



**ACTION** FOR  
HEALTHY  
KIDS 

Optimal Nutrition Series: Parents and School Nutrition How to Engage Support

# Today's Presenters



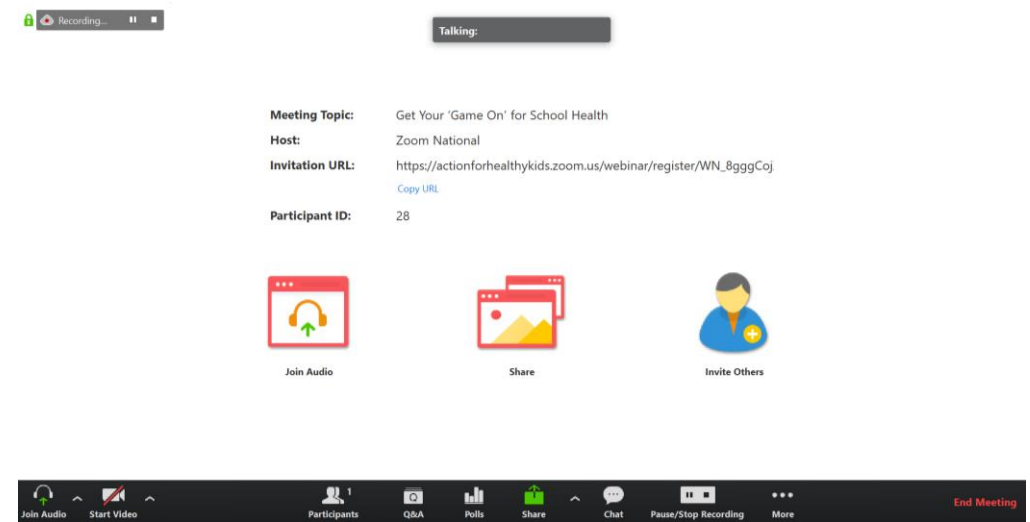
Ellen Dillon  
Senior Field Manager  
Action for Healthy Kids



Grace Perry  
Program Manager  
Action for Healthy Kids

# Logistics

- » Listen in with your telephone or computer speakers
- » Everyone is muted
- » Submit questions in the question box
- » This call is being recorded
- » Link to recording and handouts will be sent out following the call



# Agenda

- » Action for Healthy Kids Overview
- » What parents say about school nutrition?
- » Value of parent engagement
- » How can schools engage parents?
- » How can parents engage schools around nutrition?
- » How parents and schools can work together?
- » Q&A

# Who Are We?

Action for Healthy Kids' (AFHK) vision is a world in which every kid is healthy, active and ready to learn. We work to mobilize school professionals, families and communities to take actions that lead to healthier schools where kids thrive.



# The Learning Connection



**1 in 3** U.S. children are overweight or obese


Overweight kindergartners had significantly lower math/reading scores than those at a healthy weight.<sup>2</sup>

Eating school breakfast positively affects student attendance, which leads to high academic achievement.<sup>3</sup>

Children who ate school breakfast increased their math grades by **+0.3 points** based on a 4.0 scale.<sup>3</sup>

Participation in breakfast programs is associated with:

- Increased grades and test scores
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved cognitive function
- Memory and attention improvement!<sup>1</sup>




High quality diets (and increases in micronutrients<sup>1</sup>) improve cognition and the ability to perform well during short-term memory tests.<sup>5</sup>

Children with increased cholesterol intake had poor performance on short-term memory and cognition testing.<sup>6</sup>




Physical activity is positively associated with students' cognitive functioning<sup>1</sup> which includes ability to pay attention, memory, and IQ test scores.

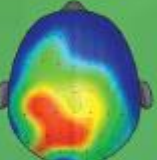


Participation in PE class is associated with better grades, test scores, and classroom behavior.<sup>1</sup>

A 20-minute walk demonstrates a brain that is activated and primed to learn.<sup>4</sup>



after 20 minutes of sitting quietly



after 20 minutes of walking

# Nutrition Environment and Service and Parent Engagement

# WHOLE

» SCHOOL

» COMMUNITY

» CHILD



# Tell Us About Yourself

What is your role?

- a. School nutrition staff
- b. School administrator
- c. Teacher
- d. Parent
- e. Community Partner
- f. School Nurse
- g. Other





# Tell Us About Yourself

What is your primary objective for participating in this webinar?

- a. I want to learn more about parent perceptions of school nutrition
- b. I want to better understand how to engage parents in school nutrition
- c. I want to better understand how parents can engage school nutrition.
- d. I want to know how to help the two groups work together
- e. Other.





# Parent Perception

AFHK conducted a nationally representative survey to learn what was of interest to them and how were schools addressing these health issues.

# Survey Results

## Parent Health and Wellness Concerns

- » Which of the following, if any, have you not seen adequately addressed at school via campaigns or initiatives?
  - » Nutrition 31%
- » Which of the following, if any, are current challenges regarding your child(ren)'s health and well-being?
  - » Nutrition 18%

# Survey Results

## School engagement: Schools role in engaging parents

- » About which of the following issues, if any, has your child(ren)'s school ever asked for your input?
  - » Other school food (non-meal e.g. snacks, fundraisers or class parties) 25%
  - » School meal programs 23%
- » In which of the following events or activities, if any, have you ever been invited to participate at your child(ren)'s school?
  - » Other school food (non-meal e.g. snacks, fundraisers or class parties) 23%
  - » School meals 12%

# Survey Results

## Parent Engagement

- » Which of the following types of issues, if any, would you be interested in giving input on at your child(ren)'s school?
  - » School Meals 42%
  - » Other school food 32%
- » For which of the following reasons might you consider participating in a health and well-being event or activity at your child(ren)'s school?
  - » Someone asked me 48%
  - » Another parent asked me 35%



# What is parent engagement?

Parent engagement does not mean the same thing to all parents or to all cultures.

# Parent Engagement

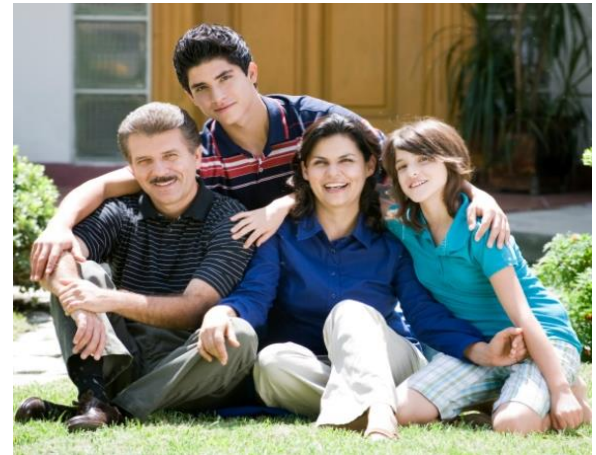
Parents can be involved in school health and wellness by:

- » Staying informed on family and school health topics
- » Providing support at home: reinforcing health messages learned at school
- » Providing support at school: volunteering on health and wellness initiatives
- » Lending valuable feedback and input on decisions



# Benefits of Parent Engagement

- » Benefits for Students
  - » Higher academic achievement, better attendance, better social skills, better eating habits, increased physical activity, less emotional distress
- » Benefits for Parents
  - » Better parenting skills, more confidence in parenting and decision-making skills
- » Benefits for Teachers and Principals
  - » More respect from families, higher morale and job satisfaction





# How to build awareness in parents from School Nutrition perspective?

- ❖ Gather feedback
- ❖ Meet them where they are
- ❖ Participate in meetings and events



# Build Awareness around School Meals

- Share the benefits
- Federal meal requirements
- Menu planning
- Taste tests

## SCHOOL MEALS HELP MILLIONS OF KIDS GROW UP HEALTHY

### BIG CHANGES

99% of U.S. schools meet USDA's healthier meals standards that took effect in 2012

Breakfasts are **44%** healthier

Lunches are **41%** healthier

Schools with the healthiest meals have highest student participation rate

### Kids like and eat more of their meals:

More students are choosing fruit in the lunch line

2012: 54% | 2014: 66%

Students are eating more of the vegetables they choose at school

2012: 46% | 2014: 64%

Students are eating more of their school meal entrees

2012: 71% | 2014: 84%



### Healthy Eating Index scores show lunches offer more key nutrients:

Whole Grains  
2009: 25 | 2014: 95

Fruits  
2009: 77 | 2014: 95

Greens / Green Beans  
2009: 21 | 2014: 72

### BIG IMPACT

**28.2M students participate in school lunch, and benefit from:**

**A healthier diet**

- + fruit
- + vegetables
- + milk

(at breakfast and lunch)

**Better academic performance**

- + attendance
- + test scores
- + grades
- + classroom behavior

**Reduced health risks**

- obesity
- hunger
- food insecurity

### BRIGHT FUTURE

According to Harvard researchers, over the next 10 years, the healthier standards will:

Prevent **2+ million** cases of childhood obesity



Save up to **\$792 million** in health care costs



# How Can Parents Engage?

What can parents do to engage school nutrition?

- » Establish a friendly relationship with school food service personnel
- » Familiarize yourself with nutrition standards and guidelines
- » Research, understand, and respect common food service concerns



# What else can parents do?

## Increase participation in Meals

- » Marketing
- » Taste Tests
- » Ask adults to eat school meals with students
- » Conduct a student focus group



# How to work together?

---

Build trust

Grow cultural relevance

Two-way  
communications

Common goals



# Health & Wellness Parent Advisory Committee

## Denver Public Schools and Action for Healthy Kids

### Description/Summary

With support from Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) and DPS Food and Nutrition Services, parents from eight schools in southwest Denver are meeting regularly with district staff to discuss student health, unite their voices, and advocate for healthy changes to their schools' wellness policies and practices.

Started in partnership with the neighborhood leadership organization, Westwood Unidos, to address parent concerns related to school meals, the group soon broadened its reach and focus to become the bilingual DPS Health & Wellness Southwest Parent Advisory Committee.



### Committee Activities

- Committee meets 6-8 times during the school year.
- Discussion topics related to school nutrition, physical activity, social emotional climate and mental health are determined by committee members in advance.
- Speakers from different DPS student support teams give brief presentations about available services and how parents can get engaged at the community level, followed by community sharing and discussion.
- Parents learn from district staff, community experts, and each other.
- District staff learn what's important to parents and what knowledge, skills and resources parents can contribute to advance district and community goals around student health and its connection to learning.

“The committee allows parents to engage with the larger community—not just their own kids. Rather than just seeing problems, the meetings help parents become more involved in the solutions.”

Theresa Peña, Regional Coordinator for Outreach and Engagement for DPS Food and Nutrition Services

“To achieve changes in the health of our children, we have to be involved!”

Gabriela Medina, Colorado AFHK Parent Advisory Board Member and Committee Co-Leader

### Promising Partnership Practices Colorado 2019

### School Nutrition Successes

- Family engagement and community involvement have increased.
- Student access to water has increased as a result of stronger policies and practices.
- Lunch menus have been updated to feature more culturally relevant items.
- Customer service has improved.
- Quality concerns related to food temperature have been addressed.

### Key Elements for Success

- Committed parent-leader who cares deeply about the work and has connections and credibility in the community
- District or school staff with strong belief in the group's purpose and value and a willingness to take actions to address family concerns
- Skilled, neutral meeting facilitator to provide welcoming atmosphere of trust and inclusivity
- Quality interpretation with meetings conducted in language spoken by majority of participants
- Partnerships with community groups to help build trust and deepen relationships between school/district staff and family members
- District, community or nonprofit funding to support meeting coordination and facilitation

# Takeaways...

- Parents want to be involved.
- Nutrition departments can benefit from parent involvement.
- Strategies for parents getting involved.
- Grow opportunity to work together.



# Healthy Eating Toolkit

- Recipes
- Creative School Gardens
- Healthy Fundraising
- Nutrition Education
- Staff Role Modeling
- Taste Tests
- And more!

## Healthy Eating Toolkit

Feast on these nutrition resources—for use at home or at school—to get your kids or students inspired to eat better and build healthy habits.

I'm a parent

I'm an educator

### ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

## Encourage healthy eaters

This interactive toolkit, sponsored by Dole, is your one-stop shop for all things nutrition. Eating better helps improve kids' learning, behavior, and emotional health, so start building healthy habits with these recipes, resources, and ideas on a variety of topics. Check back regularly for new and updated content.





# Follow Us for More Resources

Stay up to date on Success Stories, health tips, physical activity games, fun recipes, volunteer opportunities, and ideas for action!

 Action for Healthy Kids shared a link.  
Posted by Jacqueline Periman [?] · December 14



Spice up your classroom and play the Game On! 12 Days of Fitness Challenge. #SmilesAllAround



12 Days of Fitness  
[www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org)



Healthy and Fun Snack Ideas



72 Pins



Edit

Healthy Treats for Kids



38 Pins



Edit



# Connect to Your School

It is super helpful for us to know not just the people interested in our resources but the schools using them, too.

Connect to your school(s)

<https://actionforhealthykids.secure.force.com/affiliation/#affiliation>

# Questions?

## Contact Info:

Name: Ellen Dillon

Phone: 410.707.9038

Email: [edillon@actionforhealthykids.org](mailto:edillon@actionforhealthykids.org)

Name: Grace Perry

Phone:

Email: [gperry@actionforhealthykids.org](mailto:gperry@actionforhealthykids.org)



**Every kid healthy, active and ready to learn**

**[actionforhealthykids.org](http://actionforhealthykids.org) • 600 W. Van Buren St., Suite 720, Chicago, IL 60607 • 1.800.416.5136**