



**OH Partners /  
Arizona Department of Health Services  
AZ Health Zone**

**School Wellness Policy  
Focus Group Report**

*May 24, 2018*

# Research Objectives & Methodology

**Research Goal:** Determine the best creative concept to raise awareness of and encourage engagement in, Local Wellness Policies at Arizona schools.

## **Research Objectives:**

- Gauge reactions to 8 messaging options
- Test each for being attention-grabbing, believable, informative, and compelling
- Test possible program names

## **Target Audience:**

- Parents of school aged children, with focus on elementary and middle-school age
- English and Spanish-dominant parents
- Statewide

## **Focus groups:**

- Phoenix (4 groups – 2 English, 2 Spanish), Tucson (2 groups – 1 English, 1 Spanish), Flagstaff (1 group - English)

The focus groups, which were held on May 3, 7, 9 and 14, 2018, were moderated by Wendy Godfrey, senior analyst at WestGroup Research and Monica Villalobos of Research by Design.

*The findings in the following slides are qualitative and therefore intended to be directional rather than predictive. Because of the limited number of respondents involved in the research study, all findings should be regarded as exploratory in nature. The results should not be considered projectable to the broader population.*

# Executive Summary: General

- **Parents are not aware of their child’s school’s *Local Wellness Policy*.** When asked specifically about this policy – using this terminology – none of the focus group participants were aware. However, after reviewing the description and associated guidelines, it became apparent that many were familiar with elements of the policy, but did not identify these “dos and don’ts” with the wellness policy. The most frequently mentioned rule relates to what they can bring in the way of snacks for the classroom. In addition, there were several references to the removal of soft drinks and candy from vending machines, and overall healthier food provided by the cafeteria and some competitive offerings. Several parents also identified various physical activity programs schools have begun to use, including *Jump Rope for Heart*, *Fit Kids*, (Flagstaff), *Fuel Up to Play 60* and *Girls on the Run*.
  - *When asked what they thought such a policy would cover, parents named a variety of topics including regulations about safety, guidelines as to when parents should keep their kids home from school, the food pyramid, bullying and other behavioral issues, and more.*
  - *Many Hispanic focus group participants agreed the policy highlights the contradiction of advocating nutrition and wellness, but providing food that lacks in quality and nutritional value.*
- **Parents receive information from their child’s school in numerous ways.** And, as might be expected, they have different preferences when it comes to which communication channel is best for them. When asked specifically how they would like to receive information regarding the school wellness policy, many agreed this type of information should be provided at the beginning of the school year at orientation, or included in the student handbook. However, most suggested a combination of several formats would be best.
  - *Spanish-speakers emphasized the importance of making the communications concise, even if it means a greater volume of messages, so that the information can be digested.*

# Executive Summary: General

- **Parents are most likely to get involved if their child is interested or excited about the wellness initiative.** Others said they would be more likely to get involved if their child's teacher asked them to help, as that is the person they are most likely to have the relationship with.
- ***Healthy Students. Healthy Minds.* was the favorite program name among English and Spanish-speaking parents.** They described it as short and to the point, and they definitely made the connection to the wellness policy.

# Executive Summary: Concepts

- In general, with regard to the visuals, parents liked those concepts that showed happy people, whether they be parents, kids, or school staff. Many also mentioned they liked seeing diversity and variety . . . in age and ethnicity, as well as in the setting, colors and topically. Others found the concept that suggested a partnership among parents, teachers and kids effective. Conversely, they objected to people and settings that looked stereotypical or unreal.
- With respect to the text, letting parents know they have a voice, inviting them to learn more about the wellness policy, and talking about *their* kids were most effective. And, while not unanimous among participants, many parents were drawn in by those concepts that started with “Did you know?”
- Participants agreed the concepts lack information. For the most part, the information they were referring to was the call to action . . . where to go to learn more, ways in which they can get involved and next steps. As one parent put it, *There is no information on how to get involved. There’s no website, and it’s like that on all of these. I’m like, “What do you want me to do? Give me a name or a site to go to or something.”*
- It goes without saying that parents don’t want to be “attacked” or made to feel like they’re not concerned about or involved with their child’s health and well-being at home and at school. Anything that suggests otherwise is offensive to them.
- Similarly, “healthy eating starts at home” was a common theme among parents. Messaging that suggests that it’s up to schools to make sure kids are consuming the right foods and beverages and not eating those that are unhealthy was also bothersome to some parents.
- Finally, parents were turned off by either visuals or text that hinted anything political.

# Executive Summary: Concepts

## “Collage”



“Collage” was the favorite among English and Spanish group participants. This concept was described as “having everything,” including a range of ages, settings, food and physical activity, and racial diversity. Several parents commented that this concept would motivate them to learn and do more to assist the school in the wellness program. The few negative comments related to it not being colorful.

Would get my attention	Is informative	Is believable	Is effective
3.87	3.38	3.60	3.43

Highest average ratings on all attributes measured  
 (+) “Has everything” – ranges of ages, variety of settings, healthy food and physical activity, racial diversity  
 (-) Not enough color, too busy

“School Lunch” had the second highest average ratings on all but one attribute in the English groups, while there was no clear second choice among Spanish-speakers.

Would get my attention	Is informative	Is believable	Is effective*
3.64	3.14	3.50	3.36

(+) Happy kids and servers, healthy food, racial diversity, colorful  
 (-) Only shows one aspect of being healthy, unlikely kids would eat like that, looks like expensive food, infers that it’s the school’s job to ensure kids are healthy. (It is not.)

## “School Lunch”



*Note: average scores are for English groups only*

# **School Wellness Policy Awareness & Understanding**



# Awareness & Understanding

To begin the discussion, parents were asked if they had ever heard of a *School Local Wellness Policy* or a *Local Wellness Policy*. No one had. However, as the discussions continued, it became evident that some of the parents were familiar with a few of the elements of their child's school's wellness policy. For example, many offered that there are rules about the type of snacks parents can bring to their child's classroom, with several others suggesting that the food at their child's school has gotten healthier over the past few years.

- *At my kids' school, they cannot bring anything on campus that hasn't been prepackaged, like you can't bring anything homemade. If you're going to bring a treat for their birthday it has to have a nutrition label on it so they know exactly what is in it. That just started about 2 years ago.*
- *All three of my daughters are on a rotation where they have to bring in a treat or snack for the entire class, and it has to be a fruit or vegetable and then a whole grain. . .*
- *We couldn't bring in anything for a party that wasn't purchased from a store already packaged, so I couldn't make my own veggie tray or fruit tray and bring it in, and I didn't like that policy.*
- *I've actually heard that they've taken a lot of foods out of the vending machines that they deemed unhealthy, so they are trying to make healthier choices in the vending machines.*
- *At one of our schools that is elementary through junior high, they actually use the lunchtime to teach about nutrition. They say no soda, too.*



# Awareness & Understanding

In addition to noting some changes in the kinds of food available on campus as well as the type of snacks kids and parents can take to school, a few parents mentioned specific programs their kids are involved in such as *Jump Rope for Heart*, *Fit Kids* (Flagstaff), *Fuel Up to Play 60* and *Girls on the Run*.

- *At my son's school, they do the little programs, like the Jump Rope for Heart type thing, but I think that's the only thing I know of as far as the physical part.*
- *Our schools here are contracted with a program called Fit Kids, and they implement fitness. There's another program called Girls on the Run for fitness also. And then at my child's school they do gardening.*

# Awareness & Understanding

Many parents suppose they have not heard about their school's wellness policy because it is not a priority among the administrative staff. Schools today have so many responsibilities that this one tends to be lower on the list. In addition to their primary roles of teaching subject knowledge, socialization skills, cultural norms and values, they are expected to teach many "life skills," which have traditionally been taught at home. And, now, issues with school safety have become more prominent. A policy related to what students eat and how much physical activity they get often gets put on the back burner.

Other parents said schools may be implementing the wellness policy, but haven't specifically brought it to parents' attention.

- *I feel like the schools kind of don't care so much that they have this or we would know more about it.*
- *Maybe it's a low priority. Explaining a policy to parents, there are so many other things you're trying to explain to a parent, and you're thinking I'm not going to worry about it, as long as we're feeding them OK and they're getting their PE, then why do we need to tell them about a policy because there are so many things to let them know about.*
- *Information overload. There's just so much information they give you. My priority as a parent is that they are learning in class and that they are learning what they are there to learn. Socializing comes in there, but you are there to learn, you're there to respect the teachers and getting the knowledge. I do my own food and nutrition program at home, so it's not really a high priority,*
- *They're already abiding with their policies, so why inform us?*

# Awareness & Understanding

A few participants suggested that the backlash from parents as well as the confusion and chaos that involving parents would cause, are reasons for not making parents aware of the wellness policy.

- *It makes me also think that a lot of the schools don't really want to involve the parents because can you imagine...like right now there are ten of us here and we all have a lot of different ideas and opinions and suggestions, so if we involve all of the parents in all the kids' classrooms for all ages, that could be a little bit crazy. So I think the schools have that policy, they've checked it off, and they don't want to involve the parents as much because then it creates chaos.*
- *I would say they kind of don't want the parents to know that there is a policy because then they have to deal with the repercussions.*
- *I think that some people might not agree with it. I think they might say we want more physical activity, like if you say we only need 30 minutes every 5 days, I don't agree with that.*

# Concepts



# Ad Concepts Tested

Focus group participants were shown the following eight concepts. *(The order in which participants were shown the concepts was rotated to prevent order bias.)*

You have a Voice	Working Together	School Lunch	School (aerial)
<p><b>DID YOU KNOW YOUR DISTRICT HAS A POLICY THAT WORKS TO CREATE A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR CHILD?</b></p> <hr/> <p>You have a voice! Find out how you can get involved.</p>	 <p>Working together to promote students' health, well-being and ability to learn.</p> <p><b>GET INVOLVED TODAY.</b></p>	 <p><b>GET INVOLVED TO ENSURE KIDS ARE HEALTHY IN SCHOOLS</b></p>	 <p><b>HEALTHY STUDENTS ARE HERE</b></p> <p>... AND HERE</p> <p>... AND HERE</p> <p>... AND HERE</p> <p>... AND HERE</p> <p>... AND HERE</p> <p><b>GET INVOLVED TO ENSURE KIDS ARE HEALTHY IN SCHOOLS</b></p>

# Ad Concepts Tested

## Confused



**DID YOU KNOW YOUR DISTRICT HAS A POLICY THAT WORKS TO CREATE A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR CHILD?**

## Backpack

**DID YOU KNOW** your district has a policy that works to create a healthy school environment for your child?



## Hands Up!



**WHO WANTS TO HELP ENSURE KIDS ARE HEALTHY IN SCHOOL?**

## Collage

**HELP KEEP YOUR KIDS HEALTHY**



**IN SCHOOL NO MATTER WHERE THEY ARE.**

# Key Findings:

- ▶ **Collage:** highest average ratings on all attributes measured
  - (+) “Has everything” – ranges of ages, variety of settings, healthy food and physical activity, racial diversity
  - (-) Not enough color, too busy
- ▶ **School Lunch:** 2<sup>nd</sup> highest average ratings on all but one attribute
  - (+) Happy kids and servers, healthy food, racial diversity, colorful
  - (-) Only shows one aspect of being healthy, unlikely kids would eat like that, looks like expensive food, infers that it’s the school’s job to ensure kids are healthy (It is not.)
- ▶ **You have a Voice:** only concept without a picture
  - (+) Lets parents know they have a voice in school policy / empowering, has call to action, “Did you know” and red font draw people in
  - (-) Lack of visual makes it look political, too plain
- ▶ **Working Together:** generally high ratings, but “wrong” setting
  - (+) Shows parent, teacher and child working together, good copy – “health, well-being and ability to learn,” shows African American people / diversity
  - (-) Looks like a doctor’s office (because of clip board and white “lab coat,” child looks too young to be in school / OK for elementary school but not junior high or high school

# Key Findings:

- ▶ **Hands Up!:** high scores for getting attention
  - (+) Shows kids being involved / leading
  - (-) “Dumb question” – Who *doesn't* want to ensure kids are healthy?, doesn't show anything about the issue
- ▶ **Backpack:** mixed scores, mostly relating to the visual
  - (+) Happy child, colorful, red font grabs attention
  - (-) Visual too big, generic, corny / kids don't look like that when they go to school
- ▶ **Confused:** received relatively low scores
  - (+) Did you know? draws some people in
  - (-) Looks like a bank ad, don't like “black box” with white lettering, unclear what this is about
- ▶ **School (aerial):** received relatively low scores
  - (+) Variety of settings, colorful, attention-getting, like aerial photo (especially if it's their kid's school)
  - (-) Reminds some of a school shooting, no kids / people in the picture, “x's” should be on the homes (where healthy students start)



# Concept Ratings:

The chart below summarizes the average scores received on four attributes (concepts sorted by “is effective”):

Concept	Would get my attention	Is informative	Is believable	Is effective*
Collage	3.87	3.38	3.60	3.43
School Lunch	3.64	3.14	3.50	3.36
You have a Voice	3.18	3.26	3.42	3.18
Working Together	3.38	3.05	3.19	3.08
Hands Up!	3.60	2.50	3.0	3.08
Backpack	3.55	2.87	3.21	2.92
Confused	3.32	2.89	3.21	2.92
School (aerial)	3.53	2.58	2.89	2.84

*\*Question wording ...is an effective way to get parents engaged in their school's wellness efforts”.*

*(Base n=37; English only) Participants were asked to rate each ad element on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree*

# Collage

## Positive Comments:

- *It has everything in there. It just needs to tell us where to go for information, but otherwise maybe a little more color in the pictures, but it gives me the idea of nutrition, physical activity, and being inside the classroom. I like the bottom part where it says in school no matter where they are.*
- *I thought that one was straight to the point because it's telling you it's up to the parent no matter if you're at school on the playground or at an extracurricular activity or wherever, they're just saying it's in your hands basically.*
- *I like this one the best because I like the pictures and it's short and sweet and to the point. You look at the pictures and you read the words and it clicks.*
- *I think it covers everything, and it's got the older kids in there. It's kind of culturally inclusive at the same time.*
- *. . . it's focused on every aspect of where your kids are at in school instead of focusing on just one thing.*
- *It caught my eye because it says keep your kids healthy, so it's talking to me.*



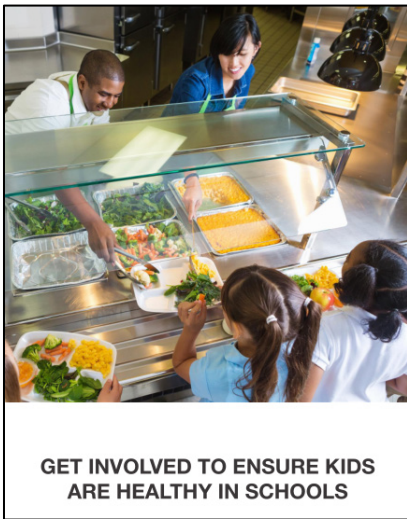
## Negative Comments:

- *The colors in the picture are dull, and there is nothing that says look at me.*
- *The images on there just looked very dull, and I don't know if that's just the way they printed it and it would be more vivid.*
- *Infers kids aren't healthy.*
- *It's too vague. It's what I always see . . . wouldn't pay attention to it.*
- *What I don't like about it is that it has nothing about policy on there, so if you're trying to get information about a policy, after seeing this I still would have no clue that there is any policy at the school.*
- *I thought it was too busy.*

# School Lunch

## Positive Comments:

- *I think it's a good one because it looks like the kids are happy, eating healthy, and at least getting one healthy meal, so that is cool.*
- *I liked that it had all kinds of different ethnicities, the color, the food, everything. And people are smiling in there. I liked the way that it said, get involved. . .*
- *When you walk into a cafeteria the people working there are kind of blah, so these people seem happy, and I think if you are happy about what you are serving then the kids will be happy about what they are getting . . .*
- *It shows them in the lunch room getting healthy food. It's got broccoli and mixed vegetables and lettuce and salad, and it's also inviting you to get involved.*



## Negative Comments:

- *I don't like the inference that it is the school's job to ensure kids are healthy. It is parents' job.*
- *This one I thought was too specific. This makes me think all that you're going to talk to me about is school lunch.*
- *They all got a huge salad which is unlikely, so that's where I got lost with this.*
- *It just looks like expensive food, like it would be expensive to feed a child healthy foods like that. Get involved to me sounded like we're asking for funds, not getting involved by serving.*
- *This is saying that you as a parent - get involved to ensure kids are healthy in schools. I don't think it's my job to tell your kid what he should or should not eat to be healthy. I didn't like the verbiage in this.*

# You have a Voice

## Positive Comments:

- *I like the bottom part, telling the parent they have a voice.*
- *They want feedback . . . that's cool.*
- *Anything that starts with, "Did you know?" I'm always like, oh, did I know what? It makes me think.*
- *I think what grabs it is the bottom red part where it's saying "You have a voice! Find out how you can get involved." That's directly focusing it on you; it's telling you that you do have a voice.*
- *It just grabbed me, and the red thing was like a warning, hey look at this. Once I read that then I was hooked.*
- *It's all about the power of choice where people want to make their own decisions and not be told what to do and how to do it, so you see that you have a voice right there.*
- *It tells me, hey there's something going on, you have a say in this, find out how to say something.*
- *. . . the bottom is so empowering to me as a parent that this is my favorite one.*

**DID YOU KNOW  
YOUR DISTRICT  
HAS A POLICY THAT  
WORKS TO CREATE  
A HEALTHY SCHOOL  
ENVIRONMENT FOR  
YOUR CHILD?**

---

You have a voice! Find out  
how you can get involved.

## Negative Comments:

- *It didn't have enough visuals. I like having pictures with it, so I probably wouldn't even look at this one if I saw it somewhere. It's just too plain.*
- *I thought it was kind of political with the way the whole thing is set up. There is no picture, it's not inviting, and it just looks like something that would be political propaganda.*
- *That's just too plain.*

# Working Together

## Positive Comments:

- *Parent with child actually shows them trying to help.*
- *. . . so a parent and child and teacher together and the working together part is good.*
- *This one was my favorite because it's the parent and child sitting with some professional to help them figure out how to be healthy together, and if you don't do it together then it's not going to happen for your kid.*
- *They have beautiful smiles, they are African American people, so it's breaking down the barriers, so I like it.*
- *It's like working together to do this, get involved today. This tells me who to go talk to. The picture says, go talk to your kid's teacher to find out more on how we can work together to do this, so it may not be verbally written down, but this one actually tells you where to go.*
- *This is my favorite because it gets right to the point, and it says to promote health, well-being, and ability to learn, and I liked get involved because it lets me know that I can get involved somehow. I like the wording the most.*



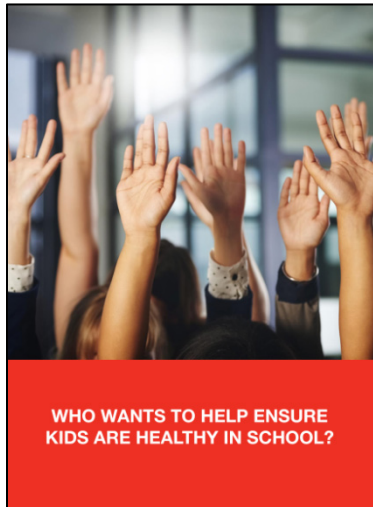
## Negative Comments:

- *With the clip board, it makes me think of a doctor's office.*
- *To me, get involved would suggest that I'm not an involved parent, so I find it irritating. It's like we're trying to make your child better than you can.*
- *It looks like a doctor's office, like they are sitting with the nurse, and that little girl looks like she is only 3 years old.*
- *It might be good for elementary school, maybe not so much for middle school because your teachers aren't going to be involved as much. . .*

# Hands Up!

## Positive Comments:

- *I like the hands because it is very simplistic, it's like OK kids in school, they want to help ensure kids are healthy in school, well who wouldn't?*
- *I see it as kids leading each other, like leading by example kind of deal. They want to get involved, so other kids should get involved, so parents should also get involved.*
- *We are a meme world, and this looks like a meme, and I want to read it because it usually has some kind of catchy play on words which is who wants to help, and the hands are up, so I'm like OK who am I helping, you're helping in school.*
- *It shows eagerness and participation, like they're eager saying I want to do this and participating in it.*
- *So this is telling us as adults that this is what they care about, so I need to be involved. It makes me want to get involved.*



## Negative Comments:

- *I thought it was a dumb question, like who doesn't want to ensure that kids are healthy in school? I just thought, wow, that's a lame way to try and draw people in. Are you trying to insult me and telling me it's not important to me?*
- *I didn't like this one because of the hands. You don't see any kids in there or the concept of it, whether it's food or whatever else, it's just hands up in the air.*
- *I didn't like it because it went back to the political thing. Even though there are kids' hands, it turned into politics for me.*

# Backpack

## Positive Comments:

- *The child looks happy and prepared.*
- *You have the red up there, so it grabs your attention to read the rest of it, and you have a smiling kid, so you have the whole thing there. It's inviting.*
- *I think it's an attractive picture and it's colorful.*
- *I actually like the big picture. It's an attention grabber for me because it's colorful. When you get other handouts there are no pictures, there's more like clip art, so if my child brought me this colorful picture like that I would like it.*



## Negative Comments:

- *I think the image does overwhelm the page. You don't necessarily look at the words because you wonder what he's up to.*
- *I thought it looked corny to me. I went to a Catholic school and we had to dress in a collared shirt, dresses, hair combed, but kids don't go to school like that today.*
- *He's cute, but what kid looks like that when you take them to school? My kid doesn't smile like that. I don't like how the words are small on the top, and the picture takes up so much of the page.*
- *The picture is too generic. It's cute and adorable, but like she said you feel like you've seen this picture a million times and you just glaze right over it.*
- *As far as the wording goes though, to me it didn't jump out and say we have a whole array of policies here to create a healthy school environment for your child. This just doesn't say that it includes everything.*

# Confused

## Positive Comments:

- *It makes me want to go, hmm, I don't know that my district has a policy, so I want to find out.*
- *It grabs my attention because she's confused so I'm confused too and I want to know what is going on.*
- *It makes you think why isn't it a healthy environment already, so therefore it leads into what can you do to make a healthy environment. . .*
- *I wrote down curious because it makes you want to know more. I like policy because we're all about policy and politics nowadays. For me, when I don't know something I do that too, so I liked it.*
- *I like the combination of did you know and the confused look.*



## Negative Comments:

- *I wouldn't have a clue that this has anything to do with health or wellness or nutrition. It looks like a bank ad or something.*
- *It's boring. It's kind of confusing with the words on the black and then it's kind of white, and it's just boring. And then that big black box is just...yeah.*
- *I don't really like this one because it makes the parents seem like they are in the shadows or in the dark, like they're too dumb to realize what is going on.*
- *What drew my attention is that it's a confused mom, and to see a confused mom isn't good.*



# School (aerial)

## Positive Comments:

- *I like the picture with the aerial views. It grabs my attention, especially if it's of the school that I'm at or where my kids are at, it's something that I recognize .*
- *I like the image because it's saying, my kid can be healthy because he's doing sports, he can be intellectually healthy here because he's in a classroom, and here it could be a cafeteria where they are eating nutritious foods, so I like this, but it doesn't give me more information or direction.*
- *It was saying that your mind and your body go hand in hand, so you're in the classroom or you're in PE running track or playing tennis. So inside the classroom you have to work your mind, and out here you have to work your body. . .*
- *That's the one I like the most because the different colors pull your eye in. You want to look and see what it actually is about to me.*
- *I chose that as my number 1 because it catches your attention really quick, like curiosity kills the cat. With it saying and here, and here, and here, and here, I want to know what is going on here, here, and here.*



## Negative Comments:

- *My thing is that healthy students start at home, so you should put all these little X's here on the homes because that's where a healthy student is going to start and then continue here.*
- *I saw the parking lot and there's nobody there first of all, so I thought what kids are they talking about because nobody is at school right now, so I don't get it, I'm lost.*
- *I thought of a school shooting, like the shooter was here, here, and here. I didn't like it at all.*
- *As awful as this sounds, when I saw this I thought of a school massacre.*
- *I wrote down that it was confusing and kind of weird because most parents don't even know the layout of their kids' schools.*

# **School Communications**



# Communications: General

As would be expected, parents receive information from their children's schools in many ways, including: parent-teacher conferences, packets distributed during orientation, on-site meetings, telephone calls (with a recorded message), newsletters, weekly packets, email (either blast or personal from teacher), fliers, texts, websites, and apps. This was true with general information as well as information related to lunch menus and allowable foods and beverages.

Most parents insist they read the fliers, newsletters, and binders of information their kids bring home, with a few mentioning they have to sign some of the papers they receive and send them back to school with their child. That said, several of the dads admitted they leave this kind of stuff up to their wives.

- *I just received some communications that were electronic, like PDFs that were sent via email. I can't recall if it was specifically this information, but it was things similar to that, so we receive it in this format now as opposed to pieces of paper that the kids bring home.*
- *They also use something called Remind, and it's a text that comes right to my phone. I get messages on things that are coming up. It's really awesome. They use ClassDojo, too. It's nice to get those reminders because I don't always look at my email, so it's right there on my phone telling me something that is coming up.*
- *I get a newsletter from each teacher at the beginning of the week and then there is also an app that the teachers can go on and text you throughout the day called ClassDojo. Most of the teachers have it and you download it and they text you right to your phone and they can tell you if your kid is being naughty right then.*
- *The principal makes a recording of the weekly announcements, and they will send it out to everyone's phones.*

# Communications: General

- *If I wanted to see the calendar of food, I would go to their school district website. We also get a weekly news bulletin that is online. . .*
- *Our school does this ParentVUE which is an app, and I get an email on everything. Every time they enter a grade in the system it sends me an alert and it tells me what my son's grades are. Fliers get sent out, too. I don't have to go to the school at all because it always gets sent out. They no longer give your child a flier to bring home and they end up losing it because now it goes straight to this app. I have all the teachers' emails too, so if I need to personally ask them something then I can do that, too. When they email me something, it also goes to my phone and it dials my phone and leaves me a message on the recorder if I don't answer, and they do that for every single flier that has been sent out.*
- *They even have a Facebook page at our school. Every month there is an updated letter that comes out the first week of every month, and you can go to Facebook to get this letter, but you also know that once a month your kid should be bringing home this updated letter, so you should get a paper one at the end of every month, and then everything else is also on the website for you to refer to.*
- *Every week at my daughter's elementary school they get a packet with all their homework and all the new notes of what is happening, like if they're going on a field trip or if there's no school or if there's a parent-teacher conference or whatever else. They have to bring them back signed every week.*

# Communications: School Wellness Policy

When asked specifically how they would like to receive information related to the school's wellness policy, the responses were mixed. However, many feel this type of information should be provided at the beginning of the school year at orientation, or included in the student handbook or orientation packet. Others said getting the information via email would be best, while still others suggested putting it on the school's website and / or sending a text with a link to the policy.

- *I like email because I know the link is there and I know what the subject is about because it was sent to me as an email. Our teachers all communicate to us through emails, like this week this is what's happening, next week it's this, and my wife reads them and then I will go through them later on to see what is going on.*
- *I think it would be great if the schools could get some form of texts just because all of us are always on our phones. We are either on Facebook or looking at emails or sending text messages, so I think a text would be another option.*
- *It would be nice if they had a link in every email that went out and it was at the bottom of the email that says if you would like to see our policy or any updates that have been made you can click here and it takes you to their website.*
- *At the beginning of every year I have to go to a meet the teacher orientation, so I think they should talk about those policies because we sit in an auditorium and they talk about everything else, so they should just say that there because a link on social media or a flier sent home with my daughter never makes it to me.*
- *Every Friday my kids have what is called talking with the principal, and you can meet with the principal and you can go over anything that you want to talk about or anything that has happened or any questions about policies, and they always discuss things like that and healthy stuff and Fuel Up to Play 60 and different things like that.*

# Communications: School Wellness Policy

- *My district is on Facebook, and they post everything, and I really like that.*
- *A call would be the best way for me too. I just let it go to voicemail and I listen to it later.*
- *Either get it in a packet whenever the start for the school year or an email. A lot of people don't read emails on a regular basis though, so I think a hard copy is probably going to be the best way to obtain the information that you're probably going to see it more so than not because if you get a hard copy in the mail that says the school name on it, you're going to open it because you are going to want to see what your child has done.*
- *I would like to see the schools get a meeting together at the very beginning of the school year and talk freely about it and make it kind of mandatory so that everybody is on the same page. We get these handbooks at the beginning of the school year, and if we've got more than one child we're just signing everything away and we're probably not even reading any of it. I know they have open houses, but that is sent through email and they don't make it mandatory where you should participate and know the wellness issues at your school. Your children are there for 8 hours a day.*
- *I like that idea, but not everyone can make it to a meeting, so if I know this guy here and his child, he could either pass along the word or have something written up like a flier so that you can take it to that person. In addition to that, you can send something to the parents when they send them their grades because things can change throughout the school year with those policies, so send something with the kid's report card in addition to the flier because I like the hard copy fliers that they send home.*

# Engagement in Wellness Policy

Parents' level of interest in being engaged in their school's wellness policy ranged from not at all interested to interested. Many of those in the *not at all interested* camp agreed that a child's wellness is the parents' responsibility, not the school's. Some went so far as to say they don't think schools should have a policy that dictates what their child can and cannot eat or drink when at school. Others contend that if it's a policy, they can't do anything about it anyway, so why get involved, with a few suggesting they trust their schools to do what's in the best interest of the students, so there is no need for parents to be involved.

- *If they send me a text about a wellness policy, I will click and delete, and it's not because I don't care about my child. I don't go to a parent-teacher conference to learn about the policies and procedures of the school, I go to a parent-teacher conference to learn about how my child is doing in class and his performance.*
- *And maybe it's more like we have faith in our schools and we know they are being healthier and they are making healthy choices...*
- *I guess the overall question is what do you need the parents to do? It's a policy, so how far can they go with that? Do you need them to volunteer? I don't know how far the parents can get involved if it's a policy because there has to be rules and regulations, and that has to come down from a higher up, and that has to be voted upon. Maybe the parents' input on what could be done to help? I just don't see where they would need the help to rewrite the policy or to enforce the policy. . .*
- *I don't even like the idea of them telling us what we can or cannot put in our vending machines and different things. I think we should focus on the education and let the children's parents govern their food and drink and not put these rules and policies in place.*
  - *I would probably not get involved because it's too much and it's overwhelming.*

# Engagement in Wellness Policy

On the other end of the continuum, there were parents who would like to have a say in the policy, particularly as it relates to the amount of physical activity students get. A few seemed to want to *test* the process to see if they really could influence policy.

- *I do want to look at my school's policy to see what it says, and if I disagree with it then say how can I help change this to how I would like it to be?*
- *I want to see how much of a voice we as parents really have. It did enlighten me, and now I'm going to ask my daughter first to check it out, and if she doesn't then I'm going to go to the school and check and see what they have and what kind of wellness program they have. If they have it, what are they doing to implement it because they can have it in place, but what are they doing about it, that's the whole thing.*
- *This is my job to make sure they are eating right. The thing I don't agree with is the recess and PE, so maybe I would get involved for that reason. I was really active when I was young, and our kids really aren't. I have active kids who are in good shape, but there's a lot that are not and it's because what they're eating at school and they're not getting their physical activity.*
- *If it would help then I would love for them to have PE every day. I wish they had PE every day.*
- *I would want to be engaged to make sure they are fulfilling all those things that they are required to.*



# Engagement Motivators

Parents were asked what would motivate them to get involved in their child's school wellness policy (if anything). Several suggested they would get involved if their child was interested or excited about the wellness initiative and talked it up to his or her parents, with others saying they would be more likely to get involved if their child's teacher asked them to help. A few maintain they would get involved if the flier or other literature compelled them to do so, with a few others saying that a gift card would further incent them.

- *If my son or daughter came home from school and was super excited about something, I value what they say and what they think, and I want to support them, and if they did have some kind of assembly after school or a field day or something to promote parents getting to know about it, then I would go to do that.*
- *So if the teachers were very into it or involved and my son said, oh, there's this wellness program and because of it we do this and that in school and he seemed interested in it, then I would look into it further. . .*
- *Usually the teacher will ask if I can help with this or that, and that is a better approach to me than reading a poster.*
- *What would bring me in is a flier or an email that had a little more context to it so that I knew exactly what it was about, but I think if you're talking about the masses and trying to get more people there, if you had an afterschool event like an assembly for parents where they had a raffle for a couple of gift cards, you're probably going to get more people in the door because it's more of a fun thing.*

# Engagement Motivators

- *If they sent me literature and I felt compelled to read it, and in that literature it was specific on what they were trying to implement, then I most definitely would participate and would get involved to make my kids healthier.*
- *When you mentioned maybe a gift card, that might bring in people that are not interested in it whatsoever, and then once they get there maybe they will become interested. If you just send it home, some might read it, some won't, and some people really into the school may look into it, but to bring in a variety to get them there, a gift card might do that.*

In addition, several parents suggested that if they felt (or were assured) their voice would make a difference . . . would actually influence policy . . . they would be more likely to get involved.

- *I want to know I can make a change, but making a change is impossible. They can't even get a raise, they can't figure out how to get guns out...I mean a simple thing of asking for them to have more time to be outside, and they can't even get that now without a committee when we all know it's common sense. If they could tell me that we could be effective and make a change, that would be fine, but it'll never happen, so I would probably never be involved because the outcome would never happen.*

# Program Names



# “Healthy Students. Healthy Minds.”

Focus group participants were asked to react to four potential names for the school wellness policy.

*Healthy Students. Healthy Minds.* was the clear “winner” among these parents. They found it short, to the point, and saw the connection to the wellness policy. Others simply said this is what we all want . . . healthy students with healthy minds.

## Reactions

- *I think if I’m healthy I have a great mind and I can learn better.*
- *Healthy Students. Healthy Minds. They go hand in hand. You have a crappy diet then you’re going to be lethargic and not cracking at 100%. If you students are given what they need then they are going to not be tired and they will be more focused.*
- *I liked that they are saying we want them to be healthy because we want their minds to be healthy.*
- *(Kids will think) if I’m healthy then my mind is healthy, and it’s going to make them curious, so I think these top two target the kids and the parents.*
- *Healthy Students. Healthy Minds. Short and sweet as to what the ultimate goal is.*
- *It plays on where if a student is healthy in this area then they will have a healthy mind.*
- *It just grabs me and gives me the feeling of that’s what I want is for my kids to be healthy, and I want them to have healthy minds.*

# “Healthy Schools. Healthy Kids.”

Those who chose this potential program name suggested “health” encompasses more than just nutrition and that with all of the responsibilities schools have in keeping kids safe and healthy - in the broadest terms – having healthy schools is critical to having healthy kids.

## Reactions

- *I put Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids because it's more than just the nutrition things because there is a lot of mental health that goes on in schools and social aspects and all those things, and if the school is healthy and the kids are having proper social interactions and bullying has been taken care of it and kids have friends and they are learning how to get along with each other, they're going to be healthier. This just implies more than nutrition.*
- *If we can have healthier schools, maybe we can pass that on to the kids, but I think it starts with the school first.*
- *I originally chose Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids, but then I thought to myself if this is going from kindergarten up through grade 12, seniors aren't kids, high school kids aren't kids.*

# “The Student Wellness Initiative”

Parents were divided on the word “initiative.” For some, initiative suggests action (which they considered a positive) and is more “alive” than a policy. However, others felt initiative sounded too political or bureaucratic, which was a turn-off. A few noted that initiative is not a kid-friendly word and therefore would not be something students would get excited about.

Several others who found this name appealing, commented that “wellness” is all-encompassing, which is appropriate for this type of effort.

## Reactions

- *An initiative, it's taking action, we're making sure this is going to be good.*
- *I would prefer The Student Wellness Program or Project, but I liked it for the word wellness. It's focusing on making our kids well, not just healthy, but well, so it encompasses all of them.*
- *I think it covers everything altogether as far as nutrition, physical activity, studying at school, it's just preparing the student for the whole program.*
- *I do like the word initiative, but I don't think it would really entice the child. I don't think a kid is going to want to say, hey we have this initiative, let's look into it.*
- *I put the initiatives at the bottom because I felt like maybe not all parents will be able to understand what that means when they see it.*
- *I didn't like the last two because I don't like the word initiative and I really do not like the wellness initiative because I feel like that could encompass behavioral and different things.*

# “The Healthy Student Initiative”

Similar to The Student Wellness Initiative, focus group participants were divided on their feelings about the word “initiative.” Those who had favorable reactions agreed it sounds like action, like something will actually be done or a movement. A few others said this name sounds like the students are actually going to be involved.

## Reactions

- *I liked The Healthy Student Initiative because it indicates action with the word initiative, like they're actually doing something about it.*
- *It is inviting the students to learn more about being healthy and getting them involved and not just the parents, it's for them.*
- *It gives you the idea that the kids are actually going to be involved in some way, shape, or form.*
- *It sounds great, a grassroots movement, let's get it going.*
- *I'm thinking of them being in high school and that the students are taking the initiative to be healthy.*
- *I like the word initiative because it sounds like action.*
- *When I look at the words initiative or policy, it all seems so (bureaucratic), and to me as a parent, I can't even be involved in that because you already have your thing going, so it's like, okay great you have a policy and it's already done and I'll follow it, just tell me the rules.*

## **Other Findings**





# School Food & Beverages

Parents named a wide range of items when asked about the foods and beverages available at their child's school. While several stated the menus included fruits and vegetables, smoothies, bottled water and other healthy foods, others mentioned pizza, hamburgers and French Fries.

Many focus group participants explained that in elementary school, the menus are more fixed, while the options increase in junior high and even more so in high school. Several reported that high school students can often choose to buy food from any one of a number of fast food chains, including Dominos, Little Caesars, Panda Express, Jimmy Johns, and Subway.

- *My kids are in elementary school, and they will give them say pizza, green beans, and some type of fruit, so they pre-make the food for them.*
- *My oldest daughter in middle school, she will say, mom I get to choose from a smoothie and stuff, but my nephew on the other hand will say, I get cheeseburgers,*
- *From kindergarten to junior high, it's all one menu of cafeteria food, but when you get into high school they loosen up a little bit and they have a little bit more fried foods, pizza, burritos, and fries, but I've only seen that starting in high school.*
- *My kids are in elementary school, and they have Sardella's coming to their school. I think it's only three times a week. Somehow, some way under the school program they can feed them pizza.*

# Physical Activity at School

Most parents agreed their kids do not get enough physical activity while at school. Many explained kids have PE once or twice a week and / or that it is an elective, with just a few saying their kids have PE every day. Several compared this to when they were in school - or even when their older children were in school - and had PE every day.

Parents with kids in elementary school said they typically have two recesses a day.

- *There's not as much PE. My daughter is at a charter school that is on a rotation where they have...well actually now she doesn't even have to take it because she's in eighth grade, so she doesn't have to do any kind of physical activity. It's an elective, so you only have to take it if you want, and my daughter is like, I'm not taking PE, but even the younger kids they make them not want to do PE because they go to PE once a week, if even that, but what happened to having PE every day?*
- *At my kids' school, they do PE once a week, and they are required to do band or orchestra, and I think the third thing they do is art, and they switch tracks every week where you might have PE Monday this week and then you don't have it again until Wednesday next week. I'm against it.*
- *My kids are 10 years apart, and my son had PE every day, and then my daughter went to the school and she said she only has PE on Tuesdays.*
- *The younger elementary school kids have PE once a week, but they get 2 recesses throughout the day. The only exercise my junior high and high school kids get is walking between classes carrying their large backpacks.*
  - *My kids have it every day, too, but they shortened it. I remember having PE and it was like the whole 45 minutes or so, but now it's about 20 to 25 minutes tops.*

# Competitive Foods

Schools vary considerably with regard to the competitive foods that are available on campus. Quite a few parents of high school students, as well as those with children in charter schools, reported that their schools have “catered” lunches by such restaurants as Chick-fil-A, Pizza Hut, Barros Pizza, and Eegees, with others agreeing these restaurants set up booths on campus for students to purchase food.

While some parents said their kids still sell candy bars and cookie dough, others offered that “fun runs,” bowl-a-thons, and selling t-shirts have replaced candy sales as fundraisers. Some vending machines still include candy bars and chips, however, others only have water and healthy food options in the machines.

- *My son is in junior high, and they added a vending machine for drinks, and I asked if it is soda because I don't like him to have a lot of soda, and he said at the top of the machine it says, make a wise choice, and it's all water.*
- *There is a bus parking area on the campus, and these food places line up there, tons of fast food places, Dominos, Little Caesars, a Chinese place, and a Mexican cart that sets up, everyone. You can go out there and get whatever you want. They have Hot Cheetos out there too. It just gives them variety, that's all it is.*
- *My son is in elementary school, and for the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders they have a snack bar with pizza and pretzels and baked chips and ice cream.*
- *My daughter plays softball, so they sell candy during softball season, those World's Famous Chocolate bars.*

# Competitive Foods

In general, parents are against having competitive foods available in elementary school, but seem to be OK with it once kids reach high school. Several actually said it is good to have these foods available to teens, as it will help them with their decision-making skills and it may be the only food they eat.

- *I think it's a bad idea (to have competitive foods). I think they should have cafeteria food that someone has thought about that has a few food groups to it. If my 13-year-old son has a choice at Taco Bell, he might just get one thing that he likes and that's what he would eat every day for the week instead of getting more of a variety.*
- *I think as kids get older it's not a bad idea to let them have choices simply because if you limit their choices as they are growing, when they finally get to make the choices they freak out, so as they are learning...like in elementary they get the school lunch, and in junior high there is a snack bar, and then in high school have a few other options out there just to teach you to be an adult and make your own choices. To me, that's where it opens their horizons a little bit better.*
- *I don't think that should be an option for elementary. As far as middle school, maybe. At a high school, yeah, because those kids are able to make their own money or save some money.*
- *I think it's a good idea because some of the kids don't eat what's on the menu every day, and not everybody can send their kid to school with a lunch.*
- *If there are vending machines I really like that because before school my kid can go get a snack or after school because if they play football and have practice they need a snack from the vending machine, so that's a good option that I've always liked.*