

Dr. Michael M. Krop, Chair

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIES FOR CREATING A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT:
NUTRITION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

COMMITTEE: EDUCATION AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS

It is well known that healthy eating and physical activity are essential for students to achieve their full academic and physical potential. While the primary responsibility of schools is to foster academic achievement, paying attention to the needs of the whole child, including health, can have a tremendous impact on learning.

Our national school lunch programs were launched to combat hunger, but we are now aware of a new problem: childhood obesity. Dr. Jeffrey P. Koplan, former Director of the CDC, states, "Overweight children are at risk for cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and other serious health problems. They are part of an epidemic of overweight and obesity that must be addressed so that they can lead healthier lives." Another expert predicts that if unhealthy eating habits persist in this country, we may be raising the first generation of Americans who will have shorter lives than their parents.

Statistics from the CDC indicate the following for the United States:

- 34% of children ages nine to eleven, and 21% of twelve to 17 year olds are overweight.
- About nine million six to 19 year olds are overweight.
- As many as 30,000 children have non-insulin dependent diabetes, with the highest rates among African Americans and Hispanics.
- Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with obesity in children.
- Soda consumption has almost doubled in the last 20 years.

Recent research provides compelling evidence of a clear connection between nutrition and learning. Poor nourishment impacts student behavior, school performance, ability to concentrate and the ability to perform complex tasks. Other studies showed that providing more opportunities for physical activity demonstrated positive effects on student achievement and increased test scores, especially in mathematics.

To provide a comprehensive program according to the recommendations adopted by the Surgeon General's Prescription for Change, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the United States Department of Agriculture's "Changing the Scene" program, our district should consider the following:

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- A commitment to emphasizing nutrition and physical activity as a priority
- Support of Nutrition Education and Physical Education
- Providing a pleasant eating environment conducive to good health
- Ensuring a variety of healthy food choices in school meals
- Monitoring of competitive food sales and vending machine contents
- Encouraging a collaborative approach with the community

In Miami-Dade County we can seize the opportunity to improve the selection of foods available to students, and to enhance their physical well-being at the same time. Adopting policies to create a healthy school environment will positively impact the health of our entire community.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MICHAEL M. KROP:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to report to the Board, no later than December 2003, suggested strategies, initiatives and actions necessary to create a healthier school environment in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.