



A family evening featuring games, exercises, dancing, and nutritious foods promotes the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

## Objective

Encourage students and their families to explore healthy eating and physical activity in fun ways that reinforce healthy choices in school and at home.

## The Event

Students, families, and teachers gather in the evening to dance, play games that involve physical activity, and sample healthy snacks at a festive food table that also features student displays. The evening can build upon an existing schoolwide family event, with modifications made to incorporate healthy choices.

The activities can be set up as stations around the gym or the whole school. School faculty members or parent volunteers can supervise each station by introducing the activity, leading an interactive session, providing additional information about the activity's health benefits, and suggesting ways students and families can incorporate the activity into their routines. Attendees can be given a guide that encourages them to explore and try several stations. Using games or a passport-type card will encourage greater participation, especially if completed cards are eligible for nonfood prizes. For example, **Dighton School District in Kansas** handed out playing cards at each station of its *Family and Fitness Event* and awarded prizes for the best and worst hands at the end of the evening.

## Planning

**Gather a broad team.** School faculty, teachers, wellness committee members, parents, and student volunteers can all contribute ideas for the event's logistics, preparation, promotion, set-up, clean-up, and takeaway materials. Consider the activities that would work best in your available space, and determine how the stations should be set up so several activities can run simultaneously. Collaborate with parents, the school nutrition director, or a local registered dietitian to offer nutritious snacks such as low-fat popcorn, yogurt parfaits, and fresh fruit, or main dishes such as sandwiches made with lean meats, low-fat cheese, vegetables, and whole-grain bread.

**Determine a date and a theme.** The event can be tied in with another annual family event held at the school, such as a holiday fair, craft show, or fundraiser. For example, try a "Harvest Hoedown" theme with fall seasonal produce and country line dancing, or a "Jingle Jam" where participants can move to music from Team Nutrition's *Serving Up MyPlate: A Yummy Curriculum* (see appendix, page 94), with music-themed nutrition posters from Team Nutrition's *Dig In!* curriculum (see appendix, page 95) on display. During winter, remind students that staying active can help them stay warm.

**Promote your event in a fun way.** Spread the word throughout the school with posters and announcements, as well as via the school's Web site and newsletter. For more ideas, consult the list of promotion tips (see page 3).

**Arrange the activity stations and healthy snack table for the day of the event.** Volunteers can begin setting up the event early in the day. Once the event begins, each volunteer can assume roles leading the activity stations and running the festive food table. Both volunteers and attendees can help clean up the event after it ends.

# Team Up Success



## School

- Conduct a schoolwide vote to determine your event's theme. Invite different classes/grades to propose the physical activities and decorate posters for the event.

## Classroom



- Ask students to create decorations for the event that relate to a subject they are studying. Art classes can create collages of healthy food options and physical activities.
- Elementary school students can learn songs about healthy food options during class using the tunes in Team Nutrition's *Serving Up MyPlate: A Yummy Curriculum, Level 3* (see appendix, page 94).
- Middle school students can write about the connection between making healthy food choices and physical activity using Team Nutrition's *Nutrition Voyage* materials (see appendix, page 95).



## Cafeteria

- Ask the school nutrition director to help select items for the festive food table that are in line with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (<http://www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/>). Collaborate on the use of cafeteria and kitchen space, if needed. School nutrition services may be available to cater food for the event.



## Community

- Ask local businesses to provide donations or sponsor sections of the event. For example, a local restaurant could donate healthy sandwiches and a local grocer or farmer might donate fresh fruit.
- Invite a local chef to provide an interactive activity where families learn to prepare a healthy snack.



## Media

- Post student journal entries on the school's Web site about how to spend a healthy evening. Use these ideas to also post a list of healthy activities that families can enjoy together.
- Post pictures from the event on the school's Web site.



## Home

- Provide families with take-home materials that promote healthy routines outside of school, such as Team Nutrition's *Eat Smart to Play Hard MyPlate Mini Poster* (see appendix, page 107).

# Schools **IN** Action

**Southeast High School** in **Cherokee, KS**, hosted a *Wealth of Health Activity Evening*. The night began with a brown bag supper of healthy food options for the 465 students of all ages and their guests, including family and members of the community. After the meal, participants visited activity booths where they could partake in various physical activities, including double-dutch, kick boxing, and hip hop dancing. Booths also provided information on healthy behaviors. The Kansas State University Research and Extension booth held an exercise requiring participants to pick out foods that contained whole grains. The kids were all given a jump rope, kick sack, or hula hoop to take home with them.

**Richmond Elementary School** in **Richmond, VT**, held a *Family Wellness Night*. Students and their guests received a map of the school indicating nine stations they could visit. The stations invited attendees to participate in activities geared around food, fitness, and well-being. A professional chef hosted a cooking class, showing families how to make a healthy, kid-friendly stir fry. Dance lessons, taste-tests, and a salad bar gave families the opportunity to enjoy healthy food options and new activities.

**Hesston Middle School** in **Hesston, KS**, hosted a *Steppin' into Wellness* event for students and their families. Eighth grade students led all physical activities, including horseshoes, croquet, golf, balloon volleyball, badminton, dance, wiffleball, basketball, and an obstacle course. Harvey County Research and Extension set up a snack creation station where families could create their own snacks, including fruit cups, vegetable trays, and make-your-own snack mix from a grain buffet. The school nurse also conducted blood pressure checks and vision screenings.



[Photo] **Richmond Elementary School** students play games as part of their Family Wellness Night.