

Manual 3

Parent and Community Involvement Guide

We would like to thank the following organizations for their help in developing the parent involvement component of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*: the American Cancer Society; the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service; Baltimore City with its expanded Food and Nutrition program and Financial Planning, Urban Gardening, and 4-H programs; Share Our Strength; and the Maryland Food Committee.

To find files for the writers, contributors, and acknowledgements for this manual—and all other manuals—on this web resource go to the Manuals folder.

Introduction

You can use the materials on the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Web Resource to make nutrition and physical activity a school-wide and community-wide priority. The classroom activities and physical education lessons are powerful teaching tools in their own right, but when the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* messages are expanded to the wider school community—as suggested by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—their effect on students becomes even greater.

Food Services

Outside of physical education, there is no clearer tie-in to *Eat Well & Keep Moving* than school food services. Every school day, students eat at least one meal at school, and this meal provides an excellent opportunity to reinforce the messages of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. This reinforcement can be as simple as teachers getting a cafeteria menu in advance and integrating it into their lessons or as involved as teachers working with the school principal and food service manager to make permanent healthful changes to the school breakfast and lunch menus.

The *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Web Resource provides detailed information for food service managers interested in making healthful changes to their school menus, including a food service guide (Manual 4) that contains preparation tips, promotional materials, and classroom tie-ins; recipes; and a staff training guide (Training 1). When implemented to its fullest, the food service component works very closely with the classroom component, as explained in the promotions section in manual 2 of the web resource.

The link between the classroom and food service components of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* can be strengthened if teachers and the cafeteria manager openly discuss promoting the messages

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(continued)

of the program. Teachers can invite the food service manager to give presentations in the classroom (such as an Eat Well card), and the cafeteria manager can provide teachers with regular updates on scheduled lunch menus as well as periodically display on the serving line the various Eat Well cards complementing the lunch items served.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement in *Eat Well & Keep Moving* greatly bolsters the program's effectiveness. Encourage parents and family members to become involved in activities that complement the program messages the students learn in school. This reinforcement increases the probability that the dietary and lifestyle changes students make will become a regular part of family and daily life.

Teachers can volunteer some of their time to organize parent activities around *Eat Well & Keep Moving* messages or can locate a parent volunteer or other teacher to spearhead such activities. The web resource details different approaches to getting parents and family members involved in *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. As with all the other components of the program, your level of involvement can be as little as or as great as you like. The separate components of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* stand alone very well but become even stronger when brought together.

When implemented to its full extent, the parent involvement takes a unique approach: identifying community-based health organizations to offer nutrition, physical activity, and wellness programs to parents. Additional *Eat Well & Keep Moving* activities for involving parents include publishing nutrition and physical activity information in school newsletters and hosting program-related family activities, such as Parent Fun Nights, that allow families to see exactly what their children are learning through the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program.

Through these *Eat Well & Keep Moving* activities, parents and guardians hopefully will become models for their children and encourage healthy eating and active lifestyles for the entire family.

Other Web Resource Materials

In addition to food service and parent involvement materials, the web resource also provides

- nutrition, physical activity, and wellness training sessions (Training 2) for teachers that also provide a comprehensive introduction to the curriculum, as well as a shorter version of the teacher training workshop (Training 3);
- the complete fourth- and fifth-grade classroom and physical education lessons from the *Eat Well & Keep Moving*, 3rd Edition book;
- Web sites for developing, implementing, and measuring school wellness policies and improving the school food and physical activity environment;
- useful Web sites (located at www.EatWellAndKeepMoving.org) for additional resources on nutrition, physical activity, and other topics related to *Eat Well & Keep Moving*; and
- information for school administrators interested in *Eat Well & Keep Moving*.

Parent and Community Involvement

The parent and community involvement component of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* encourages parents and family members to participate in activities that complement the program messages the students learn in school. This increases the chance that the dietary and lifestyle changes students make will become a regular part of family and daily life.

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As a unique part of the parent and community involvement, community-based health organizations are brought in to offer nutrition, physical activity, and wellness programs to parents. Additional *Eat Well & Keep Moving* activities for involving parents include publishing nutrition and physical activity information in parent newsletters (see the Parent Newsletters folder on this web resource); sending home fact sheets (see the Fact Sheets folder on this web resource) on key nutrition and physical activity topics related to the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* curriculum; and hosting program-related family activities, such as Parent Fun Nights, that allow families to see exactly what their children are learning through the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program.

Through these related activities, parents and guardians hopefully will become models for their children and encourage healthy eating practices and active lifestyles for the entire family.

The Parent Organizer

The parent organizer is critical to the success of the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* parent component. The parent organizer is the person who organizes all the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* family events and acts as the link between the school and community organizations and the families.

The extent of the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* parent program largely depends on the amount of time a parent organizer can dedicate to this specific task. In some schools, the parent organizer may be a full-time paid position; in others, the parent organizer may be a classroom teacher volunteering some time.

The *Eat Well & Keep Moving* parent and community involvement component addresses both of these situations. Programs can be as involved as bringing in local chefs to host a family taste-testing night or as minimal as reprinting an Eat Well card or a prewritten article on an *Eat Well & Keep Moving* message in the school's parent newsletter. The important thing is that some effort, no matter how seemingly small, is made to connect *Eat Well & Keep Moving* with the home.

Designating a Parent Organizer

- ▶ In some cases, the parent organizer can be a salaried position within the school. For schools designated as Title I schools, parent involvement is mandated as a requisite of this Federal program. However, many schools do not employ a parent organizer and must rely on volunteers.
- ▶ A retired teacher, often called a *parent educator*, may also work with parents and guardians. Parent educators normally work part time and are excellent resources.
- ▶ A teacher could be designated as the parent organizer. This position may be delegated as an assigned extra duty. Scheduling of time devoted to this position is determined by school system and school policy.
- ▶ The parent organizer may be a parent volunteer.
- ▶ Others who may be asked to serve as a parent organizer include Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) members, Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) members, school nurses, school social workers, psychologists, and school administrators.

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(continued)

Qualities of the Parent Organizer

Research shows that many parents and guardians are not involved in their children's schooling because they might not feel comfortable in the school setting. Others may not know how to become involved in their children's education. Effective parent organizers must be sensitive to these and other issues related to parent involvement.

The optimal parent organizer is

- organized and motivated;
- able to devote regular (though not necessarily copious) time to organizing parent activities related to *Eat Well & Keep Moving*;
- able to understand the needs of the particular parent and guardian population in the community surrounding the school;
- willing to deal with individual parents and guardians, recognizing that each parent may have individual needs;
- able to work well with a diverse group of parents and guardians; and
- able to motivate parents and guardians to improve their participation and to increase their knowledge so that they can be better role models for their children.

Very few people will meet all of these criteria. At a minimum, however, the parent organizer should be organized and able to regularly dedicate time throughout the school year to scheduling *Eat Well & Keep Moving* parent activities.

Organizing the Parent Component

Each school is unique. However, the following steps may help in organizing effective *Eat Well & Keep Moving* programs for parents:

1. Survey parents and guardians to determine their needs and interests concerning nutrition and physical activity.
2. Determine the current status of existing parent programs at the school: the general level of parental involvement, the kinds and duration of programs being brought into the school, and plans for the upcoming school year.
3. Start small: Offer a limited number of programs at the beginning, and then build up as parental interest increases.
4. Customize the program for parent groups with differing needs. Not every parent will need to attend every program that is offered; the parent organizer should be able to recognize which programs will meet the needs of different parents and guardians in the school community.
5. Offer programs beyond the topics of nutrition, physical activity, health, and wellness. Parents may also be interested in issues such as financial management. Some community education and health service organizations offer these types of programs. Addressing these needs may foster parent interest in *Eat Well & Keep Moving* and increase attendance at some of the program's other parent events.

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(continued)

6. Document strategies that develop trusting relationships with parents and guardians and that empower parents and guardians to (a) make regular visits and volunteer their time during school hours, (b) take on decision-making roles in the school, and (c) support school projects. This will help the program continually grow and improve.

Involving Parents and Guardians in *Eat Well & Keep Moving*

Parents and guardians need to know that they play a critical role in the success of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. When possible, ask parents to become actively involved with *Eat Well & Keep Moving* from the very beginning. An effective way to get parents involved is to introduce the program to parents in the fall and to provide a list of ways in which they can become involved with the program. The first issue of the school newsletter or the first all-school parents meeting is a good venue for introducing *Eat Well & Keep Moving*.

The points to cover include the following:

1. *Eat Well & Keep Moving* is a multifaceted program that promotes healthy living. Summarize the program for parents and guardians (use the articles from the Parent Newsletter in the Parent Newsletters folder and the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Introduction Presentation in Additional Resources). Explain that some program activities, such as the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* cafeteria promotions, focus on the entire school, while other program activities focus on the fourth and fifth grades. For example, only fourth- and fifth-grade students will use Eat Well cards and Keep Moving cards and specific materials that cover making healthy choices about food, being more physically active, getting adequate sleep, and cutting down on the time spent in recreational screen time activities such as watching television.
2. Parents and guardians can help out in the cafeteria during the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* school-wide campaigns and cafeteria promotions.
3. Parents and guardians will be offered opportunities to attend workshops on their own wellness, personal health, patterns of eating, and physical activity. These workshops will not only enhance their personal health but also help them talk about these topics with their children. In addition, learning about wellness, nutrition, and physical activity will enable parents and guardians to help their children with homework and other assignments that are a part of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*.

How Parents and Guardians Can Help With Program Promotions

Parents and guardians can help support the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* classroom and cafeteria promotions that run throughout the school year. Each of the promotions should be explained to parents and guardians, and parents and guardians should be informed when a specific promotion will begin in the school. Each principal can decide how parents and guardians can help make the promotional activity a success.

Freeze My TV

During the Freeze My TV week, students keep track of and try to limit their television viewing and other recreational screen time. In addition to keeping track of the time they spend in screen activities, students also create related graphs, answer questions based on their graphs, and

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(continued)

write entries each day in the Freeze My TV Journal (see lesson 29). During this week, parents and guardians can also cut back on their own TV viewing time and discuss the experience with their children. Families may want to discuss shows that they can watch together that will enhance interaction among family members. Parents and guardians can also talk to children about the TV-free activities they did when they were growing up.

For a list of Web sites related to television and recreational screen time reduction, see the Screen Time section on www.EatWellAndKeepMoving.org.

Get 3 At School and 5+ A Day

The Get 3 At School and 5+ A Day activity, found in lesson 30, puts students' knowledge of healthful eating into practice as they try to consume at least 3 servings of fruits and vegetables while at school. Students are also encouraged to eat 5 or more servings for the entire day, with an emphasis on choosing colorful fruits and vegetables instead of less nutritious foods. In their effort to reach this goal, students are encouraged to take materials home that reinforce this message. Parents and guardians can participate in the activity by keeping track of the fruits and vegetables they themselves eat during the day and talking with their children about it when they come home.

For a list of Web sites related to fruits and vegetables, see the Nutrition section on www.EatWellAndKeepMoving.org.

Class Walking Clubs

The class walking clubs run throughout the school year and arise directly from the fourth- and fifth-grade classroom lessons on fitness walking. Classes are encouraged to chart walking routes around their school and to go on weekly (or more frequent) walks with their teacher (see lesson 31). To add interest to the club, classes are encouraged to imagine they are walking across a part of the world. Each time they walk they can accrue a certain number of miles (for example, 100 miles, or 161 kilometers, for every 5 minutes of walking or 500 steps on a pedometer) and mark their progress on a map. Classes walk around the world, walk across America, walk across Africa, or even “walk” the circulatory system of the body. Parents whose schedules allow it can find out from their children's teachers when and where the students will be walking and meet them on the route. In the Baltimore pilot of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*, a number of parents regularly met with class walking groups. This connected parents to the program, gave them a fun opportunity to be physically active, and helped them discuss physical activity and nutrition with their children.

Tour de Health

Tour de Health turns the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Principles of Healthy Living into a fun and edifying game. Played in groups or as an entire class, the Tour de Health can serve as a daily review for the classroom and physical education lessons as well as an occasional refresher of the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* messages. The game includes cards with questions that relate to the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Principles of Healthy Living; students also get a Tour de Health scorecard that emphasizes the healthy living messages, and an Answer Cube (optional; see lesson 32). When students answer the nutrition and physical activity questions correctly, they receive points. The first student or group to reach 20 points (or the student or group with the highest point total) wins the game. The optional extension to this game, the My Tour de Health—How I Can Eat Well and Keep Moving booklet, is a great way to bring together all the messages of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* and to involve parents in the program. The My Tour de Health booklet can be completed

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(continued)

as a classroom activity, and students can bring the completed booklets home to share their health-promoting ideas with their families. Alternatively, students can complete the booklet at home with family input, as a homework assignment, and then bring it to the classroom to share ideas with their peers.

Using Eat Well Cards and Keep Moving Cards With Parents

Eat Well cards and Keep Moving cards serve as important links between the classroom and the food service and physical education components of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. Each card contains a mix of text and graphics that can be reviewed with students in as little as 3 minutes. Although brief, the Eat Well cards and Keep Moving cards play an important role in helping students synthesize and put into practice the nutrition and physical activity information they learn through the program. Many of the cards focus on menu items planned as *Eat Well & Keep Moving* cafeteria promotions.

Full sets of Eat Well cards and Keep Moving cards appear in this web resource. There are many different ways parents and parent organizers can use the Eat Well cards and Keep Moving cards. The following examples may spark additional creative uses:

- Cards can be hung on a bulletin board in the parent room, parent council's room, or parent liaisons' room and changed periodically.
- The parent organizer or parent liaison can periodically lead short discussion sessions in which parents and guardians talk about the information that appears on individual cards. These discussions can coincide with the times the cards are used in the classroom and cafeteria. This way, parents and guardians can brainstorm ways to work the cards and the messages of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* into life at home.
- Cards can be included in the monthly parent newsletter (see Parent Newsletter in the Parent Newsletters folder on this web resource) that goes home to parents and guardians.
- Parent volunteers who help monitor in the cafeteria can discuss Eat Well cards with students as they wait in the serving line.

Eat Well & Keep Moving Promotional Days

During the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Promotional Days, the entire school participates in *Eat Well & Keep Moving* activities. The focus of a given day is to promote a specific cafeteria food item as a healthy choice.

In Baltimore, the food service managers chose Fridays to highlight the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* menu items. These *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Fridays helped focus the promotional efforts of both the cafeteria and the classroom. For example, the cafeteria served an *Eat Well & Keep Moving* menu item, and the related Eat Well card was used in both the classroom and the cafeteria. When the classroom activities and cafeteria promotions work together, students receive positive reinforcement in multiple areas to try the healthful foods offered on the school's menu. Each system or school should pick the day of the week that works best for it.

On these Promotional Days, parents who monitor the cafeteria can help place the appropriate Eat Well cards and posters throughout the cafeteria. In addition, as students wait in the service line, parent monitors can ask them to share the Eat Well card messages they learned just before coming to lunch.

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Parent Fun Nights

In the Baltimore pilot program, schools organized a number of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* Parent Fun Nights. These very successful events often served as culminating activities for the classroom portion of the program and allowed parents the opportunity to see what their children had been doing with *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. Healthful food dishes were served, and students and family members participated in games, skits, and relays based on the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* messages.

For more information on organizing *Eat Well & Keep Moving* parent activities, see Tips for the Parent Organizer in Additional Resources.

Examples of Parent Activities

Examples of organizations that conduct each activity are listed in parentheses.

Chef-led cooking classes (Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters Program, <http://cookingmatters.org/>)

Herbal gardening classes (State Food and Nutrition Extension)

Walking clubs (Sisters Together Move More Eat Better, <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/sisters/index.htm>, 877-946-4627)

Stress reduction workshops (organized by a local mental health organization)

Nutrition and activity Parent Fun Nights (organized by individual schools)

Assessing Resources

Bringing in community-based health organizations can help strengthen the parent involvement component of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. School districts may also be able to provide resources that can enhance parent involvement. Here are some tips on how to assess resources available to promote parent involvement.

Assessing Resources in the Community

The first step to involving outside organizations in the parent and community involvement component of *Eat Well & Keep Moving* is to determine the community resources available to each school's parent population. This can be done by

- contacting local and national community education and health services organizations;
- providing these organizations with a brief overview of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*;
- determining which current community programs fit the goals and objectives of the parent component of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*;

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(continued)

- discovering whether volunteers or community agents are available to deliver free programs on wellness, nutrition, and physical activity to parent groups in elementary schools; and
- securing a commitment from these organizations to provide programs to parents and guardians in district schools that are participating in *Eat Well & Keep Moving*.

Once organizations have agreed to provide services to participating schools, the parent organizer should determine which times during the day and which days of the week parents and guardians are willing to attend workshops on nutrition, physical activity, and other topics that support the goals of *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. Parent organizers can then phone representatives from community education and health services organizations to schedule activity dates and times.

Community Education and Health Services Organizations

Examples of organizations you might ask to provide parent programs include the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the county's State Food and Nutrition Extension, a mental health organization, and Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters. Please contact your local department of public health for further referrals.

American Heart Association

The American Heart Association (AHA) organizes many community activities around the issue of heart health, including walks and runs and children-focused events such as Jump Rope for Heart and Hoops for Heart. Parent organizers can rally parent and student participation in such events as well as bring in American Heart Association volunteers to an after-school program or health fair to talk about cardiovascular health and possibly even provide blood pressure and cholesterol screenings. For more information contact the AHA at 800-242-8721 or www.heart.org.

American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society (ACS) offers seminars on prostate and breast cancers and on reducing the risk of such cancers. Although ACS volunteers are usually available to provide seminars, they are often available only for evening events. Therefore, it may not be possible to obtain their services for daytime parent activities. However, the ACS is often willing to train interested parents so that they can serve as volunteers for their school to deliver daytime seminars to parents. For more information, contact the ACS at 800-227-2345 or www.cancer.org.

State Food and Nutrition Extension

State Food and Nutrition Extension offices are located in every state in the United States and are attached to the states' land grant universities. Visit www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/index.html to locate your state's Food and Nutrition Extension offices, programs, and services. Many State Food and Nutrition Extension organizations do pre- and postprogram assessments with their clients. These assessments make it possible to learn what parents and guardians know about a subject before a workshop and how their knowledge changes after participating in the workshop. Programs are offered in nutrition, financial management, parenting, urban gardening, and more. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is available through many State Food and Nutrition Extension offices and worked well with the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* pilot in Baltimore.

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Mental Health Organizations

Although mental health organizations are usually thought of as providing treatment services, these organizations increasingly emphasize prevention and fostering continuance of good mental health practices. A local mental health alliance or association may be able to provide workshops on wellness, stress management, walking, and family and individual mental health counseling. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Mental Health Information Center has an online Mental Health Services Locator, available at <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>; the agency can also be contacted at 800-487-4889.

Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters

Share Our Strength (SOS) is an antihunger, antipoverty organization that conducts a wide variety of activities throughout the nation. Cooking Matters (formerly Operation Frontline) is an SOS program that unites chefs, nutritionists, and community leaders with families and caregivers to teach the skills to cook healthful meals on a limited budget. For more information on programs in your area, contact Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign at 800-969-4767 or visit <http://actioncenter.nokidhungry.org>.

Sisters Together Move More Eat Better

Eat Well & Keep Moving encourages parents to become more physically active. One way to achieve this goal is for the parent organizer to help parents and guardians start a walking program in a school. Parents can either join their children on their regular walks (discussed previously in Class Walking Clubs) or begin their own independent program. The Sisters Together Move More Eat Better walking program is a good model program. This program is a collaboration of the Weight-Control Information Network (of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases), the New England Medical Center, the Harvard School of Public Health, and the Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy. Parent organizers can receive information on starting and maintaining a walking program by calling Sisters Together Move More Eat Better at the Weight-Control Information Network at 877-946-4627 or by visiting <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/sisters/index.htm>.

Forming Partnerships Among Community Education and Health Services Organizations

It may be possible for staff members from a community education and health services organization to jointly offer a program. For example, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) offers nutrition education programs that are delivered by EFNEP nutrition assistants. It may also be possible to couple EFNEP nutrition assistants at a County Extension Services office with volunteer chefs from local restaurants who have agreed to teach parents and guardians how to shop for and prepare economical meals that are low in saturated and trans fat and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and foods with healthy fat. The chefs could demonstrate food preparation steps for parents and guardians; the EFNEP nutrition assistant could discuss subjects such as sanitation while cooking, cooking with healthy oils, and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. In many places, chefs may not work on Mondays, making this a good day to schedule sessions using local chefs.

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(continued)

While some health services organizations may not be able to deliver daytime programs, most are able to provide evening hours. If daytime programs are desired it may be possible to work with local colleges or graduate schools to offer such programs. For example, colleges with schools of nursing may be interested in having their senior nursing students trained by the American Cancer Society so that they gain practical experience giving presentations on health and wellness issues. Similar arrangements may be made by collaborating with the American Heart Association and a local college.

The nutrition education or health promotion division of your state, county, or city may also be able to offer programs to parents.

Assessing Administrative Resources of the School District

A school system may be able to provide training and technical assistance to parent organizers. When this is the case, a number of options exist for developing the *Eat Well & Keep Moving* parent involvement component. A train-the-trainer approach can provide parent organizers with staff development and technical support in organizing workshops, classes, and other hands-on activities that enable parents to learn more about eating healthfully and participating in physical activity. Providing technical assistance for parent organizers who need this training will lead to their organizing a school calendar that works more effectively for parents and guardians and others who will facilitate the workshops in the schools. Further, funds for parent staff development may be available because of specific federal, state, or local programs that are operating in a school district. It may be possible to offer workshops in wellness, nutrition, and physical activity using funds attainable through these programs.

Other Resources

The federal school-based nutrition programs Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH) and Team Nutrition both have parent involvement components that complement *Eat Well & Keep Moving*. For information on CATCH, visit <http://catchusa.org>, or call 877-247-7890. For information on Team Nutrition, visit <http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/>; the *School Day Just Got Healthier Toolkit* is available online at www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/school-day-just-got-healthier-toolkit.

For a list of Web sites with information for parents on healthy eating and active living, see the Parent Information section on www.EatWellAndKeepMoving.org.

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