

# HEALTH LINK

YOUR INFORMATION SOURCE FOR KEEPING STUDENTS HEALTHY AND READY TO LEARN



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Dear Health Link subscriber: Recently you received an email from NSBA's School Health Programs asking for your feedback on *Health Link*. If you have already completed this survey, thank you for your response. **If you have not had the opportunity to respond, we would greatly appreciate if you could take 5-10 minutes to complete the survey. We will close the survey December 11, 2009.**

**If you are a state school boards association staff member, please complete this survey:**  
[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=S\\_2fr8jFz\\_vXomRoUY\\_2fXsq4ow\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=S_2fr8jFz_vXomRoUY_2fXsq4ow_3d_3d)

**All other subscribers, please complete this survey:**  
[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=HD8A4y7R24fLB\\_snfsLiM6w\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=HD8A4y7R24fLB_snfsLiM6w_3d_3d)

We hope you have enjoyed reading *Health Link*, and we greatly appreciate any feedback to ensure that we are providing the best services possible. Your input will help shape School Health Programs' services and technical assistance for school health stakeholders across the country.

Thanks and have a happy and healthy holiday,

NSBA's School Health Programs staff

## What's Happening at NSBA's School Health Programs?

### **Webcast on addressing childhood obesity through collaboration and policy change**

Mark your calendars! On December 1st at 2:00pm EST, join national experts and local policymakers to discuss key strategies state and local policymakers, including school boards and administrators, can use to address childhood obesity.

This two-hour webcast, [Leadership in Action: Policymakers Addressing Childhood Obesity through Collaboration and Policy Change](#), will highlight the [Leadership for Healthy Communities Action Strategies Toolkit](#), a resource for state and local policymakers to collaborate in creating healthier schools and communities through policy change. The webcast will focus on two strategies from the toolkit that can help local school leaders collaborate with other policymakers: joint use agreements and Safe Routes to School programs. Listen in and ask questions as national experts and local policymaker champions provide tips and examples of how to collaborate with key stakeholders to make these two policy strategies and others work in your district and community. **The webcast is free, but please register [here](#).** For questions, contact Emily Kujawa, Project Coordinator at NSBA ([ekujawa@nsba.org](mailto:ekujawa@nsba.org), 703-838-6743).

### **Pilot states to work with NSBA in preventing tobacco use among students**

NSBA's Tobacco Use Prevention Project launched a new program in October to provide capacity-building assistance to several state teams working to promote comprehensive tobacco-free schools

policies. Teams from Louisiana, Michigan, and Montana were selected through a competitive process to receive technical assistance and mini-grants from the [National Consortium on Tobacco Use Prevention through Schools](#). The three pilot states have assembled teams and strategic plans to promote comprehensive tobacco-free schools policies in their states. Representatives from each state team will come to NSBA headquarters in April, 2010, to share their progress and participate in a meeting of the National Consortium.

## What's New in School Health?

### Data and Research

#### **More reasons for schools to go tobacco-free**

A new report lends urgency to tobacco use prevention in people of all ages to lessen secondhand smoke. [Secondhand Smoke Exposure and Cardiovascular Effects: Making Sense of the Evidence](#), from the Institute of Medicine, examines the link between secondhand smoke and heart disease among both men and women. Each of the 11 studies analyzed in this report suggests an association between smoking bans and lower rates of heart attack, showing decreases between 6 percent and 47 percent. This report strongly supports the need for 100% tobacco-free schools to protect the health and safety of students and staff. Also, as the FDA transitions into its new role in tobacco regulation, one of its first steps has been to enact a [ban](#) on mint, candy and fruit flavored cigarettes, products that appeal particularly to youth and can rope young people into lifelong nicotine addiction. This action addresses tobacco use by those younger than 18 years, and a similar ban is being considered for both menthol-flavored cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products, including spit tobacco.

#### **New issue brief shows the effects of education on health**

An [issue brief](#) recently released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) shows a large body of evidence strongly links educational attainment with health. According to the brief, low educational attainment is prevalent in this country - nearly 16 percent of adults older than 25 years have not completed high school, and 30 percent only have a high school-level education. People with more education are more likely to practice health-promoting behaviors and, therefore, live longer and experience better health outcomes. In addition, the brief reveals that children of parents with higher education levels also experience better health and other social advantages. One of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Healthy People 2010](#) objectives is to increase high school completion. In [Healthy People 2020](#), there is also a draft objective to increase the educational achievement of adolescents and young adults. Education policymakers are welcome to provide input on the Healthy People 2020 draft objectives — public comments will be accepted through December 31, 2009.

#### **Kids who are active perform better in the classroom**

Despite the increasing prevalence of obesity among children and youth in the U.S., physical education in the nation's schools has been substantially reduced — and in some cases completely eliminated — in response to budget concerns and pressures to improve academics and test scores. A recently released research brief, "[Active Education: Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Academic Performance](#)," sheds important light on this issue. The brief, released by Active Living Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, highlights the available evidence linking physical activity to better classroom performance and shows that daily physical activity does not adversely affect academic performance. The brief is a revision of a similar brief released by the group in the fall of 2007.

## Policy and Guidance

### **New H1N1 and seasonal flu resource for families**

For schools to combat any kind of flu, it is essential to involve parents and caregivers. Part of that process is providing relevant information to students' families. A new resource can be used by schools to better inform parents/caregivers of the symptoms of H1N1 and seasonal influenza, communicate steps to take in case a child gets sick, and promote the best way to prevent the spread of the flu virus. The resource, "[Seasonal and 2009 H1N1 Flu: A Guide for Parents](#)," provides answers to questions such as, "What if my child seems very sick? When can my child go back to school after having the flu?" and, "How can I protect my child against flu?" To learn more about preventing and managing the flu within schools, check out NSBA's "[H1N1 Planning for Schools](#)" webpage.

### **H1N1 and asthma: important guidance from the CDC**

People with asthma are at higher risk for flu-related complications such as pneumonia. To help better control asthma when infected with the flu, the CDC issued a flu [information sheet](#) for patients and parents of patients with asthma on November 19. Recommendations include that persons with asthma should have an injection rather than use the inhaled "FluMist" vaccine. Schools should ensure that such guidelines are followed for students who have asthma when holding vaccine clinics.

### **New EPA guidance on managing and limiting exposure to PCBs in caulk**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued new guidance to help schools manage and limit chemical exposure to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that have been found in caulk in some schools built or renovated before 1978. A build-up of PCBs in a child can damage the immune, reproductive, nervous, and endocrine systems. If your district has buildings that were built or renovated prior to 1978, visit the [EPA's website](#) and [school information kit](#). It provides resources on testing, containing, managing exposure and ultimately eliminating PCBs from schools. The EPA also has information on improving [indoor air quality](#) to create a healthier and more stimulating environment for students and staff.

### **IOM issues recommendations for school meal program nutrition standards**

The federal school meal programs provide lunch to more than 30.5 million children and breakfast to 10.1 million children each school day. While school meals must meet the nutrition standards established in 1995, The Institute of Medicine convened a committee to provide recommendations to revise national standards and requirements to reflect advances that have been made in dietary guidance in the years since. The committee's recommendations are presented in a new report, [School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children](#). Key recommendations include: increasing the amount and variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains served as part of school meals; setting a minimum and maximum level of calories for meals; and focusing more on reducing saturated fat and sodium. Visit the report [website](#) to view a [summary](#) of the recommendations, a [comparison](#) between the current requirements and new recommendations, and more.

### **New school kit to help reduce diabetes among youth**

The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) American Indian/Alaska Native Work Group recently released its revised and updated [Move It! And Reduce Your Risk of Diabetes school kit](#). The kit's purpose is to encourage physical activity in the school setting to help reduce the risk for diabetes among American Indian/Alaska Native youth. The kit includes fact sheets on diabetes prevalence within this group and posters and examples of successful school activities that can be implemented by using kit materials. In addition, the toolkit is applicable to general interventions promoting physical activity among youth and can be used even in organizations that do not focus on American Indian/Alaska Natives. For more information about the kit or to receive a copy, visit the [NDEP website](#) or the

[Association of American Indian Physicians website.](#)

## Practice

### **How to bridge the cultural divide in school wellness**

Addressing cultural differences is one of the most challenging issues in improving the physical activity and nutrition environments for children and youth. A new field report from Action for Healthy Kids presents several successful initiatives and lessons learned that schools and communities can apply to help bridge the cultural divide. The report, [Lessons for Engaging Diverse Communities to Create Healthy Schools and Kids](#), showcases successful strategies employed by Action for Healthy Kids state teams in Utah, New York, New Jersey, Idaho, and South Carolina to understand the unique challenges facing diverse schools and communities, communicate in culturally meaningful ways, and use culturally-competent methods to engage parents and other community stakeholders. The report also provides lessons learned and tips and techniques for improving the cultural sensitivity and relevance of childhood obesity and wellness initiatives. To learn more about disparities and bridging the cultural divide in school health, also check out NSBA's [School Health Issues in Communities of Color "101" packet](#).

### **What works in addressing childhood obesity**

The Council of State Governments has released "[Childhood Obesity: Sharing What Works](#)," which describes exemplary programs that address childhood obesity across the nation. These programs represent schools that serve different types of populations and communities, with different economic levels, racial compositions, and locations, from urban to rural. The featured programs include: using technology to engage students; making physical activity a top priority; finding the balance between academics and physical activity; and helping students and parents learn how to eat better.

### **Georgia district successfully implements comprehensive tobacco free policy**

With support from Georgia's North Central Health District, the Washington County Board of Education (a member of NSBA's National Affiliate Program), has implemented a district-wide 100% Tobacco Free School Policy that prohibits the use of all tobacco products, in all locations, by all people, at all times. A local youth advocacy group, Youth in Charge, was trained and presented information about the dangers of smoking, use of tobacco products and health hazards of secondhand smoke, which encouraged the board to approve this policy. For further details about this district's and others' successes, or to submit your own school health success story, visit NSBA's [Promising District Practices website](#).

## **Announcements and Upcoming Events**

- December 1 is [World AIDS Day](#). This year's theme is "I AM" and includes slogans such as "I am accepted" and "I am living my rights." The theme illustrates the relationship between human rights and universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support. As this day is celebrated, schools should be reminded that non-Hispanic black adolescents have been disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. According to the CDC, in 2007, 72 percent of HIV/AIDS diagnoses in 13 to 19 year olds were in black adolescents. To learn more about how HIV/AIDS affects students, check out NSBA's publication "[Living with HIV/AIDS: Students Tell Their Stories of Stigma, Courage, and Resilience](#)." Please note that hard copies of this publication are no longer available.
- December 6 – 12 is [National Handwashing Awareness Week](#). Handwashing is one the best ways to prevent germs from spreading and curb widespread outbreaks such as the H1N1 flu pandemic. This week is a great opportunity for schools to raise awareness of the importance of handwashing as well as teach children and school staff about the four principles of hand awareness, which include: wash your hands when they are dirty and before eating; do not

cough into your hands; do not sneeze into your hands; and above all do not put your fingers in your eyes, nose or mouth.

- Grant reviewing opportunity: The U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) is recruiting policymakers, educators, and other qualified experts to serve as peer reviewers for OSDFS discretionary grant program proposals. An honorarium is provided for all participating reviewers. For further information about the review process or on how to apply to be a peer reviewer, please [click here](#).

Want to read past issues of Health Link? You can access archived issues on [NSBA's School Health Programs website](#): just scroll down to the Resources section and click on "Health Link."

About This E-Newsletter: Research shows a link between student health and academic achievement. *Health Link* helps state school boards associations provide relevant health information and resources to school leaders striving to keep students healthy and ready to learn. *Health Link* is published bi-monthly as a service to state school boards associations.

About NSBA's School Health Programs: NSBA's School Health Programs helps school policymakers make informed decisions by providing relevant and up-to-date information, technical assistance, and professional development on a variety of school health issues. Our work underscores the important connections between school health issues, the well-being and success of our nation's children, and the safe and effective operation of schools. We promote healthy school communities to foster excellence and equity in public education. Our activities are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and supported by NSBA.

## Contact Us:

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Website: [www.nsba.org/schoolhealth](http://www.nsba.org/schoolhealth)

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