



DANNON INSTITUTE®

Nutrition for Health



INCREASING PARENT BUY-IN

Rich Abramson
Superintendent of Schools
for RSU #38
Maine

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"If you build it, they will come." If you ask them, they will tell you! Parents are happy to give feedback when asked. However, administrators need to make their expectations clear to parents. Let them know why feedback is needed and how the feedback will be used. When expectations are not made clear at the outset, parents may get upset because they think that their advice was not followed.

Include parents and members of the community when constructing School Wellness Teams, School Health Advisory Committees, or other forms of mandatory school wellness councils. Many different models can work, with parents having a wide range of roles and authority. Recognize that parents are the best advocates for our children - their input and participation should be encouraged. It is also important to realize that there are no dumb ideas! Everyone has a voice and it is critical to listen to these voices.

Equally important is the student voice. After all, isn't it all about the children? Like the parent voice, the student voice should be included as we build and implement wellness policies, programs, and services for our children, schools, and communities. The powerful message that kids bring to the table can be pivotal in our success in changing the tide of obesity and poor health for our children.

Increase parent buy-in by providing helpful resources and information about wellness, recreation, physical activity, and nutrition to parents. Technology is extremely helpful for making information available to families and communities. Keep in mind that not everyone in the community has access to the Internet, so continue to make information available in hard copy, when requested. Ask parents if the information provided was helpful and gather any suggestions for improving or adding to the information. To reach members in the community, make wellness information available through town or city offices, public libraries and supportive merchants.

Every parent wants what's best for the child. Helping families and parents understand that administrators want the very same thing is critically important to forging a partnership between home and school. Inviting parent participation on wellness councils, opening schools whenever possible to help promote physical activity and wellness, and sharing of resources are several ways that this partnership can flourish. Follow these simple guidelines and "they will come"!

Mr. Abramson is Superintendent of Schools for RSU #38 and a former YMCA CEO living and working in Maine.

The Dannon Institute is a separately incorporated, 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation dedicated to non-commercial activities. Launched in 1997, The Dannon Institute was established as an independent foundation to promote research, education and communication about the link between nutrition and good health.- The Dannon Institute | 100 Hillside Avenue, 3rd Fl, White Plains, NY 10603-2863 | Tel: 914-872-8543

