

Office of School Wellness Programs  
**2012-13 School Wellness Council Grants**

➤ **What is wellness?**

Wellness means being healthy in mind and body. To support healthy, successful students, the DOE updated its [Wellness Policies](#) in 2010. Strong physical and health education instruction, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, and healthy eating help young people stay in shape, feel good, do their best at school, and avoid long-term health conditions that can affect their ability to lead productive lives. Research done by the DOE with the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene has shown a correlation between academic achievement and fitness levels.

- Nearly half of NYC elementary school children are overweight or obese.
- Children who are overweight are more likely to be overweight as adults.
- Being overweight increases the risk of developing many serious health conditions and diseases.

➤ **What is the purpose of this grant?**

This is the third year the NYCDOE has invested in a grant to encourage schools to form or expand a School Wellness Council (SWC)—a group of representatives from your school who meet to consider ways to improve the physical and health education instruction, physical activity, nutrition, and wellness of your students and community. However, due to funding from the [City's Obesity Task Force Plan](#), this year the grant is expanding from 50 to 125 schools/sites. Administered by the [Office of School Wellness Programs](#), the SWC grant program offers \$2,500 grants along with resources, tools, incentives, and technical assistance through mentoring and networking events. Ten schools that participated in the 2011-12 SWC grant program can apply to take on additional leadership responsibilities to be considered for a \$3,000 mentoring grant.

All New York City public schools are encouraged to apply. The online grant application, available on the [website](#), will be open until mid October.

➤ **How can School Wellness Councils make a difference?**

Today's children are projected to live sicker and die younger than their parents, but lifelong health and fitness habits, supported by School Wellness Councils, can help to reverse those projections. Councils develop practical and innovative ways to address various components of wellness for students and the school community, e.g., PE, health education, physical activity, school nutrition, staff wellness, mental health, and other wellness-related programs. A wellness council functions best when there is representation from across the school community, including students, teachers, school nurses, administrators, school food staff, custodians, mental health providers, and CBOs. It's also a great way for parents and parent associations interested in wellness policies and programs to get involved, by either serving on the SWC or volunteering with its programs and subcommittees (e.g., gardening). School Wellness Councils:

- Assess current school wellness policies, practices and programming,

*"Ultimately, it's going to take all of us – businesses and non-profits; community centers and health centers; teachers and faith leaders; coaches and parents– all working together to help families make commonsense changes so our kids can get, and stay, healthy. In the end, I know that achieving all this won't be easy – and it won't be quick. But make no mistake about it, this problem can be solved... We don't need to wait for some new invention or discovery to make this happen. This doesn't require fancy tools or technologies. We have everything we need right now – we have the information; we have the ideas; and we have the desire to start solving America's childhood obesity problem. The only question is whether we have the will."*

-- First Lady Michelle Obama on her [Let's Move](#) campaign, which provides a great framework for thinking about wellness.

- Highlight areas of strength and concern,
- Create an action plan for addressing identified areas of concern,
- Develop and implement policies and projects to improve the school's overall physical activity and nutrition choices.

➤ ***Are School Wellness Council Grants one-size-fits-all?***

No. School Wellness Councils can only be effective when they reflect the interests and needs of an individual school community. The grants encourage schools to define and tackle programs that address their unique challenges and resources. These grants will support the creation of new School Wellness Councils or expansion of existing Councils by:

- Providing a constant flow of information and resources, networking opportunities, and professional development, along with technical assistance and one-on-one support from OSWP staff and other SWC schools,
- Connecting schools to community partners that can provide additional information and resources,
- Awarding each grantee \$2,500 to purchase materials and other resources,
- Sharing success stories and replicable best practices through a citywide Wellness Expo at the end of the school year.

➤ ***What kind of activities can these grants support?***

Projects to improve PE and health education programming, nutrition, physical activity, staff wellness, and other related areas are limited only by the imagination of your school staff. Councils promote a wide range of programs which succeed when they are closely aligned with the school's needs and the interests of the school community. For example:

- A PE teacher becomes certified in yoga instruction to strengthen the school's PE program.
- A teacher who runs every day forms a running club open to staff, parents, and students.
- The science teacher and health teacher coordinate with the cafeteria manager so science and nutrition lessons incorporate information about the seasonal foods being served in the cafeteria.
- Students and parents commit to raising funds using non-food fundraisers.
- A parent rallies everyone to design and plant a school garden and then start a cooking class using those foods.
- The entire school decides to adopt physical activity breaks as a part of its daily schedule to contribute to the 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise children need daily.

Schools that receive these grants will identify several areas of need in their school and then propose projects that directly address the needs. There are no "right" or "wrong" ideas. Schools should view these grants as an opportunity to jumpstart home-grown ideas that can take root and become embedded in a school's culture and expectations.

➤ ***How will the Office of School Wellness Programs support grant winners?***

OSWP will provide guidance, resources, and technical assistance so that schools can:

- Form or maintain an SWC and engage key stakeholders within the school community.
- Complete a school wellness assessment (provided by OSWP).
- Create an action plan and budget, based on its assessment, which the school will implement over the course of the school year.
- Use information, resources, and networking opportunities to provide concrete ways to develop, implement, and evaluate wellness programs.

➤ ***What will my school need to do if we receive a grant?***

- Most importantly, generate some excitement in your community for the idea that you have the opportunity to make a real difference in the health of all members of the school community.

- Have two Council members, who are identified on your application, participate in an orientation meeting, call, and/or visit with OSWP staff to learn about the supports available for you to create a strong SWC.
- Hold at least one SWC meeting per month and be ready to provide documentation (i.e., a meeting attendance sheet) to OSWP.
- Create (or update) and implement an action plan and submit a budget based on a school wellness assessment.
- Participate in networking events and professional development as well as in the year-end Wellness Expo June 6, 2012, to share your school's success stories with other schools.
- Please note that for all new SWC schools, OSWP will manage the grant funding for per session expenses and contracted goods and services for awardees instead of allocating funds to individual school budgets. Continuation grant schools (schools that participated in the 2011-12 SWC grant program) will receive a direct allocation and must provide follow-up expenditure reports.

➤ ***My school has had a School Wellness Council for several years but we were not funded under the 2011-12 SWC grant. Do I apply for a continuation grant?***

No. If you did not participate in the 2011-12 SWC grant, you will apply for an implementation grant and receive the support and technical assistance given to schools funded through our office for the first time. Only previously funded schools are eligible for the continuation grant with the option of additional funds for mentoring.

**If you have any questions or need further information please visit our [website](#) or email [Wellness@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:Wellness@schools.nyc.gov).**