

Making Your SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT Safe and Healthy



You have a right to attend a school that provides a safe and healthy environment. School districts today face many challenges in making sure their school environments are safe and healthy, but teachers, administrators, students, and parents can help districts overcome these challenges.

School staff, students, and parents need to step up and help offer solutions if they feel their school isn't as safe or healthy as it should be. Several times each year, a regular "Safe and Healthy" school evaluation should be conducted. During this evaluation, the following topics and questions should be addressed:

- ☛ Is your school structure free of any physical, psychological, and social hazards?
- ☛ Are the average temperature, lighting, and noise levels favorable for learning?
- ☛ Do students and staff get regular physical activity?
- ☛ Are healthy breakfast and lunch options provided?
- ☛ Is your school building secure, and do you require every visitor to check in and wear a visitor's pass?
- ☛ Is there a school plan in place in case of an emergency or natural disaster?
- ☛ Is your school atmosphere one in which students and school staff do their best work?
- ☛ Is there an expectation at your school that all students can succeed?
- ☛ Are there supportive policies in place for students, school staff, and parents?
- ☛ Is there a respectful attitude among all school members?
- ☛ Does everyone know what to do if someone comes into the school to cause harm?
- ☛ Is your school drug and alcohol free?
- ☛ Does the school have a zero tolerance policy for any kind of bullying?



Activities



1. In groups, or as a class, go through the list of questions relating to the health and safety of your school and answer them. All class members should contribute to the discussion. Which questions identified clear deficiencies in the health and safety of your school?
2. With your teacher leading this activity, determine how much physical activity time you have each day. Include your regular PE class, as well as any break time. Do you think this time is adequate?
3. In your PE class, and in at least one regular class, complete an emergency exit drill. On signal, line up as quickly and orderly as possible, and exit the building. The teacher should make note of the time it took the class to exit the building and any problems that he/she observed in terms of how orderly the process was.



As a class, discuss how you did.

4. In groups, or as a class, discuss the nutrition and physical activity offerings on your campus. Make note of healthy offerings and options, and make note of any barriers or unhealthy options. Share your conclusions with the other groups or class.
5. List the policies at your school that help prevent the possibility of violence on your campus.



Home Connection How can parents support the health and safety initiatives happening at your school? With your parents, determine one way they are or could be involved in these initiatives. Turn your answers in to your teacher.

Discussion Questions

What is your school's visitor policy or protocol?

What kinds of healthy food options are offered at your school?

If any deficiencies are identified during the "Safe and Healthy" school evaluation, recommendations and solutions to address and rectify the issues should be suggested, and timelines for implementation should be discussed and set.