

Building Family- School Partnerships Through Nutrition Education

ACTIVITY	AT HOME	AT SCHOOL	AFHK RESOURCE
Become nutrition detectives and discover what's inside the food we eat.	Practice reading food labels using common items found in your kitchen. Make grocery shopping fun by applying these skills the next time you do your grocery run.	Invite students to work together with their families to gather a snack or label at home to bring to school. Prepare some questions and tasks for families to explore as they are picking out a snack or food item packaging to bring to school. Utilize your next classroom snack break to talk with students about nutrition food labels and the importance of knowing the ingredients of what we eat.	How to Read Nutrition Facts Labels
Explore the mind-body connection by talking about hunger and energy cues.	Talk with your children about the importance of listening to their bodies and recognizing when they are full or still hungry and look at how different foods make them feel (e.g. energized, sleepy, etc.). Take time to eat meals and snacks together and work to eliminate any distractions to better reflect on how your body feels.	Talk with parents and families about the mind-body connection and share resources to support healthy snacks and meals to ensure children stay energized throughout the day.	Mindful Eating Feelings of Food: Exploring the Mind Body Connection
Get creative with snack time.	Create food art with fruits and vegetables at snack time to incorporate play and healthy eating.	Reach out to parents and families to discuss the importance of sending children to school with healthy snacks. Offer to send home some healthy recipe ideas or invite families to share their favorites and start a community recipe swap or cookbook.	Healthy Snacking at Home Food Art Refreshing Summer Snacks
Host a taste test.	Invite children to pick a new fruit or vegetable to try at home. Choose from a variety of healthy preparation methods to explore different textures and tastes. Trying new foods helps children to better understand their preferences while also inspiring them to be brave and explore new things.	Host a taste test at school to show students how delicious fresh fruits and vegetables can be. Send students home with information that they can share with their families about the new foods they tried and how to host a taste test at home.	Host a Family Taste Test Taste Test with a Twist Host a Taste Test
Plant a garden to grow your own fruits and vegetables.	Plant a garden for fresh fruits and vegetables at home. Start with a small herb garden and when you're ready, expand into a container garden or a small spot in your yard.	Start a school garden to teach students about the responsibility of caring and growing produce. Provide parents with information on starting their own garden at home. Utilize time spent in the garden to teach lessons about nutrition and caring for the environment.	Kitchen Scrap Gardening School Garden Creative Gardens: Thinking Outside the Garden Box
Enjoy meals as a family to foster healthy relationships.	Find time in everyone's busy schedules to eat at least one meal together as a family per week. Sharing meals as a family allows time to connect with one another over shared feelings and stories.	Encourage students to eat together as a class and invite family members to visit for lunch. Eating together allows people to eat slower and talk more, helping digestion and giving time to recognize fullness. Mealtime can serve as valuable time to catch up and reconnect.	Cooking with Kids The Benefits of Eating Meals as a Family Healthy Role Modeling at Home
Get to know the story behind the food you eat.	Visit your local farmer's market or ask a staff member at your local grocer to help you find locally sourced vegetables for your next family dinner recipe. Invite children to research the life cycle of their favorite fruits and vegetables to see all the changes that take place before it arrives on your plate!	Host an after-school gardening event to teach families how to grow simple fruits and vegetables at home and set up food science experiments for students and families to test out.	Farm to Table Farm to School Science in the Kitchen
Host a healthy celebration for friends and family.	Offer healthy snacks at your next family gathering. Serve as a healthy role model for children and other family members.	Set up a healthy snack booth or other nutrition campaign at your next back-to-school or parent-teacher conference night. Encourage students and families to consider bringing healthy snacks for your next classroom celebration.	Healthy Celebrations At Home Healthy Celebrations at School Healthy and Active Parties

Why Family-School Partnerships?

For kids to develop the lifelong habits necessary to become healthy, successful adults, schools and families must commit to working together to build a culture that supports the whole child. Effective family-school partnerships occur when families and schools actively partner to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve kids' educational and health outcomes.

5 TIPS for Developing Strong, Effective Family-School Partnerships

FOR FAMILIES

- Get involved at your child's school, as you're able. Visit the school and learn about its culture and practices related to student health. Volunteer in the classroom and at school events. Attend Zoom meetings with teachers and school staff as possible.
- Introduce yourself to school leaders and ask questions. What are your school and district priorities and practices related to student health, and how would they like families to provide support?
- Talk to other parents. Gather perspectives and ideas from other families, especially those in your school community that may be dealing with different challenges than your own family, to understand and communicate your community's needs and concerns.
- As a parent, you have a powerful voice—use it as best you can. Speak up and speak with school staff, share your concerns and priorities, and let them know how to communicate with you and other families in a way that works best for you.
- Don't make assumptions—learn how things work. Take advantage of learning opportunities and ask questions, then communicate your concerns clearly in a constructive, non-judgmental way. Approach conversations in a spirit of collaboration vs. confrontation.

FOR SCHOOLS

- Consider the demographics of your community. Learn about their values and the specific challenges they may face. Provide quality interpretation with meetings conducted primarily in the language spoken by the majority of participants.
- Create a warm and welcoming environment that shows families that their input is desired, respected, and valued. Ask families about their lives and their concerns and validate the challenges families have and their expertise. Don't get defensive—share the challenges you have so that families can help come up with solutions.
- Offer multiple two-way communication channels so families can ask questions and share opinions (e.g., texts, emails, phone calls, video-conferences, in-person meetings).
- Consider your own mindset. Get rid of pre-conceived notions about how parents think, the expertise they have, and how they want to be involved.
- Communicate the school/district vision and priorities clearly and transparently and provide families with clear information about how school and district departments function, set policy, and make decisions. Share school and district policies, goals and plans related to student health.

FOR FAMILIES-SCHOOLS TOGETHER

- Find a way to meet that is accessible and agreed upon by staff and families and consider providing childcare for the meetings. If childcare cannot be provided, are there other ways this barrier can be addressed (e.g., children attend meetings with their parents, schedule meetings at different times, provide stipends for babysitters, etc.)?
- Recruit 1–2 committed parents to co-lead the partnership. They should care deeply about the work and have connections and credibility in the community.
- Recruit school or district staff with a strong belief in the partnership's purpose and value and a willingness to commit to the group and take actions to address family concerns.
- Work with established school parent groups (e.g., PTO, PTA, Parent Advisory Council, Parent Action Committee) to get their perspective and buy-in for the collaboration and to recruit more families to participate.
- Bring a solution-focused mindset to the work and find common values. Every person brings a different set of values to the table. Identify the core values you share and bring them to the forefront of how you collaborate as a committee.



Additional Resources

Building Family-School Partnerships

[Global Families Research Project: Family Engagement Playbook](#)

[Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#)

[Colorado Department of Education Family-School-Community Partnership Framework](#)

[National PTA – Standards for Successful Family-School Partnerships](#)

[CDC – Parents for Healthy Schools](#)

Nutrition

[Action for Healthy Kids – Healthy Eating Toolkit](#)

[US Department of Agriculture – MyPlate](#)

[SNAP-Ed Toolkit](#)



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