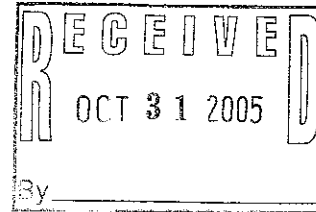




TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

1701 North Congress Ave. ★ Austin, Texas 78701-1494 ★ 512/463-9734 ★ FAX: 512/463-9838 ★ <http://www.tea.state.tx.us>

Shirley J. Neeley, Ed D.
Commissioner



To the Superintendent Addressed:

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) have joined forces to bring a special message to school boards and school administrators. We are very concerned about the dramatic increase of overweight children in our schools, and want to work with school boards and school administrators to address the problem sooner rather than later.

We specifically request that you review the enclosed 7-minute DVD and ensure that it is shown to your school board at the next appropriate school board meeting. The video, titled "Healthy Children, Healthy Schools," features TEA Commissioner Shirley J. Neeley, TDA Commissioner Susan Combs, and DSHS Commissioner Eduardo Sanchez.

We are convinced that obesity among students is a threat to our children and their academic achievement. Obesity costs the average school district in Texas \$95,000 a year in lost state aid due to higher absenteeism. Poor diet and physical inactivity lead to lower test scores and increased behavioral problems. Providing healthy food choices and encouraging physical activity in our schools is essential to the future health of Texans.

We urge Texas school boards to work closely with their School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs), and to make sure they start a SHAC if they do not already have one.

We have developed a 1-page handout to accompany the video. The handout underscores key messages from the video, provides practical suggestions for actions school boards can take immediately, and provides web links for further information.

DSHS Commissioner Eduardo Sanchez will preview the video at the TASB/TASA Convention in late October.

Please become a partner in the *Healthy Children, Healthy Schools* initiative, and help us ensure this message is presented to every Texas school board member.

Districts interested in further information can contact their regional school health specialist or nutritionist, or Anita Wheeler, DSHS, 458 7111 x2909

Shirley J. Neeley, Ed.D
Commissioner of Education

Susan Combs
Commissioner of Agriculture

Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

"Good, Better, Best—never let it rest—until your good is better—and your better is BEST!"

Healthy Children Healthy Schools

Tools and Tips to Chart a Course for Change

“Real change will take all of us working together with a commitment to taking action today.”

Susan Combs
Texas Commissioner
of Agriculture

Turn the Tide with a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)

- The Texas Education Code §28.004 requires that all school districts have a SHAC to advise their local school board about health issues
- Research shows that SHACs provide the most effective way for schools to interact with the local community on school health issues, and effective SHACs foster healthy students
- School boards that support and work closely with SHACs are making positive strides towards healthy children and healthy schools

Immediate Actions

- Form a **SHAC**, and ensure that school board members are involved in SHAC activities. Get started by visiting www.schoolhealthinfo.org, where you can find detailed guides to plan, launch, support and maintain an effective SHAC
- Adopt, implement and track the progress of a **Coordinated School Health Program** approved by the Texas Education Agency. Find details on approved programs at www.state.tx.us/curriculum/ncs_approvedshp.html

- Ensure that your district is implementing

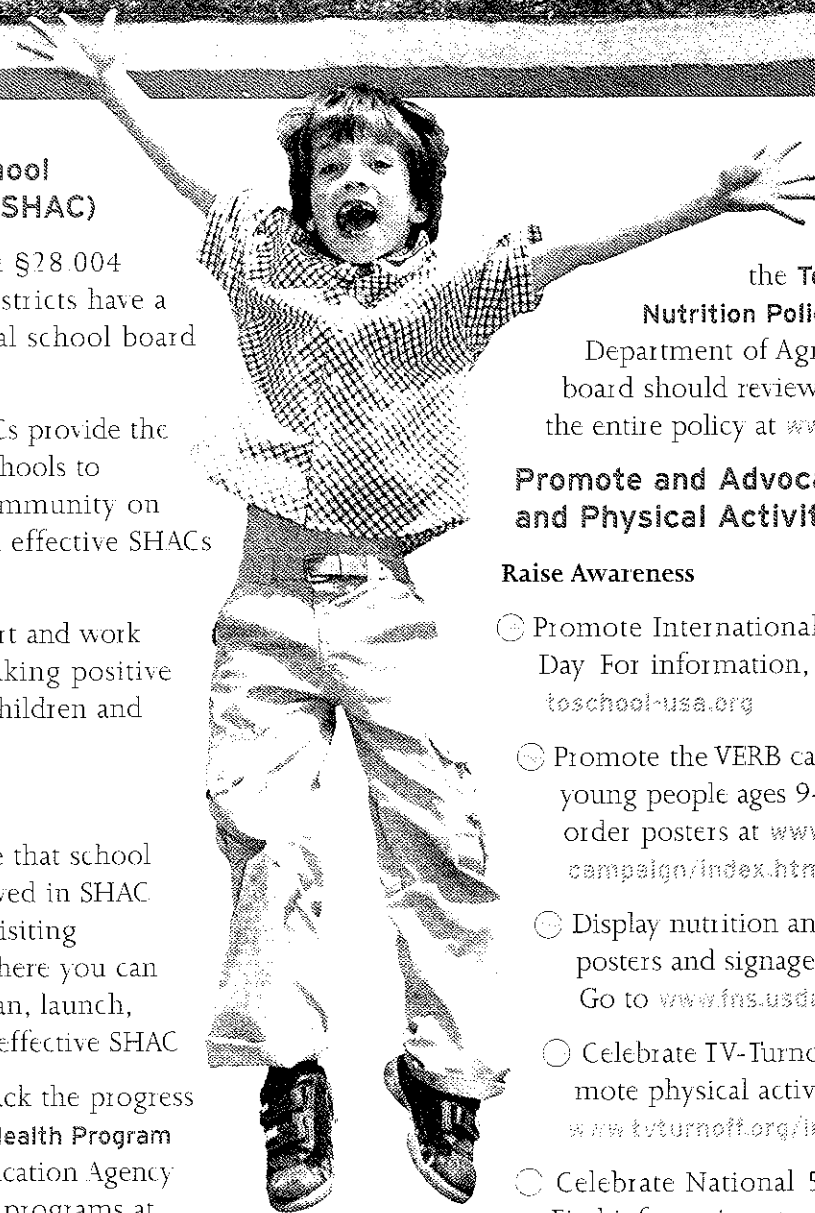
the **Texas Public School Nutrition Policy** from the Texas

Department of Agriculture. The school board should review compliance. View the entire policy at www.squaremeals.org

Promote and Advocate Nutrition and Physical Activity

Raise Awareness

- Promote International Walk to School Day. For information, visit www.walktoschool-usa.org
- Promote the VERB campaign among young people ages 9-13. Download or order posters at www.cdc.gov/youth/campaign/index.htm
- Display nutrition and physical activity posters and signage on school grounds. Go to www.fns.usda.gov/tn for details
- Celebrate TV-Turnoff Week to promote physical activity. For details, visit www.tvturnoff.org/index.htm
- Celebrate National 5 A Day Month. Find information at www.5aday.com/html/events/week.php
- Support non-food fundraising efforts and initiatives. Go to www.squaremeals.org for ideas



Healthy Children ★ Healthy Schools

Create a Nutrition and Physical Activity Culture

- ☉ Encourage healthy eating initiatives through the Parent Teacher Association and other extracurricular groups
- ☉ Encourage healthy eating and active lifestyles for Texas families. Go to www.squaremeals.org for a multitude of resources for parents and children, including information on the School Meal Programs
- ☉ Institute a healthy meeting policy for teachers and all other school staff. Go to www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_1_5X_Meeting_Well.asp for tips.
- ☉ Adopt a wellness challenge like MarathonKids or Walk Across Texas. Find details at www.marathonkids.com or walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/wat_schools/wat_schools.htm.

“One of the greatest problems facing school boards across Texas is the growing problem of obesity among our students.”

Shirley Neeley
Texas Commissioner of Education



“Studies show a direct link between improved nutrition and improved academic performance. More than 200 studies confirm fit kids learn better.”

Dr. Eduardo Sanchez
Texas Commissioner of Health Services

- ☉ Open school track and field facilities to the community for physical activity.

Explore Other Web Resources

- ☉ Team Nutrition from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA): www.fns.usda.gov/tn
- ☉ Action for Healthy Kids: www.actionforhealthykids.org
- ☉ Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Health and Physical Education Requirements: www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter115/index.html and www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter116/index.html
- ☉ My Pyramid, USDA's New Food Guidance System: www.mypyramid.gov

Contact information:

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squaremeals@agr.state.tx.us

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