



PARTNERS POST

Our Schools • Our Communities • Our Future

Your Partners for Public Education Newsletter

www.partnersforpubliced.org



Staying healthy reduces absenteeism and helps students succeed

Did you know that the common cold results in 22 million missed school days each year for American students? That's a lot of lost learning time for students, not to mention the discomfort, medical bills, and additional care arrangements that come with unexpected sick days.

The good news is that hand-washing can reduce lost school days by as much as 26 percent. Avoiding germs through good hygiene makes a real difference.



Here are some simple measures that work to limit the spread of germs:

- ✓ Hand-washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs in a classroom. To effectively wash away germs, use soap and scrub in between fingers, under fingernails, and on the front and back of hands. Children should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds (the time it typically takes to sing the ABC song).
- ✓ Encourage your children to wash their hands at times when they are most likely to spread germs: before eating or handling food; after using the bathroom, coughing, sneezing, or blowing their nose; when coming in from playing outside; after touching used tissues, garbage, or contaminated surfaces; and after touching a pet.
- ✓ Teach your children to use hand sanitizers (with at least 60 percent alcohol) when soap and water are not available. Give your child hand sanitizer to use at school.
- ✓ In addition to routinely washing hands, teach your children to cover their mouths with an arm rather than a hand when coughing or sneezing, to dispose of tissues rather than leaving them out, and to avoid sharing beverages, food, or utensils.

The academic success of America's youth is strongly linked to the quality of their health.

Studies have shown that students who eat breakfast have:

- lower rates of absenteeism and tardiness
- need less attention from school nurses
- are less obese
- are less likely to have disciplinary, behavioral, and psychological problems

Learn more

Find more information on healthy habits from the Healthy Habits School Program, a joint effort of Lysol, the National PTA, and the National Education Association (NEA), online at <http://www.lysol.com/mission-for-health/healthy-classrooms>.

How can parents reduce absenteeism?

Partners for Public Education asked educators and school support professionals from across Pennsylvania what parents can do to reduce absenteeism and keep students in the classroom. Here are some of the suggestions they had to offer:

- ✓ **Schedule vacations outside of school days** and doctors' appointments after school hours or on in-service days. —Carolyn, reading specialist, Unionville-Chadds Ford Education Association
- ✓ **Maintain a regular family schedule.** Be a good role model by keeping your children's schedule as well as you can. Always serve a good breakfast. —Liz, school counselor, Warrior Run Education Association
- ✓ **Don't make it easy for a student to just stay home.** Make sure your child is spending adequate time doing make-up work when absent. Make it a priority that your child needs to be in school. —Rita, high school math teacher, Armstrong Education Association
- ✓ **Make sure your kids get enough sleep, eat well, and wash their hands.** —James, middle school computer science teacher, Mt. Lebanon Education Association
- ✓ **Praise students when they do good things at school.** Talk to them about the importance of being at school and keeping up with their schoolwork. —Josephine, high school science teacher, Northgate Education Association

School nurses rock: Keeping kids healthy and saving lives

A certified school nurse is summoned to a classroom and immediately recognizes from a student's shortness of breath, bluish color, and no pulse that she is in cardiac arrest. The nurse's early efforts at CPR and the use of an automated external defibrillator are instrumental in saving the girl's life.

On another day in a different school, a fourth-grade girl runs into the nurse's office frantically waving her arms and unable to speak, cough, or make any sound. She's choking, and the nurse

saves her life with the Heimlich maneuver.

These real-life examples from Pennsylvania schools underscore the value of certified school nurses.

In addition to handling students' emergency health needs, school nurses perform a variety of mandated health services throughout the year, including vision testing and height, weight, and Body Mass Index calculations. School nurses administer hearing and scoliosis screenings to

students in certain grades and ensure compliance with required immunizations, dental exams, and physicals.

Day to day, school nurses perform a variety of other tasks to support student health and academic success in the classroom, including educating students and their families on disease prevention and health promotion, collaborating with colleagues on student health issues, and developing health and wellness programs for faculty and staff.

Cutting school nursing positions sacrifices more than health care

School nurses not only improve the health of students and save lives – they also save taxpayers money.

A study by *The Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics* found that for every dollar spent on school nursing services, \$2.20 is saved in medical costs and lost productivity from teachers and parents.

Partner Benefits: Get healthy and save

Beach season may be behind us, but there are plenty of reasons to get in good shape and cultivate good health all year round.

Through your Partner Benefits program, find savings on gym memberships and weight loss programs, or get a discount on a yoga class or wellness seminar. Shopping for vitamins or supplements to keep your immune system strong? Head over to DrugStore.com and get a 15 percent discount (when you purchase \$45 or more).

To get started, visit the Partner Benefits Page at www.partnersforpubliced.org/ and click on the "Health and Beauty" category.



About Partners for Public Education

PPE's mission is to provide parents, community leaders, elected officials, and educators with information and resources they need about public education in Pennsylvania, so we can work together to ensure the success of every child.

September 2014



Learn more and enroll for free at www.partnersforpubliced.org