

Family Fitness and Fun Events

One of the most effective ways of getting parents involved in schools is to have an event that involves their children. Whether they are in kindergarten or middle school, parents are always curious about what goes on at school and how well their kids are doing.

Hosting an event that involves physical activity and healthy eating can help you share positive messages, educate and engage parents and motivate kids to promote healthy behaviors. These events can be as simple or as involved as you have time and volunteers to make them!



Six Steps to a Fun Family Event!

1. Get your school's PE teacher to set up the gym with stations that will demonstrate what the kids are doing in PE. Kids can show parents what they are learning and parents can see how PE has evolved since they were in school.
2. Get your school nutrition services staff involved. Have them prepare samples of the types of foods being served, specifically fresh fruits and vegetables and any whole grain, low fat items. This is a great way to show parents that school foods are nutritious and taste good and to get kids to try items they might ignore during normal school meals.
3. Invite local businesses that have services or products that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Have them conduct demonstrations and share information:
 - a. A local gym could do some fitness training exercises
 - b. An aerobics instructor could do some quick routines
 - c. A yoga instructor could demonstrate positions
 - d. A restaurant or chef could sample some of their healthier dishes
 - e. A bicycle shop could do bike safety demos
 - f. A local clinic could provide health screenings
 - g. A farmers' market could share info on composting and gardening
4. Ask the high school to have some of their athletes come and demonstrate their skills, letting kids and adults participate. Soccer, baseball, lacrosse, or even the drill team can share some skills and show kids that being active can be fun.
5. Communicate! Get the kids excited by announcing the event at school. Better yet, let the kids make the announcements! Send home a flyer with details for parents. Give kids an incentive to bring back a tear-off part with a parent's signature. Consider a challenge among the grades to see who can have the most families attend.
6. Prizes! Check with your local retailers for prizes: grocery store gift cards, sports equipment from a sporting goods store, free lessons for martial arts or yoga, tennis shoes, camping equipment. Any type of prize that relates to healthy eating or being active will work. Kids or families receive a sticker or stamp for each activity station they visit to place on a card or "passport." Completed cards can be entered into a prize drawing.



Game On makes it easy for schools to help kids and their families learn to eat healthy and be active every day. Featuring dozens of fun "Eat Better" and "Move More" activities and challenges, the *Game On* framework is free, easy to implement and adaptable to your school's schedule, needs and resources. View our *Game On* school blueprint, more challenges and our step-by-step guide at ActionforHealthyKids.org/GameOn.



Fit and Fun Events

Checklist for your Family Fitness Event

- Pick a time and date that fits with your school community.
- Talk with the principal and get his or her support.
- Get staff interested and excited about participating. Find a hidden talent and ask staff to participate in a demo! (Jazzercise? Karate?)
- Send information home; offer incentives for students to make sure parents are informed.
- Talk with school nutrition services about providing healthy snacks and sharing information about school meals.
- Ask high school groups to provide demonstrations for their team activities (drill team, dance team, sports teams).
- Ask students to volunteer, get school clubs involved (student council, National Junior Honor Society, others).
- Ask your PTA or other parent group to help out. Consider providing prizes.
- Make sure prizes are related to healthy activities. A Wii, camping equipment, sports equipment, bicycle, skateboard (with helmets) or an edible arrangement are some ideas.
- Give each family a card or “passport” with a list of activity stations; provide stations with stamps or stickers to give out when families participate in the activity.
- Involve the community. Have different groups provide demonstrations for bike safety, yoga, health and wellness checks.

Communication is Key

- Ask the school to offer an incentive to make sure information gets to parents. A free homework pass or time outside after lunch are great motivators.
- Use the school phone tree to share important information.
- Ask for a parent signature when you send home information.



Promote Healthy Living

Plan family events that get parents engaged and on board with healthy living, as this will create more buy-in and support for a healthy school culture. It also makes it more likely that healthy habits will be reinforced at home!

Other Family Event Ideas

- Health Fairs
- School garden work days
- Cooking lessons or “Iron Chef” competitions
- Walk-to-School month with parent participation
- Create school teams for local runs or walks
- Screen movies that promote healthy living
- Parents and teachers vs. kids sports competitions
- Family nutrition classes from community partners like your cooperative extension service



Find school wellness resources for parents at:

ActionforHealthyKids.org/Parents



Action for Healthy Kids® partners with teachers, students, parents, school wellness experts and more to fight childhood obesity, undernourishment and physical inactivity by helping schools become healthier places so kids can live healthier lives. Our programs, tools and resources make it possible for everyone to play their part in ending the nation’s childhood obesity epidemic.