

Prepared for:
Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Parent Attitudinal Survey

Following are the results of a survey of 600 parents conducted September 1-3, 2009. The survey was conducted online using an opt-in panel. The margin of error for the overall study is +/- 4% at the 95% confidence level and is higher for subgroups.

Quotas were set to ensure the sample matches the national distribution of consumers by census region and K-12 grade levels. Gender quotas were set to ensure an even distribution of respondents between males and females. There were no weights applied to the data.

KEY FINDINGS

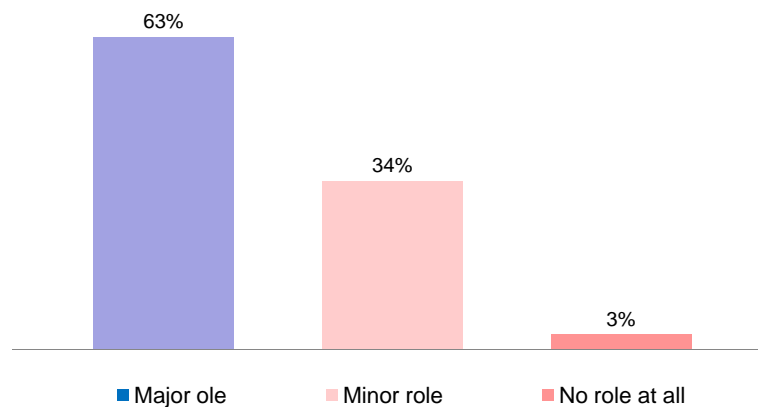
- Parents view schools today as being at the forefront of instilling and nurturing healthy lifestyles and therefore place great importance on healthy nutrition and physical activity in schools. In fact, parents unanimously agree that physical and health education are as critical as core subjects, such as English, math and science.
- Nearly universally, parents recognize the benefits of physical activity and healthy nutrition in boosting their children's academic performance and preventing childhood obesity. As the result, parents would like to see schools provide opportunities for and access to physical activity throughout the day, be it physical education, activity breaks, or recess.
- Not only do parents have high expectations for their children's school, they also recognize the role THEY themselves can play in helping encourage and promote healthy lifestyles at school. What is more, overwhelming majorities are willing to help kick-start healthy school programs in their own schools.
- Despite the great strides both parents and schools have made in promoting healthy lifestyles and behaviors, there still remains room for improvement. For schools the opportunities lie in providing better access to healthy foods and physical activities, while for parents, advocacy efforts present an opportunity.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Parents believe that schools today are at the forefront of instilling and nurturing healthy lifestyles among children.

- Nearly two-thirds of parents (63%) believe schools play a major role in maintaining and promoting healthy lifestyles among children.
 - Health advocates* are more likely than non-advocates to think of schools as playing a major role in maintaining and promoting healthy lifestyles among children (67% vs. 48%).
 - Similar to health advocates, younger parents (less than 45 years old) are significantly more likely than older parents (age 45+) to say that schools play a major role in instilling healthy lifestyles (66% vs. 57%).

Overall, how big of a role do you believe schools play in maintaining and promoting healthy lifestyles among children?

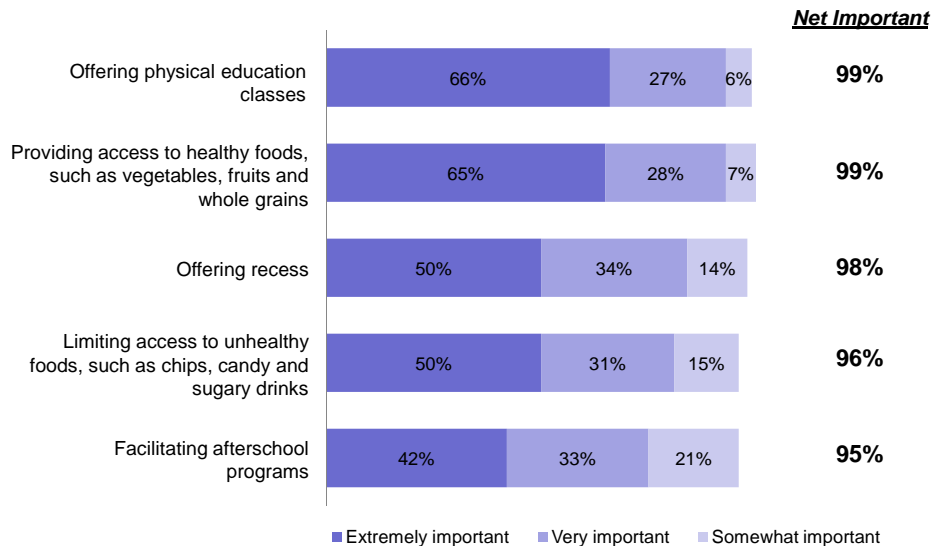


When it comes to healthy nutrition and physical activity in schools, parents unanimously recognize the importance of physical activity and healthy foods in encouraging a healthy lifestyle among children. In fact, parents universally agree that health and physical education are as crucial as core subjects.

- Near universal majorities of parents believe that offering physical education classes (99%), recess (98%) and afterschool programs (95%), as well as providing access to healthy foods (99%) and limiting access to unhealthy ones (96%) are important activities in encouraging healthy habits among children.

* Health advocates are defined for the purposes of this research as parents who report having undertaken one or more of health-related activities (brought healthy foods to school parties or other events or discussed healthier lunch choices with their child) or advocacy efforts (advocated for additional physical activity, healthier lunch menu options, or additional health education programs).

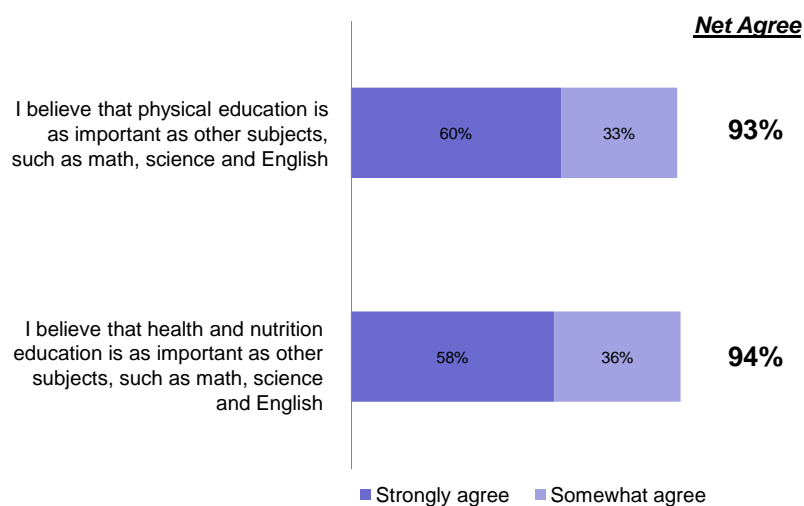
Below is a list of activities in or aspects of schools today. In your opinion, how important is each of the following in encouraging a healthy lifestyle among children?



- However, parents place different levels of importance on the health aspects. Over six in ten believe that offering physical education classes (66%) and providing access to healthy foods (65%) are extremely important in instilling healthy lifestyles among children, followed by a half (50%) who think recess and limited access to unhealthy foods are extremely important.
- Not surprisingly, recess is more important to parents of younger kids (kindergarten and elementary school) as opposed to parents of high school students (57% vs. 46% saying extremely important).
- Health advocates are significantly more likely than non-advocates to say that it is extremely important to offer physical education classes (69% vs. 54%) and recess (53% vs. 46%), provide access to healthy foods (69% vs. 48%) and limit access to unhealthy ones (54% vs. 35%) and facilitate afterschool programs (45% vs. 29%).
- Southerners are more likely than parents from the Midwest to believe that it is extremely important to offer physical education classes (71% vs. 56%) and recess (55% vs. 44%), limit access to unhealthy foods (55% vs. 44%) and facilitate afterschool programs (46% vs. 34%).

- Furthermore, over nine in ten parents agree that health and nutrition education (94%), as well as physical education (93%) are as important as other core subjects, such as math, science and English.

Below is a list of statements. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of them?

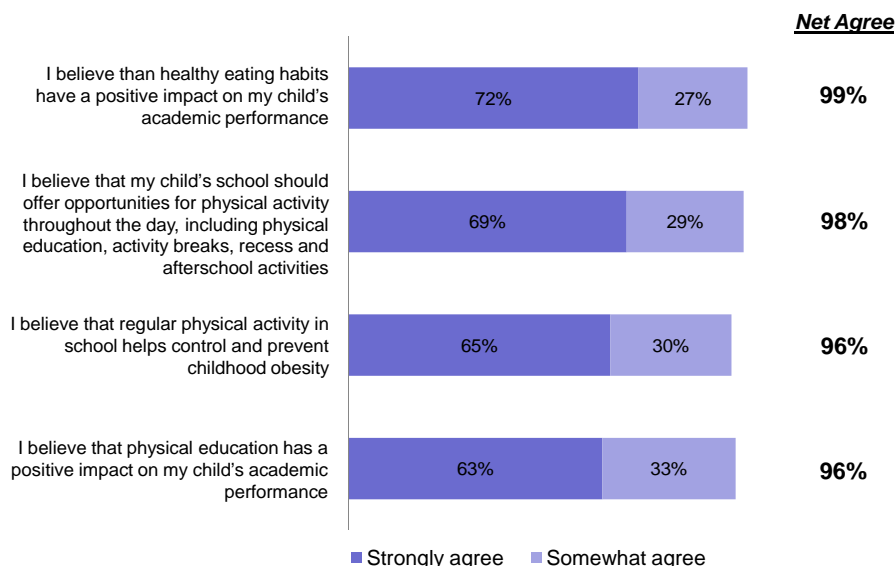


- Six in ten health advocates (64%) are more likely to strongly agree that physical education is as important as core subjects, as compared to four in ten non-advocates (42%). Similarly, 62% of health advocates place health and nutrition education on the same level as math, science, and English, as compared to 44% of non-advocates.

Parents believe healthy lifestyles yield results. Overwhelming majorities say that nutrition- and health-related activities positively impact children’s academic performance. Parents also recognize the ultimate importance of regular physical activity in addressing the problem of childhood obesity. As the result, parents unanimously support the idea that their child’s school should offer opportunities for physical activity throughout the day.

- A near universal majority of parents agree that healthy eating habits (99%) and physical education (96%) have a positive impact on their child’s academic performance.
- Additionally, nearly all parents (96%) agree that regular physical activity in school helps control or prevent childhood obesity.
- Parents nearly unanimously (98%) agree that their child’s school should offer opportunities for physical activity throughout the day, be it physical education, activity breaks, recess and afterschool activities with nearly seven in ten strongly agreeing with the statement (69%).
- Moms appear to be main advocates with 74% saying they strongly agree with the statement, as compared to 65% of dads.

Below is a list of statements. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of them?



- Across the board, parents who have undertaken health-related activities or advocacy efforts are significantly more likely than non-advocates to strongly agree with the statements.

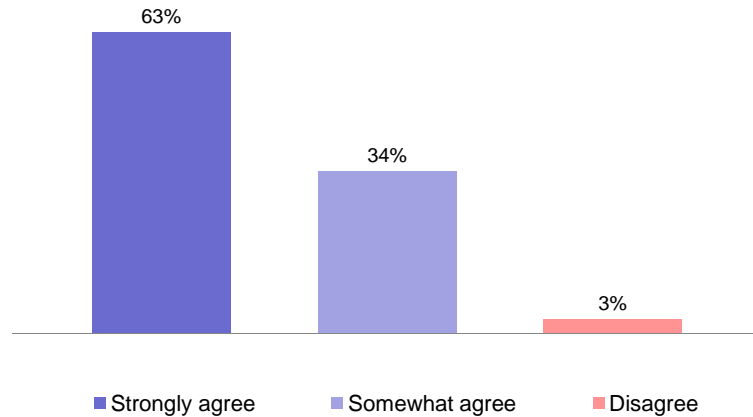
% Strongly Agree	Health Advocates	Non-Advocates
I believe that healthy eating habits have a positive impact on my child's academic performance.	78%	48%
I believe that my child's school should offer opportunities for physical activity throughout the day, including physical education, activity breaks, recess and afterschool activities.	74%	50%
I believe that regular physical activity in school helps control or prevent childhood obesity.	70%	47%
I believe that physical education has a positive impact on my child's academic performance.	69%	41%

Parents have high expectations for themselves as well as their child's school. They overwhelmingly believe that their OWN participation in THEIR school's health and nutrition policies creates a healthier school environment. What is more, the vast majorities are willing to get more involved in helping create a healthier school environment at their child's school.

- A near universal majority of parents agree (97%) that parental involvement in the school's health and nutrition policies creates a healthier school environment with over six in ten (63%) strongly agreeing with the statement.

- Health advocates are significantly more likely than non-advocates to say they strongly agree with the statement (66% vs. 50%).

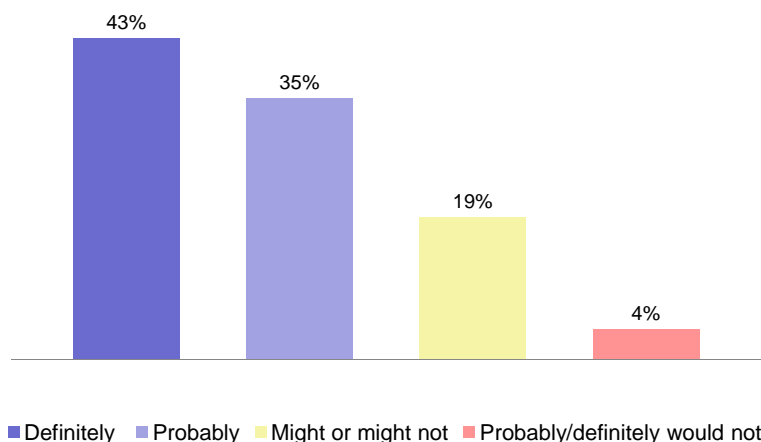
I believe parental involvement in the school's health and nutrition policies creates a healthier school environment.



➤ Close to eight in ten (78%) would be willing to get more involved in helping create a healthier school environment.

- Nearly one in two parents from the South (47%) and the West (49%) say they would definitely be willing to get more involved in creating a healthier school environment, as compared to a third of parents from the Northeast (35%) and the Midwest (35%).
- Non-Caucasian parents are significantly more likely than Caucasian parents to say they would definitely be willing to get more involved (56% vs. 40%).
- Health advocates are more than twice as likely as non-advocates to say they would definitely be willing to help create a healthier school environment (48% vs. 20%).

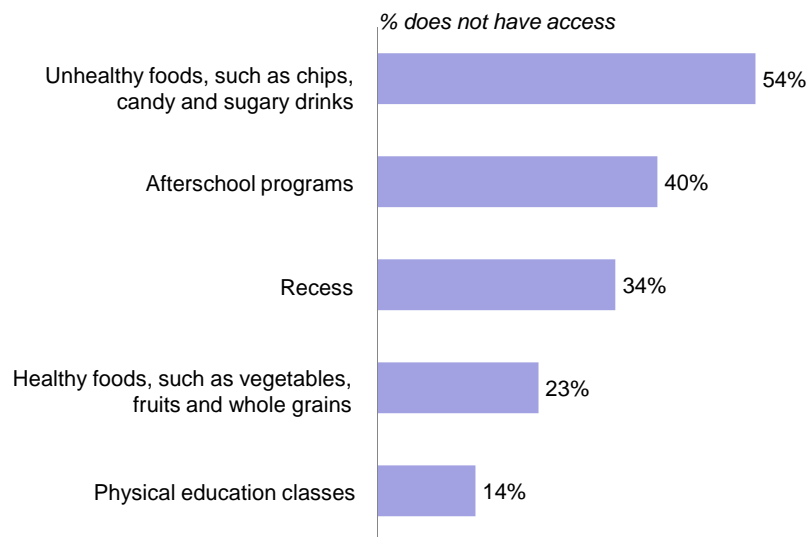
To what degree would you be willing to get more involved in helping create a healthier school environment at your child's school?



Despite the great strides both parents and schools have made in promoting healthy lifestyles and behaviors, there still remains room for improvement. For schools the opportunities lie in providing better access to healthy foods and physical activities, while for parents advocacy efforts at their child's school present an opportunity.

- Parents believe that their children already have regular access to physical education classes (86%) and healthy foods (77%) at school.
 - Younger parents (less than 45 years old) are more likely than older parents (45 years and over) to report that their children have access to physical education classes on a regular basis (88% vs. 81%).
- Still, over one in three (34%) report that their child does not have access to recess, and four in ten (40%) do not have access to afterschool programs on a regular basis.
 - More likely to report not having access to recess are parents over 45 years of age as opposed to parents less than 45 years old (48% vs. 26%), Southerners and Midwesterners as opposed to Westerners (36% and 39% vs. 25%).
 - As for afterschool programs, moms and less affluent parents (income less than \$100,000) are more likely than dads and more affluent respondents to report not having regular access to them (46% moms vs. 34% dads; 42% income less than \$100,000 vs. 26% income \$100,000+).
- Additionally, close to a half parents (46%) report that their child has access to unhealthy foods, such as chips, candy and sugary drinks.
 - Not surprisingly, parents of kids in middle and high school are more likely than parents of kindergarten and elementary school kids to report that their kids have access to unhealthy foods on a regular basis (52% vs. 38%).

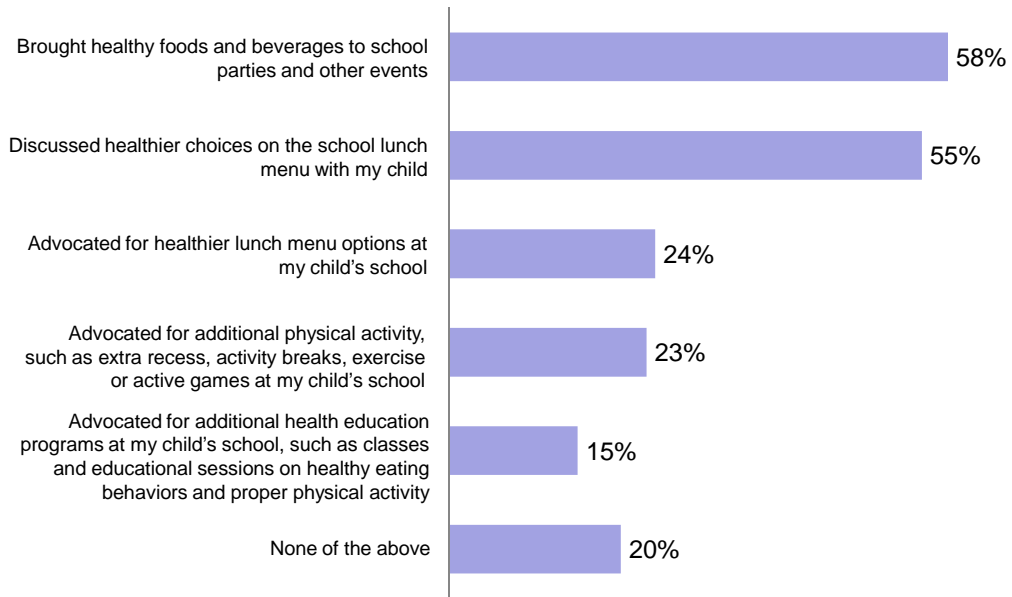
Which of the following does your child have access to on a regular basis at school? Indicate all that apply.



- Eight in ten parents (80%) have undertaken one or more health-related activities or advocacy efforts, be it bringing healthy foods to schools parties or other events, discussing healthier lunch choices with their children or advocating for healthier lunch menu, additional physical activity, or health education programs in their child's school.
 - These health advocates tend to be dads (84% vs. 77% moms), Non-Caucasians (87% vs. 79% Caucasians), more affluent (85% income \$50,000+ vs. 73% income less than \$50,000) and better-educated (85% college degree+ vs. 77% less than college degree). They also tend to reside in the South or the West (85% and 86%) as opposed to the Northeast and the Midwest (71% and 74%).
- However, while over one in two report they brought healthy foods and beverages to school parties or other events (58%) and discussed healthier choices on the school lunch menu with their child (55%), only less than a quarter of parents say they advocated for healthier lunch menu options (24%) or additional physical activity, such as recess, activity breaks or active games (23%). Less than one in six (15%) say they advocated for additional health education programs at their child's school, such as classes and educational sessions on healthy eating behaviors and proper physical activity.
 - Interestingly, dads are more likely than moms to be health and nutrition advocates, with 28% of dads saying they advocated for additional physical activity as compared to 17% moms, 29% of dads saying they advocated for healthier lunch menu options as compared to 18% moms, and 18% of dads saying they advocated for additional health education programs as compared to 12% of moms.

- More educated parents (college degree+) are significantly more likely than parents with less than college degree to say they have brought healthy foods to school parties or other events (63% vs. 53%), discussed healthier choices on the school lunch menu with their child (60% vs. 51%) and advocated for additional health education programs at school (20% vs. 11%).

Which of the following things, if any, have you done in the past? Indicate all that apply.



A FINAL WORD

Thank you again for the opportunity to work with you on this research project. Please do not hesitate to contact Victoria Sneed at (202) 585-2814 with any specific questions or comments you might have.

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