

HOW CAN YOU MAKE A
HEALTHY
DIFFERENCE
IN SCHOOLS?

just
ASK?
ADVOCATES • SCHOOLS • KIDS





The solution to adult problems
tomorrow depends on large measure
upon how our children grow up today.

— Margaret Mead

This manual was created by the North Carolina Parent Teacher Association (NCPTA) to provide information and strategies to help you successfully advocate for school policies and programs that can positively impact your child's health and academic success.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SCHOOL HEALTH	3
Getting Started	4
Develop a Plan	7
Working with Decision Makers.....	8
Working with the Media	9
NC Healthy People 2020 Strategies	16
HEALTHY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	11
Resource Development	11
What is Fundraising?	11
Healthy Fundraisers & Raising Funds for Health.....	12
Making Healthy Changes	14



What is Just ASK?

Just ASK (Advocates . Schools . Kids) is an initiative of the North Carolina PTA to educate and empower parents and families to encourage effective school policies and programs that support child health and academic success.

Why Advocate?

As a parent or caregiver, you are responsible for the health and well-being of your child. Since they spend a lot of their time at school, it's important for you to know what is going on in the school, As an informed advocate, you can influence decisions.

Did You Know?

- Well-nourished kids learn better and physical activity supports academic achievement.
- Childhood overweight and obesity, diabetes, asthma and allergies are impacting school attendance, behavior, attention and lifetime success.
- Principals and other decision makers at schools care about what you think, and parents have an important voice in influencing school health policies and practices.

Getting Started

Just ASK!

Getting involved is as simple as asking questions.

Just ASK about the school health policies and practice at your school. Schools should strive to support a collaborative approach to learning and health similar to the CDC model of the whole school, whole community, whole child to improve students' health knowledge, attitudes, and skills; health behaviors and health outcomes; and educational and social outcomes.

WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD



Source: ASCD and CDC
www.ascd.org/wholechild
www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth

Find out if your school has completed a School Health Index, Successful Student's Scorecard, or other school health assessment to learn about your school's health. If they haven't, request one be completed and offer to be a part of the process.

Collaboration is Key

Seek out opportunities to engage other people.

- Build a network of concerned parents, teachers, a school nurse, other school staff, healthcare providers, civic groups, businesses and other organizations. Invite them to get involved as PTA volunteers and supporters.
- Engage in community building activities and look to your community for volunteers and learning opportunities.
- Look to your community for volunteers and learning opportunities and engage in community building activities.

Do Your Research

Research the issues and go to trusted sources for information. Review the list below as you consider important school health issues, prevention, and healthy school environments.

- Overweight and Obesity
- Physical Activity and Nutrition
- Physical Education and Health Education
- Asthma and Allergies
- Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug use or abuse
- Mental Health, Suicide, School Violence, and Bullying
- Staff Worksite Wellness

A list of suggested organizations and websites is also included in the resources section of this manual.

Set Clear Goals

Just ASK if it is possible to make something happen now, in the next several months, or in the short-term future? What are realistic time expectations considering your goals, the school's climate and the resources that are available?

- Outline your goals, tasks and timeline.
- Work on a few tasks at a time and share responsibilities so you can really focus on achieving success. If you try to do too much, you or your volunteers may burn out.
- As you make progress, assess if you need to adjust your plan or add anything new.



Develop a Plan & Take Action

There are many resources in your community that can help you improve school health.

Government Agencies

Local government agencies offer health programs and educational opportunities for the community (e.g., Cooperative Extension, Health Department and Parks and Recreation).

Organizational Resources

Statewide and national organizations have resources available to improve child and school health.

National PTA and NCPTA provide guidance and resources for student health and welfare, parent involvement, and advocacy.

- NC Action for Healthy Kids provides resources for parent advocacy.
- Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!) empowers youth, in partnership with adults, to create community change.
- NC School Health Training Center and NC Alliance for Athletics, Health and Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (NCAAHPERD) provide teacher training.
- The Alliance for a Healthier Generation can help schools achieve success and receive national recognition for healthy schools programs.

Time & Money

Improving school health requires both time and money. Some businesses designate a portion of their profit or volunteer their services to support their community. These may include banks, home improvement stores, grocery stores, local ABC stores and others nearby businesses. The local health department may also know about grant application opportunities.

The chamber of commerce may also be a good resource to learn more about opportunities for business support. Consider a conversation with local leaders about the possibility of a healthy fundraiser such as a walk-a-thon for financial support.

Working with Decision Makers

School health responsibilities may be addressed by different people at each school. Investigate who you can contact about your School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), which is required in every NC school district. At the school level, initiate conversations with the school nurse, health and physical education teachers, and classroom teachers. At the district level, you can talk to the central office staff in charge of healthful living or the child nutrition director.

Take notes during meetings or phone calls and share information with the principal and others involved. Follow the tips below to build working relationships and make progress as you contact or meet people.

- When calling, writing, or emailing a decision-maker, make sure to identify who you are and why you're contacting them. Be brief and specific, and let them know how you can be reached for follow up.
- Manners matter when it comes to making and keeping appointments. Be on time, respect time constraints, be polite and send a thank you email or note for their time. Avoid blaming or criticizing anyone. Establishing and maintaining a respectful relationship will go far in achieving your goals.
- If your issue is elevated to the superintendent, school board, or county commissioner level, it is best to ask your most influential stakeholders to contact them individually to make the case and learn who will support your issue. These may include your county health director, healthcare provider, and community organizations. Make sure your issue is documented in the official meeting record.
- You may be asked questions you don't know the answer to – that's okay! Tell them you will get back to them with the answer and then do so in a timely manner.
- Don't be afraid to hear "no." Some of the most important issues take a lot of work to make change happen. Ask what would change their opinion and work towards meeting these needs. Keep a positive tone by focusing on what went well and build from that.

Working with the Media

Ask the media if they need any content on your issue. You can provide information to them that they may want to publish.

- Share your successes and give credit to all of the schools and officials who have worked with you.
- Write letters to the editors and op-eds. Write a brief headline that identifies the topic and will grab the attention of readers.
- When contacting the media, keep it brief and specific. Stay focused on the issue. Conclude with the main point, recommendations or a call-to-action.
- If you have a unique perspective on an issue, share from that point of view.
- Put the good stuff first. The most interesting, most compelling, and most dramatic information belongs at the beginning of a letter, news release or pitch to media.
- Without emotion, evaluate the main opposing argument if there is any. Be prepared for a conversation about different views.
- Be responsive. If contacted by the media, respond in a timely fashion and provide accurate information or resources.
- If you do not have the facts or are not comfortable speaking on a specific topic, do your best to refer or connect them to the right resource.
- Share your successes with NCPTA so other PTA units and councils can benefit from your good work and lessons learned.

Delivering Your Ideas

Be clear about what you want and ask for it. Prepare and practice a 30-second elevator speech to easily summarize your issue and what you want stakeholders or decision makers to do to address it. Practicing your speech frequently with others will help prepare you for effectively communicating your issue when you have the attention of the right people.



Resource Development

A PTA's real working capital lies in its members. Fundraising should not be the primary focus. When PTAs invest their human resources in programs and build a sustainable infrastructure for these programs, they create benefits for all children and youth with modest outlays of money.

Remember the Basics of PTA Policies

- Children should never be exploited or used as fund-raisers
- Funds generated by the PTA should be budgeted for purposes that advance the work of the PTA
- Ensure compliance with IRS regulations, NC's sales and use tax laws, and state and National PTA fundraising guidelines
- Maintain copies of sales contracts and purchase orders
- Account for all fundraising monies both paid and received

What is Fundraising?

In the most basic terms, fundraising is a type of resource development to support a specific need. When the resource needed is money, development activities include finding sources of funds.

What are fundraisers used for?

- School improvement, like playground expansion or books for the library
- Supplement classroom activity costs
- Healthy lifestyle activities or items, PE equipment, special guest speakers, staff wellness activities or a community garden
- To provide grants to schools for activities or items for students
- To support extracurricular activities, sports teams or clubs

What are traditional fundraisers?

- Sales of items and services
- Concession stands
- A-la-carte food items sold at school

Since these methods of raising funds are such a normal part of some schools' activities, many PTA units might not be aware of healthier alternatives.

Healthy Fundraisers + Raising Funds for Health

- Some fundraisers can incorporate healthy activities while raising money for other items related to academic success. For example, a run or walk-a-thon could provide a fun opportunity for families to get moving while raising funds for books for the library.
- Some fundraisers aren't specifically healthy, but they can be used to fund health improvements at schools. For example, the sale of books, magazines, and wrapping paper could raise necessary funds to pay for playground improvement or PE equipment.
- Candy and some other popular food sales are not healthy and should be avoided because they contradict the mission to support healthy students. They shouldn't even be used to pay for healthy activities because that can be misleading to children and community members.

Why Should You Choose Healthy Fundraising?

Healthy Kids Learn Better. Research clearly demonstrates that good nutrition is linked to better behavior and academic performance. To provide the best possible learning environment for children, schools must also provide an environment that supports healthy behaviors.

- **Provide Consistent Messages** – Fundraising with healthy foods and non-food items demonstrates a commitment to promoting healthy behaviors.
- **Support Classroom Lessons** – Students are learning about health in school.
- **Promote a Healthy School Environment** – Students need to receive consistent, reliable health information and the opportunity to use it. Choosing healthy fundraising alternatives is an important part of providing a healthy school environment.
- **Support Parents' Healthy Efforts** – Parents work hard to feed their children healthy foods and make sure they get plenty of physical activity. Unhealthy fundraisers can derail efforts at home by filling the pantry with snacks that have little nutritional value.

Healthier Fundraisers & Activities for PTAs

- Bike-A-Thons/Walk-A-Thons
- Taste of YOUR TOWN with local chefs providing healthy, seasonal ideas
- PTA yard sales or auctions
- Coupon books
- Sales at local businesses to benefit PTA
- Group discount night at the skating rink, bowling alley, etc.
- Reading contests
- Spelling Bee with sponsors
- Car wash, lawn care, or other services
- Talent shows & parent-staff games
- Silent auction with donated items
- Traditional fundraiser sales of healthy, edible items such as fresh fruit
- Sale of useful items such as gift wrap, greeting cards, sports accessories
- School-related items to build school spirit
- Grants proposals for a specific school need

Making Healthy Changes

Is it still profitable?

Yes! If your PTA unit prefers to sell items, make sure it's an item people in your community, including you, will use and want to buy. For example, replacing sodas and high sugar sports drinks with water and 100% fruit juices at concession stands is an easy change that is still profitable.

Is it more work?

Maybe at first. It may take a little extra time to select a new vendor or plan an event you haven't done before; but it will most likely be easier the next time. Making the transition to healthy fundraising is important for your child, your school and your community. It's worth putting in the extra time to get the ball rolling in the right direction.

Other Resource Development

There are other ways of find the resources your school community needs. Consider the ideas below as you outline your goals for the year.

- Grant Funding
- Community Support
- Business Sponsorships

For example, ask a local business to match funds raised or provide supplies or in-kind support.

Get Creative!

- Ask for donations of gym or fitness facility passes.
- Request a fruit basket for a raffle at a parent-teacher gathering.
- Inquire with an expert about speaking for free on a topic of concern.
- Contact running, cycling, or other sports groups in your area to see if they would be willing to support your PTA by donating event proceeds.
- Tap into school and community volunteer networks for a school garden or other project – volunteer work has a real value to schools and children.
- Talk to other PTAs in NC to get more creative ideas.

Remember that some gifts, both monetary and non-monetary, come unexpectedly through community outreach and your everyday interactions with community members.

Other Steps for Healthy Schools

- Establish a formal healthy fundraising policy for the school or school district.
- Advocate to local government for increased funds for schools and healthy lifestyles.
- Explore free resources and talk to experts in your community.

Share your PTA success stories

You may not need any additional funds this year at all, but you could impact the future of raising money at your child's school. There is value in sharing information, raising awareness, and building coalitions of partners who share the mission of supporting healthy students.

- School staff, contracted companies, or service providers may know about resources that are available. Initiate and engage in conversations with the people at your school about what may be available and invite them to connect with the PTA and potential partners.
- Stay aware of what's happening in your community, in North Carolina, and nationwide. By keeping up with current education and health trends, you are more likely to discover opportunities to make a healthy difference.
- Regularly attend public forums and educational events to learn about what's happening around you, communicate with others, and share your goals and successes.
- Offer your group's support to other community groups, like a food bank. These connections can be beneficial to both organizations as you learn from each other and consider ways to work together.
- Work with the media to share your successes, needs, and information.

North Carolina Healthy People

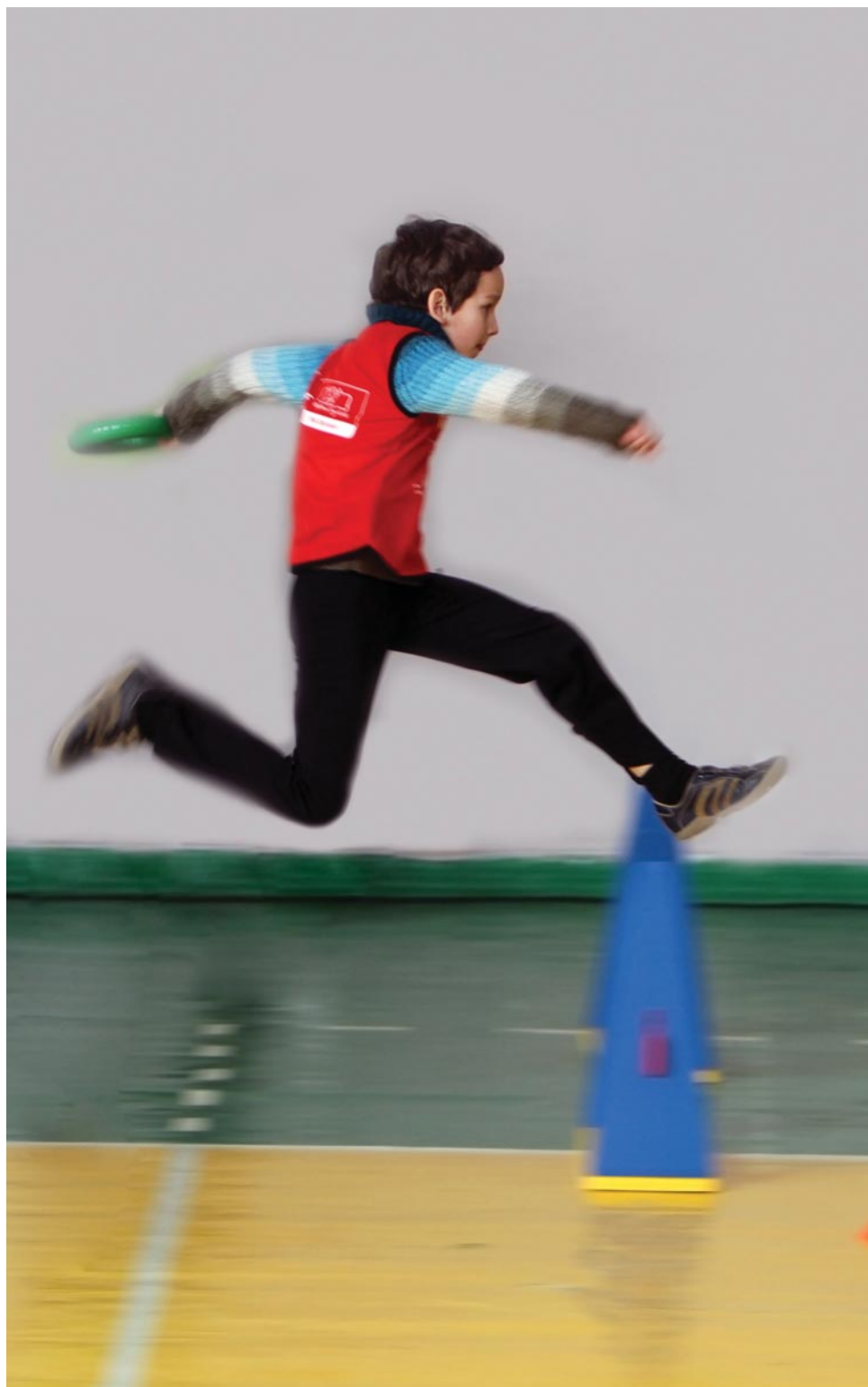
2020 Strategies

Experts have identified strategies that families, schools and communities can work towards to improve the health of children. Evidence-based healthful living curricula (health education and physical education), that meet the objectives in the in NC Healthful Living Standard Course of Study, is just one key strategy. Consider choosing some of these select strategies to advocate for at home and in your school.

TOPIC	STRATEGIES	
	FAMILY	SCHOOLS
Tobacco	Maintain a tobacco free home.	Enforce tobacco-free school laws.
Physical Activity & Nutrition	Serve fruits and vegetables with meals; reduce screen time at home.	Offer high-quality physical education and healthy foods and beverages in schools; expand physical activity and healthy eating in after-school programs; support joint use of recreational facilities.
Injury & Violence	Reduce potential hazards in the home; supervise children at home and on the playground; store medicines and chemicals in locked cabinets.	Establish a social environment that promotes safety and prevents unintentional injuries, violence, & suicide; maintain safe playgrounds, school grounds, and school buses; provide health, counseling, psychological, and social services to meet the needs of students.
Oral Health	Promote good quality oral health; help children to avoid frequent snacking between meals; ensure that children receive regular dental care from a pediatrician or dentist.	Establish school-based and school-linked dental sealant delivery programs; offer referrals to providers; offer fluoride supplements in schools.

Mental Health	<p>Respond sensitively to family members with mental health conditions; know what community resources exist; help family members make contact with appropriate services; safely store firearms.</p>	<p>Implement evidenced-based mental health programs, train staff members in the signs of mental illness and to identify stress in children that leads to mental health problems; staff should be knowledgeable in resources, offer appropriate referrals, and act sensitively; mental health professionals working at schools should have specific training in child and adolescent mental health.</p>
Social Factors of Health	<p>Encourage everyone in the family to get his or her high school diploma or GED and to pursue higher education.</p>	<p>Reduce short and long-term suspensions by expanding Positive Behavior Support initiatives that impact school learning environments; expand alternative learning programs for students who have been suspended from school; develop Learn and Earn partnerships between community colleges and high schools.</p>
Substance Abuse	<p>Talk to your children about the dangers of substance use and help family members with substance use problems get into treatment; parents should serve as positive role models for children by neither drinking excessively nor using drugs.</p>	<p>Instill substance abuse prevention programs; establish, review, and enforce rules about underage drinking with sufficient consequences.</p>
STDs & Unintended Pregnancy	<p>Talk to your children about the consequences of risky sexual behavior; encourage females aged 11-26 years to get the HPV vaccine.</p>	<p>Ensure that all* students receive comprehensive sexuality education; deliver group-based comprehensive risk reduction to adolescents to promote behaviors that prevent or reduce the risk of pregnancy, HIV, and other STDs.</p>

*NCPTA supports a parent's decision to allow their child to participate in comprehensive sexuality education.



Resources

North Carolina PTA

ncpta.org

National PTA

pta.org

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

ncpublicschools.org

childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/programs

NC Action for Healthy Kids

actionforhealthykids.org/in-your-state

Centers for Disease Control

cdc.gov/healthyyouth

Healthy North Carolina 2020

publichealth.nc.gov/hnc2020

Association of Fund-Raising Distributors and Suppliers

afrds.org

Alliance for Healthier Generation

Beverage & Competitive Food Guidelines

www.healthiergeneration.org



www.ncpta.org

919-787-0534 | 1-800-255-0417

Acknowledgements

This document was made possible through support by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation.



**BlueCross BlueShield
of North Carolina**

Foundation