



# Introducing Well-News!

Stafford Township School District appreciates that in order to ensure a successful academic experience for all students, emphasis must be placed on educating the whole child. The district further agrees that the social, emotional, and physical development of each student influences their individual success.

A wellness committee, consisting of representatives from the board of education, the business office, the instructional services office, the administration, the teaching staff, and parents, guardians, and community members, was developed a little over a year ago to review the district practices and procedures to guarantee that they support all as-

pects of a student's development. The wellness committee was charged with reviewing not only the curriculum and instructional practices but also the food service program and the incentive programs that are used to motivate student learning.

The committee has suggested modifications and adjustments that have enhanced all of our programs which include:

- a revised health and phys ed curriculum that promotes more active engagement and nutritional awareness
- revised incentive programs that promote using non-food alternatives to classroom celebrations and rewards
- improved cafeteria offerings

In addition, the committee has initiated partnerships with SOCH and the Ocean Club to offer extended opportunities for students to learn more about the benefits of exercise and good nutrition. The committee has also applied for outside funding to support the district efforts to enhance the phys ed and health programs, and has offered additional professional development to all staff to increase their understanding and expertise.

The wellness committee will continue to meet and reflect on its practices to address student needs. In addition, we will be issuing a quarterly newsletter - *WELL-NEWS* - to keep everyone informed of our efforts.

## Students, Staff Using Pedometers

In June, 2007, Stafford Township School District was awarded a NJ Department of Agriculture Healthy Schools Grant for \$2500.00. More than half of the funds were used to purchase 460 pedometers.

The physical education teachers at McKinley School have been using pedometers with 3<sup>rd</sup> and

4<sup>th</sup> grade students for outside walking and running activities. When wearing a pedometer, the goal is to have the student walk or run 1000 steps. The students enjoy using the pedometers, and learned very quickly how to set their own walking and running strides.

As part of our school district's focus on health

and wellness, we have placed some of these pedometers in each school. Many staff members enjoy walking during their lunch period, and we encourage them to sign out a pedometer and count their steps. In this way, they gain healthful steps while they set an example of non-competitive exercise for students.

## What is the *FITNESSGRAM*?

*FITNESSGRAM* - A comprehensive, educational and promotional tool for fitness and activity assessment for children.

The focus in the *FITNESSGRAM* program is on health-related fitness because the health benefits of fitness are considered to be of greater importance than performance in sports.

A central component of the *FITNESSGRAM* philosophy is that if you do the process (physical activity) the product (fitness) will follow. The essential goal then is to encourage all

children to participate in activity. By focusing on physical activity rather than fitness all children can be successful.

In the *FITNESSGRAM* assessment program, children are not compared against other children but against themselves. They are encouraged to improve their own levels of fitness and to become physically active.

To familiarize parents and guardians with the *FITNESSGRAM*, a sample report will be sent home in the fall, prior to the actual student reports.

## New Health Series is WOW! (World of Wellness)

**WOW!**, our new health series for grades K-5, is designed to develop strong and compelling links between what students should know and what they should be able to do in the areas of health, reading and writing. **WOW!** emphasizes the importance of physical activity and nutrition throughout the health education strands. The World of Wellness Health

Education series enables students to learn the importance of leading an active and healthy life through conceptually grounded, context-based lessons. Additionally, **WOW!** provides students with current, comprehensive health education that covers all 10 health education strands, from health promotion and disease prevention to environmental health.



## Healthy Options

We have been working closely with Sodexo, our food service provider, to provide nutritious, heart-healthy meals for students each day. This includes vegetarian options, baked items and using whole wheat and turkey products. We encourage healthy foods for class parties and birthday celebrations as a way of reinforcing the importance of making healthy choices.

At the Intermediate School, Mrs. Mastrogiovanni and Mrs. Burgess have been encouraging their students to eat healthy for class celebrations. One example of their healthy endeavors was the "Healthy Feast." This feast was a Thanksgiving celebration which featured fresh fruits, vegetables, healthy dips, and even delicious fresh fruit smoothies!

With a little bit of thought and innovation, any celebration can be a "Healthy Feast!"

### Recess Before Lunch

The state of Montana kicked off a unique initiative a few years ago. They decided to have the students in their schools have recess before they eat; the results were amazing!

"One of the schools in the Montana study, Central Middle School, experienced dramatic shifts in student behavior after changing its schedule. Moving lunch after recess was part of an effort to create a more healthful environment in the school. Snack and soda machines were eliminated, lunch menus changed, and microwaves and hot water dispensers installed to give students more options for lunch."

"The teachers love it," "They don't feel like they have to cool down the children after lunch. In the past it could take 15 minutes to settle the kids down after recess. So we found a lot of academic time. We also saw a drop in the number of referrals to the nurse, and the cafeteria reported more kids eating and less food being thrown away."

The Stafford Township School District's wellness committee has been looking into this new trend to see if this would fit into our schedule and benefit our students. The school principals are looking into this for the 2008-2009 school year.