

TWEENS Nutrition and Fitness Coalition

www.TweensLex.org

January 13, 2013

Dear Fayette County Public School Principals,

On behalf of the Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition I am writing to ask for your support to strengthen the Fayette County Public Schools district wellness policy. School districts around the country are finding that strong wellness policies improve classroom management, enhance student learning and reduce absenteeism, as well as teach children healthy behaviors that will serve them for a lifetime. Having a district-wide policy means that students experience a consistent healthy school environment K-12, making these practices normative in relatively short order. In addition, a district policy means principals don't have to play "bad cop" when promoting best practices; the policy does it for them.

The policy recommendations address six areas that have been shown to have the greatest impact : (1) the use of food as reward, (2) food for celebrations, (3) food marketing in schools, (4) recess, (5) physical activity and punishment, and (6) PE and classroom teachers' roles in promoting physical activity. If you review the attachments, I think you will find that the policies are reasonable. We didn't arrive at them lightly, rather we researched the latest policies promoted by school wellness experts and vetted the ideas with FCPS teachers and administrators before crafting the final language.

The Fayette County District Health Team has reviewed these policy recommendations and will bring the amended policy statements to the Board for approval. We hope that will happen in time to implement the new policy before the 2014-15 school year begins. The longer it takes for the school board to approve a stronger wellness policy, the more students will pay the price with their health and the longer it will take for schools to reap the benefits of a student body that is well-fed, fit and ready to learn. It is especially important because there are vast health disparities among students in our district and this makes it even more difficult to close the achievement gaps. Implementing the district wellness policy recommendations will help reduce some of those disparities.

Do school wellness policies make a difference? Three years ago Chula Vista, California strengthened their school district's wellness policy and now 3.2 percent fewer are overweight or obese. This helps them avoid chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and cancer. Improving school wellness can also aid the Kentucky budget battle for education since our state spends 2.3 billion dollars annually dealing with the cost of these chronic diseases. Unfortunately those costs continue to grow and are expected to almost triple by 2018.

Supporting information for these policy recommendations is attached, including some practical tips to help schools make the transition to these best practices. We hope we can count on you to support the board in adopting these common sense practices. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me. Thank you for your consideration and all you do for Lexington children.

Sincerely,

Anita Courtney, M.S., R.D. antiac@qx.net, 859 229 8400

Chairperson of the Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition

**Dedicated to make healthy eating and physical activity popular and accessible to
Lexington tweens in their homes, schools and communities.**