

## How to Recruit and Retain Volunteers

The following ideas, tips and tools can be used to engage volunteers in improving school wellness by involving parents and the school community as partners to support healthy children where they live, learn and play.

### Build Relationships

Provide a welcoming environment for volunteers by ensuring the school setting is accessible and friendly.



Be aware of all the types and degrees of participation from parents and volunteers, as they can be involved at many different levels for school activities.



Recognize the barriers to participation. Parents that seem less active may have many reasons for not participating. Encourage parents to help when they can.



Get to know parents that are actively participating in school activities. Find out why they participate and ask them to connect you with other parents that may help.



Personally invite parents, grandparents and volunteers to participate with specific tasks.



Connect with parents during popular school related times to talk about healthy children and the benefits of parent and volunteer



Acknowledge contributions from parents and volunteers.



### Tips for School Staff

Ask parents and the school community informally what their definition is of a welcoming school.

Passive participation by reading newsletter information or active participation by donating food to a nutrition program are two different levels of participation that benefit the whole school community (Queensland Health Toolbox - booklet #4).

Hold a meet the parent night to talk to parents and volunteers about the barriers they face. Provide tools and strategies to help them overcome the barriers they face (Queensland Health Toolbox – booklet #4).

Use a survey or questionnaire to gather information from parents and volunteers that will be used by school administration to create better opportunities for participation (Queensland Health Toolbox - booklet #4).

Have parents, grandparents and volunteers choose one or two tasks from a master list.

Take opportunities at concerts, parent/teacher interviews, assemblies, celebrations, dropping off/picking up children.

Use public and private acknowledgements (send a thank you card, insert a thank you into the school or community newsletter).

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## Communicate

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Send wellness activities home with students that can be incorporated by their families. Use school agendas as a feedback tool to understand how these ideas were received.



Use all forms of communication to network with parents.



Inform parents who their key health promotion and parent council representatives are.



## Create Opportunities

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Emphasize the benefits of participation.



Ensure projects are planned, organized and well thought out.



Share what is happening at your school to address healthy living.



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## Tips for School Staff

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Connect with school health services staff in your local area to help with ideas for planned at home activities.

Communicate via newsletters, questionnaires, personal invitations, e-mail, website and social networking.

Use communication networks to make sure that parents are aware of who represents them.

Use examples including meeting other parents and skill building.

Implement a Comprehensive School Health (CSH) approach to school wellness planning (refer to <http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/> or your local school health services staff for more information on CSH).

Attend community meetings outside of the school. Invite service providers to support school wellness initiatives.

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## Tools:

### School Nutrition Education Resources:

(<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/2925.asp>)

### Queensland Health Toolbox – Booklet #4 (How to get and keep people involved):

(<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/healthyschools/toolbox.asp>)

### Parents Can Help Make Healthy Eating and Physical Activity a Priority at Their School:

(<http://www.movingandchoosing.com/Parent-Council/>)

### Alberta School Councils' Association:

(<http://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/>)

### Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) resources:

(<http://www.healthyalberta.ca/AboutHealthyU/280.htm>)