



the movement to make healthy easy

School Health Council Resource Guide

The following School Health Council Resource Guide provides step-by-step instructions for developing a School Health Council (SHC).

I. About School Health Councils

a. What is a School Health Council?

A School Health Council (SHC) is a team of educators and administrators, parents, community members, and student leaders working in partnership to improve the health and well-being of students in a school.

SHCs are advisory groups that make recommendations on school health policies, programs and practices so that they reflect community concerns and values. They monitor a school's culture and environment to ensure that themes of health and wellness are consistently reinforced, and that the community is partnering in these efforts. A SHC might, for example, examine the beverages sold on the school campus or before-and-after school programming (giving students creative ways to get more physical activity) and how the local community is integrated in those programs.

b. Why are SHCs important?

The school environment is one of the most powerful influences in the lives of students, and can significantly help to create and promote healthy habits and behaviors. SHC's can help ensure schools are consistently working toward the goal of providing a healthy school environment.

In addition, the Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires all school districts that receive reimbursement for school meals programs to have wellness policies related to nutrition and physical activity. Forming a SHC is a great first step when beginning to plan for wellness policies.

c. Case Study

The Towanda Area School District formed a Healthy School Nutrition Environment Council, composed of school personnel and community agency representatives. The group meets monthly to plan and facilitate projects. The council has dozens of successful projects underway, "focusing on improving lifetime wellness through education, practice and integration of healthy choices in nutrition, fitness, safety and lifestyle for students and their families."

For example, the middle school's "Let's Do Lunch" and "Healthy Lifestyle Club" programs bring speakers into the schools to talk about the importance of health and good nutrition. Middle school students and staff also participate in International Walk to School day each fall.

d. What resources does the nrgBalance movement provide for School Health Councils?

Since 2003, Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) have engaged schools, recreation centers, local parks and trails, healthcare, and the community in programs, campaigns and events that promote healthy eating and active living. The success of these initiatives has resulted in the development of a national, branded social movement: nrgBalance™ — make healthy easy.

i. For School Nurses:

- BMI Resources: The Growth Screening Communications Kit is designed specifically to help school nurses implement the PA Growth Screening Program. The online toolkit provides pre-screening materials, implementation resources a “how to” video and success tips from school nurses. For more information, visit www.nrgbalance.org and click on nrgBalance for Schools.
- Youth Weight Management Directory: nrgBalance supports a localized directory of clinical and community-based weight management programs for providers, schools and community centers to refer youth and families for weight management support. For more information, visit www.nrgbalance.org and search *Find nrgBalance Near You*.
- Professional Development: Through the Energy Balance Learning Center, school professionals may participate in FREE Professional Development Web casts.
- nrg Powered by Choice: nrgBalance also provides a grassroots campaign designed specifically by and for teens to encourage their participation in improving the overall health of the school environment. For more information, visit www.poweredbychoice.org.
- nrgBalance Zones: annual program that recognizes Pennsylvania schools and community recreation centers that commit to improving healthy eating and physical activity options for today's youth. For more information, visit www.nrgbalance.org and click on nrgBalance for Schools.

- nrgBalance Events: nrgBalance provides the framework for three annual events that promote healthy snacking, healthy eating and outdoor play. To access our comprehensive online planning guide for each event, please visit www.nrgbalance.org and click on nrgBalance for Schools.
 - nrgBalance 12345: nrgBalance also promotes a central health education message, nrgBalance 12345! designed to protect against health risks and promote simple, actionable strategies for healthy living. Downloadable fact sheets, newsletter inserts, morning announcements and more at www.nrgbalance.org.
- ii. For Health & PE Teachers:
- Professional Development: Through the Energy Balance Learning Center, school professionals may participate in FREE Professional Development Web casts.
 - nrg Outdoors: annual program designed to improve outdoor recreation skills, promote the use of parks and trails and improve conservation practices among youth and families. For more information, please visit www.nrgoutdoors.org.
 - **nrgWalks:** For more information, visit www.nrgBalance.org and click on nrgBalance for Schools.
 - nrg Powered by Choice: nrgBalance also provides a grassroots campaign designed specifically by and for teens to encourage their participation in improving the overall health of the school environment. For more information, visit www.poweredbychoice.org.
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iii. For School Administrators:

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- School Wellness Policies & Administrative Regulations: Policy and Administrative Regulation Definitions according to the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.
- Professional Development: Through the Energy Balance Learning Center, school professionals may participate in FREE Professional Development Web casts.
- nrg Powered by Choice: nrgBalance also provides a grassroots campaign designed specifically by and for teens to encourage their participation in improving the overall health of the school environment. For more information, visit www.poweredbychoice.org.
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- e. Additional Resource
Healthy Schools, Health Youth: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/>

II. Suggested School Health Council Representatives

Following is a list of common school health council representatives and the primary expertise they may provide to the Council.

- a. School Administration:
 - Approval and support of SHC efforts
 - Allocation of resources
 - Relationships with outside community organizations
- b. Family Consumer Science Teacher:
 - Nutrition Education
 - Food Preparation
 - Communication to students and parents
- c. Food Service Director:
 - Nutrition Standards
 - Classroom to Cafeteria Nutrition Education
 - Communication to students and parents (e.g. school menu)
 - Insight on school needs related to nutrition education and nutrition standards
- d. School Nurse:
 - Student health data
 - Growth Screening Program
 - Health Education
 - Communication to students and parents
- e. Physical Education Teacher:
 - Teaches lifetime physical activity and recreation
 - Source of student fitness data
 - Health Education
 - Communication to students and parents
 - Before and after school physical activity opportunities
 - Partner with community health and recreation organizations
- f. Parents, Students, Community:
 - Supports and promotes school health efforts
- g. Health Education Teacher:
 - Integrates nutrition and physical activity into classroom
 - Communication to students and parents

- h. Guidance Counselor:
 - School health services
 - Mental, social, emotional health perspective
- i. School Business Official/ Pupil Service Director:
 - School business operations
 - Coordinate finances (grants, contributions, etc)
- j. School Board Member:
 - Represent school policies and decisions
 - Liaison to school board
- k. Sample School Health Council Representative Invite (Please see appendix B)

III. Suggested School Health Council Roles

The following provides a list of suggested roles and responsibilities for school health council representatives.

- a. Leader/Chair
 - Facilitates SHC meeting (should be a person with strong communication skills that can direct and lead a meeting-keeping it on task and producing action)
 - Ensures coordination of SHC team members and roles
 - Keeps SHC informed of professional development opportunities
 - Reference "Sample School Health Council Meeting Agenda" (Please see Appendix C)
- b. School Decision Maker
 - Provides information on school policy and procedure processes
 - Takes part in overall decision making process
 - Seeks/supports grant opportunities and financial contributions to support school health efforts
 - Supports school health council programs and activities for all school and community to participate
- c. Note taker
 - Records the minutes/notes of the SHC meetings
 - Maintains history of the meetings and provides information updates for communication needs (works with or may also be Internal/External Communicator)
- d. Internal Communicator
 - Coordinates communication among SHC members (e.g. school email, notes in the school mailboxes, etc)
 - Works with note take

- e. External Communicator
 - Coordinates external (school, parents, community, media) communication on school health programs and events
 - Works with the note taker
 - Reference "School Health Council Newsletter Article" (Please see Appendix D)

- f. Community Supporters
 - Provides educational materials, funding, and technical assistance to support school health efforts
 - Helps to create additional community partnerships
 - Brings new energy and enthusiasm to school health efforts

IV. School Health Council Frequently Asked Questions

- a. Is there evidence to support School Health Councils can make a difference?

Yes. Outcomes from PANA's nrgBalance Zone campaign indicate that there is evidence to support school health councils.

For example, the 2006-2007 KHZ Assessment demonstrated a difference between schools that had a SHC and those who did not have a representative council to advocate for nutrition and physical activity changes.

Specifically, there was a significant relationship between the existence of a school health council and existence of nutrition policies. The KHZ Assessment also demonstrated the importance of a designated SHC leader. Schools with an appointed individual to lead the school health initiatives were positively associated with the existence of several nutrition policies and the existence of "Walk to School" programs. The KHZ Assessment demonstrated the importance of SHC meeting frequency and allocation of funding in creating nutrition policy change.

Three top factors were also identified as keys to success within these SHCs:

- the collaborative group was seen as a legitimate leader in the community
- there was a favorable political and social climate
- there was mutual respect, understanding, and trust of other members within the SHC

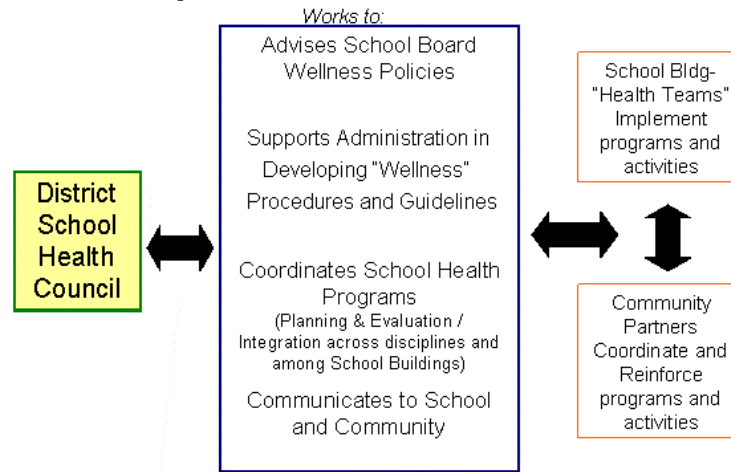
- b. Should our council be district-wide, or should each building have one?

According to the Federal Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2004, all school districts that receive reimbursement for school meal programs had to develop local wellness policies related to nutrition and physical activity by July, 2006 (Please see Appendix E).

The set-up of an SHC, whether district-wide or per school building, is dependent upon your district's overall health goals and activities. SHC's can come in different shapes and sizes; they should fit the needs of your school and district.

For example, if your district's SHC's main objective is to design and coordinate a school wellness policy, then you should have a district wide SHC with school health teams implementing the health practices and administrative procedures in each school building.

"Making Connections" A School Health Council Visual



- c. It's hard to find the time to meet face to face as a School Health Council due to our school schedule. How can we overcome this time barrier?

It's not always necessary for SHCs to hold weekly or even monthly face-to-face meetings. For example, the Bedford Area School District takes ½ hour in the morning before school begins to meet as a SHC.

Try using alternative communication strategies such as:

- E-mail
- End of day, 30 minute recaps
- Internal SHC Newsletter
- Conference calls
- Planning period recaps

- Meet in smaller groups bi-weekly or monthly (i.e., by department) and then come together as a larger SHC on a quarterly basis

d. There is lack of administrative support for our SHC and our school health efforts. How can we make progress without the support of our school decision-makers?

Start building administrative support by showing that students, staff, teachers and community members are behind your school health efforts. Celebrate events like Apple Crunch, Go for the Greens and Move it Outside to get the school and community involved, and incorporate physical education, the school nurse, food service directors, health and family and consumer science teachers.

Present your plans to the school board (after receiving administration permission). If your school is enrolled as a Keystone Healthy Zone, use your annual KHZ School Health Profile that provides statistical evidence about your school's nutrition and physical activity policies and practices. This can help build support for improvements to school health:

- Present this report to your school decision makers (administrators and board members) to advocate for changes involving nutrition and physical activity
- Share the report with local businesses that might be willing to contribute resources to nutrition and physical activity initiatives.
- Utilize the report to build support for the development of a school health council and a school wellness policy (The issues presented in this report are issues a school health council can address.)
- Use the report to generate parental and student involvement in your efforts.
- Highlight the report to celebrate your school health strengths!

In the end, administrative support is needed to advance your school health council. According to our KHZ Year One Outcomes, administrative support was a key factor that helps schools make improvements.

e. Our School Health Council lacks strong internal leadership. How can we get more accomplished at our meetings?

Start by getting organized. There are common school health council roles to support successful meetings and activities You can also assign specific roles for each of the SHC members according to the expertise they bring to the table.



Pennsylvania School Boards Association: Policy Definitions

Definition of Policy:

- Policy is a general statement that sets forth the purpose and prescribes the organization and programs of a school system.
- Policy creates a framework within which the Superintendent and staff can discharge assigned duties with positive direction.
- Policy tells what is wanted, why, how much, who is responsible

Definition - Administrative Regulations:

- Administrative regulations are the mechanics and details needed for administrators and staff to put a policy into effect
- Administrative regulations may include step-by-step procedures, specific responsibilities, timelines
- Administrative regulations tell how, by whom, where, when

Is It Policy?

A policy is NOT:

- Related to specific situation
- Precise statement with specific details
- Subject to administrative changes

A policy IS:

- Related to general area
- Broad statement allowing discretion
- Applicable over time

The Policy Process

1. Assess – What physical activity and nutrition issues will motivate local level action and how can the group bring attention to them?
2. Plan – What policy components will be identified as solutions?
3. Adopt (Agree) – What are the protocols and will others accept the policy
4. Implement – How can a policy document be translated to action and how can the action be sustained?
5. Monitor and Evaluate – How well did the policy address the problem?

Questions:

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Appendix B: Letter of Invitation to Join a School Health Council

Date
Name/Title/Position
Address
Phone

Dear [Insert Invitee Name],

We invite you to join an exciting new partnership at [insert school district or school building name] – a School Health Council. A School Health Council is a group of educators, parents, students, and community members, working together to make recommendations for school health policies and practices.

School Health Councils can work to promote healthier food choices and more physical activity, and find ways to make sure our schools are as healthy as possible. The school environment is one of the most powerful influences in the lives of students, and can significantly help to create and promote healthy habits and behaviors. But we can't do it alone – this needs to be a community effort!

Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportion; the U.S. Surgeon General has warned that unless we act now to reverse this epidemic, we could be raising the first generation of children whose lifespan won't be as long as that their parents. Families, schools and communities must work together to address this epidemic.

We hope you'll join our School Health Council – together we can create a healthier future.

Sincerely,

[Insert Name]
Chair

“School Health Council Meeting: Taking Action”

[INSERT NAME]
[INSERT DATE]
[INSERT TIME]

Forum Objectives [Insert your objectives here]

- i.e., Discuss opportunities for collaboration and coordination to improve the nutrition environment

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions (10 min.)
- II. Introduction to nrgBalance (10 min.)
- III. Results of Keystone Healthy Zone Assessment (15 min.)
- IV. Wellness Policy Discussion (approx 30 min.)
- V. Q&A/Discussion Session: (1 hour)
- VI. Closing Remarks
- VII. Next Steps
- VIII. Adjourn

For more information on the [INSERT SCHOOL NAME or SCHOOL DISTRICT], please contact <INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION HERE>

School Health Council Corner

[Insert School District or School Building Name]'s School Health Council held its first meeting of the year on [insert date]. We hope you will join us for the next meeting, [insert date, time and location].

School Health Council representatives now include [list SHC representatives, i.e., staff representatives from each of the district's school buildings, school nurses, administrators, school board members, the district's food service director, parents, several local physicians, the director of the local YMCA, a representative from the local grocery store, local hospital and local gym, etc.]

School House Council Goals:

- Development of local wellness policies – a committee will begin to work on these
- Developing a before-and-after-school walking club
- Opening the school gym to students and staff before and after school
- Ways to incorporate nutrition education into the curriculum
- Working with the food service department to offer more fresh fruits and vegetables
- Participation in PANA's events like the Great PA Apple Crunch and enrolling as a Keystone Healthy Zone School (www.panaonline.org)

What can you do to get involved?

- Make plans to attend the next School Health Council meeting or contact Council Leader [insert name] at [insert phone or e-mail address or both].

- Incorporate healthy habits and promote healthy choices at home by adopting five simple, actionable strategies for maintaining energy balance:
 - 1: One or more hours of physical activity each day
 - 2: Two or less hours of screen time each day
 - 3: Three meals each day
 - 4: Four or more cups of water or low/no-calorie beverages each day
 - 5: Five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day

For more information about helping your family achieve energy balance, visit www.nrgbalance.org.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004

Section 204 of Public Law 108-265—June 30, 2004

SEC. 204 LOCAL WELLNESS POLICY

(a) IN GENERAL - Not later than the first day of the school year beginning after June 30, 2006, each local education agency participating in a program authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1771 et seq.) shall establish a local school wellness policy for schools under the local educational agency that, at a minimum—

- 1) Includes goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the local educational agency determines is appropriate;
- 2) Includes nutrition guidelines selected by the local educational agency for all foods available on each school campus under the local educational agency during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity;
- 3) Provides an assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of section 10 of the Child Nutrition Act (42 U.S.C. 1779) and section 9(f)(1) and 17(a) of the Richard B Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(f)(1), 1766(a)), as those regulations and guidance apply to schools;
- 4) Establishes a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy, including designation of 1 or more persons within the local educational agency or at each school, as appropriate, charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy; and
- 5) Involves parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in the development of the school wellness policy.

(b) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND BEST PRACTICES. -

- (1) IN GENERAL. - The Secretary, in coordination with the Secretary of Education and in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shall make available to local educational agencies, school food authorities, and State educational agencies, on request, information and technical assistance for use in—
 - (A) Establishing healthy school nutrition environments;
 - (B) Reducing childhood obesity; and

(C) Preventing diet-related chronic diseases.

(2) CONTENT. Technical assistance provided by the Secretary under this subsection shall—

(A) Include relevant and applicable examples of schools and local educational agencies that have taken steps to offer healthy options for foods sold or served in schools;

(B) Include such other technical assistance as is required to carry out the goals of promoting sound nutrition and establishing healthy school nutrition environments that are consistent with this section;

(C) Be provided in such a manner as to be consistent with the specific needs and requirements of local educational agencies; and

(D) Be for guidance purposes only and not be construed as binding or as a mandate to schools, local educational agencies, school food authorities, or State educational agencies.

(3) FUNDING. –

(A) IN GENERAL. – On July 1, 2006, out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the Secretary of the Treasury shall transfer to the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out this subsection \$4,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2009.

(B) RECEIPT AND ACCEPTANCE. – The Secretary shall be entitled to receive, shall accept, and shall use to carry out this subsection the funds transferred under subparagraph (A), without further appropriation.