



## Bring Fit Kids to Your School

Two out of three adults and nearly one in three children ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese. This health problem is now a nationwide epidemic. Overweight and obesity are associated with a number of health risks such as diabetes, cancer, stroke, heart disease, and hypertension.

Promoting healthy eating and regular physical activity in school is very important because schools play a critical role in influencing children's behavior. When children develop healthy habits in school that are reinforced at home, they are given the tools needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout their adult lives.

Westchester County's *Fit Kids* program partners with schools to help administrators create healthy environments. *Fit Kids* makes it easy for schools to incorporate health education into the daily routine by providing creative and fun ideas to inspire students to eat better and move more. As a result, children gain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to improve their overall health and academic performance.

## What Can Fit Kids Do For My School?

To help you get started, the *Fit Kids Resource Guide* was created which contains information on how to:

- ◆ Improve the quality of food offered in school cafeterias and vending machines.
- ◆ Create opportunities for increased physical activity at school.
- ◆ Establish school policies supporting good nutrition and physical activity.
- ◆ Develop the "School-Home" Connection by providing parents with information on nutrition and physical activity.

Physical activity and eating habits are influenced by the entire school environment. *Fit Kids* will provide support and direction to your school's efforts to enhance its wellness policies.

The Department of Health can provide technical expertise, access to resources, incentive prizes for your students, and information about grant funding opportunities to help enrich your wellness program.

## Keys to Success

*Fit Kids* is successful because it is a team effort between school administration, faculty and parents. These key players work collaboratively to promote and reinforce positive health messages and behaviors at school and at home. When the "School-Home Connection" is in place, children benefit from consistent messages and healthy lifestyle practices become second nature.

Chances are your school doesn't need to create a wellness program from scratch. Many schools already have some of the components of *Fit Kids* in place. *Fit Kids* staff can help to fine tune your existing programs and supplement your overall nutrition and physical activity curriculum.



## Fit Kids Program Successes

- ◆ *Fit Kids* School Districts have adopted nutrition standards for foods and beverages served in school.
- ◆ Districts have significantly improved their school lunch menus when new contracts were negotiated by offering more healthy options.
- ◆ Schools have promoted walking by building hiking paths, designating indoor walking paths, forming walking clubs and sponsoring monthly walk-to-school days.



- ◆ School districts have worked with their communities to explore Safe Routes to School programs that encourage and enable children to safely walk and bike to school.
- ◆ Schools have planted gardens that support the science curriculum and increase students' interest in nutrition and the food system.
- ◆ School districts have implemented worksite wellness programs for staff.

## How Can I Get More Information

*Fit Kids* would love to team up with your school.

Please call the Westchester County Department of Health, Bureau of Community Nutrition Services at (914) 813-5000.

You can also visit our website at: <http://www.westchestergov.com/health/FitKids.htm> to learn more about the program and what *Fit Kids* schools are doing.



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