen and look up to them. Parents trust them to look out for their kids and teach them lifelong skills. Coaches are committed to getting kids active and healthy – on and off the field. For these reasons and many more, coaches can be terrific messengers and spokespeople.

Use this sample script to reach out to a coach in your school or community:

My name is [insert name] and I'm [a parent or insert role/organization]. Through my experience, I have learned that it's critical that we all work together to build a healthier future right here in [community].

As part of [my passion/my work], increasing access to physical activity and healthy food for our kids is essential to their success. I know you are dedicated to your kids, both on and off the field. They trust you, and their parents trust you. And when it comes to relaying information about the importance of being healthy and active, we think you can play an important role. We'd like to work with you to spread the word about healthy efforts taking place throughout the community. We've thought of some opportunities that you might be interested in, but we'd also love to hear your ideas!

Promoting Health Oriented Events

Ask a coach if they would be willing to send information home to parents. Provide them with a flyer or language they can add to an email they were already planning to send (such as game schedules, team gatherings, etc.).

Ask coaches to spread the word to school staff or community members in their network.

"Hosting" or Emceeding an Event

Coaches can bring energy and excitement to an event.

If you're hosting a rally or 5k, for example, see if they'd be willing to run the program. Provide them with a few talking points to kick off the event, explaining why they believe healthy lifestyles are critical to the success of children and families.

Promoting Your Facebook Page

Ask the coaches to follow your Facebook page so they can stay up to date with your activities. See if they'd consider "sharing" your page with their networks.

Promoting Healthy Concessions

Ask a coach for a quote about why healthy drinks and snacks are so important and feature the quote with their photo on a poster at the healthy concessions stand!



Promote Water (Win with Water)

As you work to increase access to healthy food and physical activity in your schools and communities, we know that water plays an important role. We also know that people still need to be reminded about the benefits of water and why it's the clear choice when it comes to drinks. Use the Win With Water resources to promote water consumption.

Game Announcements

Ask game announcers to promote water! Whether it's directing people to healthy concessions or a free water fountain, provide announcers with a script to encourage fans to drink water. Check out the sample script here:

Win your day with water! Drinking water is a win-win—it has the least calories and gives you the most energy...for the game or even your homework! When it comes to healthy drink choices, water is the clear winner. Keep it simple and stick to water to stay healthy and hydrated. You can buy water bottles at the [insert name] concession stand (if applicable) or get it for free at the water fountain located at [insert location].

Talking Points: When Talking to Teachers about the Importance of Water

- Win with Water is a part of our ongoing efforts to encourage kids and families to drink water every day. And show them how water gives us more energy to be active, play sports, and study.
- Water helps improve cognitive function and helps energize muscles. When kids drink enough water, they learn and perform better at school and on the field.
- Choosing water sets a positive, healthy example for your students. The next time you think about grabbing a soda for the classroom—consider water instead!
- **If appropriate per school policy:** Having access to water while they learn means your students will be alert, energized, and refreshed. We hope you'll join us by encouraging kids to visit water fountains throughout the school day, and allowing students to carry clear water bottles in class.



Additional Ideas

Here are some ways to leverage Back to School resources and kick off the year on a healthy note.

First Day of School

Set up a banner or board with photos of healthy activities so when kids arrive to school they can take a photo and share how they plan to be healthy this year. Post a few photos along with the students' ideas on Facebook.

Staff Wellness

Check out this resource form Alliance for a healthier Generation:

https://www.healthiergeneration.org/take_action/schools/employee_wellness/

Each day school staff dedicate time and energy to support their students' health—from incorporating nutrition education into classroom lessons to serving healthy meals with a smile in the cafeteria. But it's just as important to remember that staff need their health supported, too. Here's why:

- Staff wellness programs help reduce stress and boost morale, productivity, and effectiveness in the workplace.
- Improving staff wellness can directly impact student health, not just through improved job performance, but also through positive role-modeling of healthy behaviors.
- Teachers experience high rates of turnover and burnout; but by prioritizing employee wellness, schools can help staff feel that they are valued and appreciated.
- Healthy employees can help schools' bottom line by reducing costs associated with health care and absenteeism.