

# Healthy Schools & Healthy Kids

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*Resources for Promoting Health and  
Wellness in Sarasota County Schools*



This document was compiled by CHIP — the Community Health Improvement Partnership. The content reflects input and discussion from a workgroup interested in Promoting Health and Wellness in Schools, a theme which emerged as a community priority at the 2008 Community Health Interactive. To learn more, visit [www.chip4health.org/interactive](http://www.chip4health.org/interactive) or contact Kari Ellingstad at [kari\\_ellingstad@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:kari_ellingstad@doh.state.fl.us).



## Introduction

Before reaching high school graduation, most kids in America will spend the equivalent of about 700 days in school. Every school day provides an opportunity to learn about healthy lifestyles and the skills necessary to engage in healthy behaviors.

The importance of consistent wellness messages and opportunities in schools cannot be underestimated. In the United States, chronic diseases are leading causes of death and disease. Engaging in healthy behaviors –such as participating in physical activity, eating healthy, avoiding tobacco use – have been linked to prevention of these conditions. Research has shown that promoting and establishing healthy behaviors for younger people are more effective, and often easier, than efforts to change unhealthy behaviors already established in adult populations.

But are we making health and wellness the priority that it should be? Are we taking advantage of all of the opportunities available to help our kids grow healthy and strong? Are we partnering effectively – administrators, parents, teachers, students – to find creative ways to establish healthy patterns and practices which will last a lifetime? Are we doing enough?

This document provides a quick look at the health of public school children in Sarasota County and gives an overview of some of the local programs and resources which promote health and wellness in our schools. Most importantly, it can be used to enhance dialogue about how our community can adopt innovative approaches to make our schools and students healthier.

**Are we taking advantage of all of the opportunities available to help our children grow healthy and strong?**

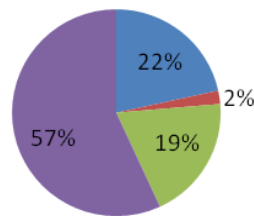


## A Look at the Numbers

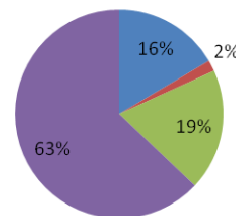
In order to grow, learn, and thrive, children need access to healthful foods, opportunities to be physically active and the tools to support healthy decision-making. Yet local data suggest there is more work to be done to promote health among our student population:

- During the 2007/2008 school year, 41% of Sarasota County public school 6<sup>TH</sup> graders were overweight or obese; 35% of high school students fell into one of these two categories.<sup>1</sup> These data are consistent with trends nationwide which reveal that obesity rates have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents over the last two decades. Physical inactivity and excessive calorie intake are the predominant causes of obesity.

**Body Mass Index Results**  
Sarasota County Middle School Students



**Body Mass Index Results**  
Sarasota County High School Students



- Though 72% of middle students had participated in vigorous physical activity for at least 20 minutes on at least 3 of the seven days preceding the survey, 25% of students also reported having watched 3 or more hours of television on an average school day.<sup>2</sup>
- 33% of Sarasota County high school students reported using tobacco and 25% reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks at one time) in the last 30 days. 19% of high school students reported using marijuana during the same time frame.<sup>3</sup>
- 12% of Sarasota County middle school students had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in one day within the past year.<sup>2</sup>

1. Data from Sarasota County School Health nurses.

2. Sarasota County Middle Schools Youth Risk Behavior Survey. 2007-2008 Executive Summary.

3. Sarasota County High Schools Youth Risk Behavior Survey. 2006-2007 Executive Summary.

## Existing Programs and Local Resources to Promote Health & Wellness in Schools

A number of health-promoting programs already exist in Sarasota County schools, some maintained and supported by the Sarasota County School Board, and others initiated by community partners.

### School Wellness Policy

In recent years, federal legislation put schools in the center of America's battle to combat the childhood overweight and obesity epidemic. The U.S. Child and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 reinforces what many concerned parents, educators, health professionals and community leaders have been working towards – schools that foster sound nutrition and physical activity. The legislation requires nearly all of the 15,000 public school districts to implement a local wellness policy. Each policy must include:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity and school-based activities to promote student wellness;
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on the school campus and for school meals ;
- A plan for measuring implementation of the policy; and
- Involvement of parents, students, school administrators and members of the school board and the community.

The wellness policy for Sarasota County, which can be found at, [www.sarasota.k12.fl.us/FNS/nutrition.htm](http://www.sarasota.k12.fl.us/FNS/nutrition.htm), provides a framework for building healthier schools and kids.



### Sarasota County School Health Program

The mission of the Sarasota County School Health program is to promote and protect the health, safety, and well-being of students. The School Health Team is a part of the Sarasota County Health Department (SCHD) and works closely with the Sarasota County School Board. Team members act as a liaison between parents and the school, helping to clarify and interpret medical information and provide medical resources.

A registered nurse is assigned to each of the public schools in Sarasota County, though not all schools have full time nurses. School nurses enhance health within the school and community by providing health appraisals, nursing assessments, periodic health screenings (including state-mandated vision, height/weight, and scoliosis screenings), health counseling, referral and follow-up of suspected or confirmed health problems, emergency health services, and promoting activities to reduce risk-taking behaviors. Health education is conducted by the school nurse in both formal classroom presentations, via active boards, and informal small group or one on one sessions. School nurses collaborate with parents, teachers, social workers, and other health care providers to develop care plans and identify the need for health referrals to address specific health problems discovered through mandated health screenings and assessments.

### Sarasota County Food and Nutrition Services

Sarasota County's Food and Nutrition Services offers a nutrition education program in which children may participate. Students from all over Sarasota County learn about the importance of nutrition and health. Items like the Food Pyramid, healthy snacking, tasting parties, sports nutrition, and many other nutrition-related topics are taught to children.



In the cafeteria, green, yellow, and red on the menu will help students make smart food choices. The three colors work like a traffic light. GO foods, in green, are the lowest in fat, sodium and calories and also “nutrient dense”; SLOW foods, in yellow, are somewhat higher in fat, sodium, and calories than GO foods and should be eaten less frequently than GO foods; and WHOA foods, in red, are the highest in fat, sodium and calories and should be eaten once in a while or on special occasions. The overall message is that all foods can fit into a healthy diet and that a healthy diet is made up of more GO foods than SLOW foods and more SLOW foods than WHOA foods. Check out the Food and Nutrition website to find out more: [www.sarasotacountyschools.net/departments/fns/](http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net/departments/fns/).

### Growing Healthy Kids

Growing Health Kids (GHK) is a collaborative preschool nutrition education, gardening, physical activity and healthy snack program run by All Faiths Food Bank that serves Sarasota and DeSoto counties. It targets at-risk and low-income preschool children and their families at childcare sites as well as parent education groups. Last school year the program served 67 classrooms and 1,076 children.

The GHK curriculum is centered on research-based nutrition information and focused on healthy eating habits. Each month a different nutrition topic is featured, including MyPyramid, healthy snacking, and each of the five food groups. Nutrition information is distributed to parents weekly. The children learn about gardening and have the opportunity to observe where different foods are from by planting a variety of vegetables and herbs in their indoor GrowLab. For more information about this program, contact Jill Collins at 941.379.6333.

### Healthy Girls Initiative

The new Healthy Girls Initiative of Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida, Inc. offers healthy lifestyle awareness programs for girls ages 8-14 and their caregivers (usually parents) in South Sarasota County (Venice, North Port, Englewood, Laurel, Nokomis, and Osprey). Programs and activities support healthy living from a holistic perspective, focusing on nutritional education, physical activity, emotional/mental wellness, and environmental health. The Healthy Girls Initiative aspires to serve all girls and caregivers of girls in the region through programs during the day in elementary schools, after-school programs with local community organizations, Better Together! fitness classes, summer camps and retreats, spring break trips, community wellness events, We Can! programs for adults, Girl Scout troop and Pathway programs, and churches. Healthy Girls Initiative is made possible through a grant from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice and support from Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida, Inc. For more information, contact Julia Onnie-Hay at 941.921.5358 ext. 319 or by email at [juliao@gsgcf.org](mailto:juliao@gsgcf.org). Also visit the Healthy Girls Initiatives websites at [healthygirlsinitiative.blogspot.com](http://healthygirlsinitiative.blogspot.com) and [www.myspace.com/healthygirlsinitiative](http://www.myspace.com/healthygirlsinitiative).

### South County Family YMCA Student Wellness Initiative

The South County Family YMCA is currently implementing the Student Wellness Initiative in Sarasota County elementary schools. Certified Physical Education teachers taught a 9-lesson curriculum in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade PE classes this fall centered on the 5-2-1-0 campaign. Children received one activity/lesson per week designed by the teachers and the YMCA's registered dietitian, incentives and rewards, a take-home scorecard with assignments for parental involvement and a t-shirt. Additionally, YMCA staff filmed a series of 21, 30-minute exercise videos that teachers county-wide can access in their classrooms via the school board's intranet. The videos help fulfill the state-mandated 150 minute/week PE requirement. To further the initiative, the YMCA has committed to sponsoring large community events for parents and children throughout the year. In October, the Venice Farmer's Market set up at the YMCA and a Fall/Halloween festival ensued with pumpkin decorating and a costume exchange. More events are scheduled in upcoming months with the goal of getting families to be active and healthy together. Contact Jennifer Tucker at 941-375-9106 for more information.

### SWAT - Students Working Against Tobacco

Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) is Florida's statewide youth organization designed to mobilize, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against and deglamorize big tobacco while working toward a tobacco-free future. The focus of SWAT is not the health effects of smoking, as research has historically shown that students do not respond well to a lecture on health effects and smoking after the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Instead, SWAT focuses on media literacy and marketing, teaching students that they are being targeted by the tobacco industry and giving them the opportunity to rebel against the industry. SWATs are designed for grades 6-12 and can be found in several public and private schools in Sarasota County. If you are interested in starting a SWAT Club at your school, contact Megan Jourdan at 941. 861.2997 or by email at [megan\\_jourdan@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:megan_jourdan@doh.state.fl.us).

### Others

The programs listed above reflect just some of the wellness opportunities which exist at Sarasota County Schools. Programming differs by school. Some schools offer diabetes support groups, "Fit-N-Fun" clubs, or walking programs where grades or classrooms compete against each other. The possibilities for incorporating health and wellness activities into the school day are endless.

## Fun Fundraising

Fun runs, talent shows, dances, skate nights – these are all *activities* which can be used to raise money. And instead of selling candy or other sweets to raise money for schools, healthy cookbooks, gift wrap, flowers, books, or Tupperware are all healthier alternatives.

## Encourage celebrations and rewards which promote health.

Schools and communities need to provide students with an environment that supports healthy behaviors. Instead of treats being the focus of birthday celebrations or offered as a reward at school, some healthier alternatives can be adopted. Students could:

- Select a paperback book
- Enter a drawing for donated prizes
- Take a trip to the treasure box (non-food items)
- Get stickers, pencils, and other school supplies
- Receive a video store or movie theatre coupon
- Listen to music while working
- Play a favorite game or puzzle
- Earn play money for privileges
- Walk with a teacher during lunch
- Eat lunch outdoors with the class



## Action for Healthy Kids

Action for Healthy Kids, a national non-profit organization working to improve children's nutrition and increase physical activity, which in turn improves their readiness to learn.



### **Action for Healthy Kids.**

resources for improving schools and children's health can be found on the organizations website: [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org).

The organization is a trusted and recognized authority and resource on creating health promoting schools that support sound nutrition and good physical activity. A variety of

## Walking School Bus

A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. If that sounds simple, it is, and that's part of the beauty of the walking school bus. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school to as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

The Walking School Bus concept started as an effort to increase the safety of streets for pedestrians and bicyclists and also to increase the engagement in physical activity among school-age children. Another added benefit is that it reduces the amount of congestion on the road and as a result is more environmentally friendly. To learn more about the Walking School bus idea – and how to start one at your school – go to [www.walkingschoolbus.org](http://www.walkingschoolbus.org).



## Florida KidCare

Florida KidCare is high quality, low-cost health insurance for uninsured children birth through age 18 who are American citizens or documented immigrants (though others may qualify).



Insurance coverage includes doctor's visits, medication, hospital care, dental visits and more. For more information and an application please telephone Virginia Brockman at 941.861.2813 or apply online at [FloridaKidCare.org](http://FloridaKidCare.org).

## Helpful Numbers for Local Resources

<b>AIDS/HIV/STDs</b>	
Community AIDS Network	941.366.0134
Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline	1.800.352.2437
Sarasota Co. Health Dept, STD Clinic	
Sarasota	941.861.2900
Venice	941.492.3800
ALSO Out Youth	941.951.2576
<b>CHILD ABUSE &amp; NEGLECT</b>	
Child Protection Center, Sarasota	941.365.1277
Florida Abuse Hotline (24 hrs)	1.800.962.2873
<b>COUNSELING</b>	
Bayside Center @ SMH (Assessment Center)	941.917.7760
CACE Charis Center	941.378.1549
Center for Change of Florida	941.955.5518
Charlotte Behavior Health Carer	941.639.8300
Coastal Behavioral Health Care	
Sarasota	941.952.1147
Venice	941.492.4360
Family Emergency Treatment Center	941.952.1147
Florida Center for Child and Family Development	941.371.8820
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Sarasota and Manatee	941.366.2224
YMCA Family Services	941.952.1644
<b>CRISIS LINES</b>	
24/7 Crisis Line	1.800.999.9999
Coastal Crisis Line	941.364.9355
Student Crisis Line	1.800.226.7733
National Crisis Line	1.800.273.TALK

<b>EATING DISORDERS</b>	
Eating Disorder Hotline	1.800.931.2237
<b>HOSPITALS / MEDICAL</b>	
Venice Regional Medical Center	941.485.7711
Doctors Hospital	941.342.1100
Sarasota Memorial	941.917.9000
<b>LEGAL / FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE</b>	
Gulfcoast Legal Services	941.366.1746
Family Law Connection	941.952.9899
Children & Family Services	
Sarasota	941.316.6000
Venice	941.483.5922
<b>RUNAWAY</b>	
Runaway Hotline	1.800.RUN.A.WAY
YMCA Youth Shelter	941.955.5596
<b>SEXUALITY</b>	
<b>Assault &amp; Rape</b>	
Safe Place & Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC)	
Sarasota	365.1976
Venice	492.3752
<b>Pregnancy</b>	
Cyesis Program	361.6240
Planned Parenthood	365.3913
Pregnancy Solutions	408.7100
Sarasota County Health Department	861.2900
<b>Gay &amp; Lesbian</b>	
ALSO Out Youth	951.2576
ALSO Helpline	544.7016

<b>POISON</b>	
Emergency	911
Poison Control Center	1.800.222.1222
<b>SUBSTANCE ABUSE</b>	
Alcohol Hotline	1.800.252.6465
ALA-TEEN Local Helpline	941.556.1346
	<a href="http://www.southfloridaal.anon.org">www.southfloridaal.anon.org</a>
Coastal Behavioral Health Care	
Sarasota	941.952.1147
Venice	941.492.4300
Drug Abuse Hotline	1.800.821.4357
First Step	
Sarasota	941.552.2075
Venice	941.497.7742
Sarasota Coalition on Substance Abuse	941.377.7736
Suncoast Narcotics Anonymous	941.257-5055
	<a href="http://www.suncoastna.org">www.suncoastna.org</a>
Tobacco Quitline	1.877.822.6669
Web Resources	<a href="http://www.freevibe.com">www.freevibe.com</a>
	<a href="http://www.abovetheinfluence.com">www.abovetheinfluence.com</a>
	<a href="http://www.painfullyobvious.com">www.painfullyobvious.com</a>
	<a href="http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com">www.tobaccofreeflorida.com</a>
<b>OTHER RESOURCES</b>	
Community Youth Development	941.922.5126
Teen Line (Listing of Activities).	941.926.TEEN
	<a href="http://www.thelookup941.org">www.thelookup941.org</a>
Sheriff's Office (Youth Services)	941.927.4190

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Winter 2009