

Team Nutrition



Planning Kit

A school health fair is an activity that can convey useful information and at the same time be fun for students. A health fair is an effective tool for:

- creating an awareness of health issues,
- providing health education,
- promoting resources that are available in the community, and
- motivating students to make positive health behavior changes.

A successful health fair requires planning, organization and good communication with participants and exhibitors. This kit will help you plan a successful health fair that is fun and educational for students and their families.



Hints for Planning a Successful Health Fair



Allow plenty of time to plan

Ideally four to six months will allow time to plan and organize a successful health fair.

Determine the focus of your health fair

A catchy theme or phrase will attract attention to your health fair. All exhibitors can be informed of the theme and asked to plan their display and message utilizing the established theme.

Determine your target audience

Will the health fair involve all students K-12 within your school district? Or will you target only

specific grade levels (maybe one or more elementary schools)? Will you include parents and/or open the health fair to community members? Will the fair be held during the school day or on an evening or weekend?

Organize a planning committee

School personnel that might contribute to a good planning committee include the school nurse, physical education teacher, classroom teachers, administrators and school food service personnel. You might want to consider including community representatives on the planning committee as well. Community members might include health professionals such as doctors or dentists, representatives of health agencies and other local groups and organizations, extension service personnel, recreation center staff, local business people, and the media.

Choose a date and location for your health fair that is convenient and accessible for your target audience

When you are considering a location, be sure that the area is large enough to accommodate the exhibitors and the participants comfortably. Parking is an important issue if parents will be included. Remember to allow plenty of time before and after the event for exhibitors to set up and take down their display.

Determine content of the health fair

Decide if the health fair will have only exhibits or if there will be a variety of interactive activities to engage students and other participants. If parents and other adults will be health fair participants, consider the addition of education seminars on a variety of health-related topics.

Identify potential exhibitors

Be sure to choose exhibitors that are compatible with the focus of your health fair. Local resources are a vital part of a successful fair. Contact health professionals, your local health department, law enforcement and fire personnel, community groups, health clubs, schools, etc and invite them to participate. State or national health organizations are also good sources of information and resource materials. Interactive or hands-on activities should be encouraged!

Procure sponsors for the health fair if financial support is needed

If financial backing is needed, approach businesses, community groups and community and business leaders for their financial support, materials or services. Remember to publicly acknowledge their support as you publicize your event.



Publicity is vital for the success of your health fair

A well-planned health fair will be a success if it has good publicity! If you plan to include parents and/or community members, be sure to notify them well in advance of the event. It is best to promote your health fair with a variety of methods. Press releases, media publicity and public service announcements are a good start. Fliers and posters can be posted around the community, distributed by businesses or sent home with students. Ask local organizations to promote your health fair in their newsletters or community calendars.



Order handouts from at least 2-3 months ahead of the date of the health fair

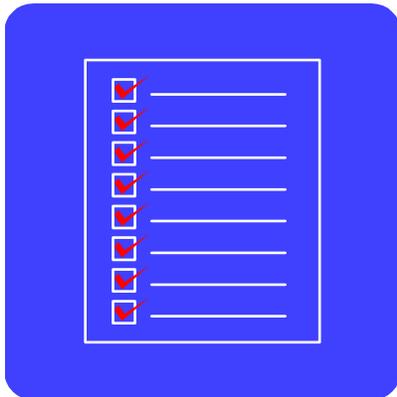
It can be frustrating to identify materials that will be excellent health fair handouts only to learn that it is too late to order the items! Plan ahead and order handout materials early. The printed materials will be shipped using a shipping method that is economical but not necessarily speedy! Many organizations request that you allow 4-8 weeks for delivery.



Preparing the Health Fair Site

Prepare a layout of the health fair site well before the day of the event

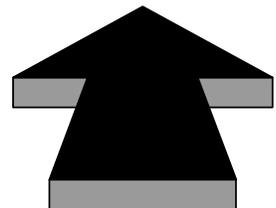
Ask the exhibitors how much space they need and if electricity is needed. Map out a floor plan to allow good traffic flow. Be sure the exhibits are not blocking doors or fire exits. If extension cords are needed, try to keep them out of the traffic way. Designate an area for a registration table if participants or exhibitors will be registering.



Have a checklist of everything you will need for the health fair

Be sure to include such items as tables, chairs, electrical equipment, extension cords, audio-visual equipment, pens, pencils, paper, trash cans, trash bags, tape, scissors, easels, signs and any decorator items.

Prepare signs or arrows directing people to the registration table, exhibits, restrooms, seminars, etc.



Set up tables, chairs and equipment before the exhibitors arrive

If the fair is large, you might consider preparing maps of the designated exhibitor areas to distribute to those attending the health fair.

Checklist for a Successful Health Fair

4 to 6 months before the health fair:

- Establish goals and objectives of the health fair
- Select a planning committee
- Identify the focus of the health fair and the target audience
- Determine the date, time and location
- Identify possible services, information, exhibits and activities
- Decide how to best publicize the event



3 to 4 months before the health fair:

- Establish timelines
- Secure commitments from exhibitors
- Decide on exhibits, activities, demonstrations
- Determine equipment needs such as tables and chairs
- Reserve any rental items
- Determine topics and speakers for parent seminars

2 to 3 months before the health fair:

- Order educational and promotional materials
- Begin securing prizes, decorations and giveaways
- Make posters and fliers to publicize the event
- Have forms and activity sheets printed
- Begin to accumulate supplies
- Send written confirmation to exhibitors including the following:
 - date and time of event
 - set-up time
 - location (include a map)
 - guidelines for exhibits
 - verify space and electrical requirements
 - verify any special needs

1 month before the health fair:

- Publicize the event
- Finalize booth and exhibit locations
- Make signs
- Make a map for exhibitors and participants
- Make a list of items still needed
- Recruit volunteers

1 week before the health fair:

- Confirm with all teachers, exhibitors, volunteers and presenters
- Print map and program
- Make nametags for exhibitors, volunteers and committee
- Finalize plan for the registration process
- Finalize plans for the evaluation process
- Assign volunteers
- Secure any necessary items



Day before the health fair:

- Set up tables and chairs
- Set up the registration table including:
 - sign-in/registration sheets
 - pens and pencils
 - maps of exhibits and programs
 - assignment list for volunteers
- Double check electrical cords, outlets, audio-visual equipment, etc
- Gather all needed supplies

Day of the health fair:

- Set up
- Be ready an hour before opening
- Direct and instruct volunteers
- Clean up

Follow-up:

- Send thank you notes to exhibitors and volunteers
- Document ideas or changes for the next health fair





Activity and Exhibit Ideas

Activities and exhibits should be targeted to the specific ages of participating students. The suggested activities and exhibits below may need to be adapted to fit the age of the audience.

Bacterial Growth

Students and adults alike are always amazed to see the results of bacterial growth. Prior to the health fair, obtain samples of food items and other objects to test and show the growth of bacteria. Algae plates can be obtained from a local health department along with instructions for growing the bacteria. This is a good project for a high school science class to do and show and explain the results to younger students.

Bicycle Rodeo

A bike rodeo is always popular with school-age children. Have students ride through a safety course using correct hand signals and safe riding techniques. Provide instruction prior to the activity to illustrate the correct safety methods. Be sure to emphasize the use of bicycle helmets at all times and explain what to look for in fitting a helmet.

Breakfast

Displays of food items that can be eaten for a quick nutritious breakfast can be assembled. Older students in Family and Consumer Science classes could prepare the displays and explain the options to younger students during the health fair.

CPR and First Aid

Emergency medical personnel or agencies such as the Red Cross could provide demonstrations on CPR and first aid. Tours of an ambulance or medical rescue helicopter are always popular.



Dental Care

Ask an area dentist to set up a display on dental care and health. Dental professionals often have models or pictures of decayed teeth that make an impression on younger students encouraging them to practice good dental hygiene.

Disability Awareness

A booth to create awareness of what a disabled person encounters is an eye-opener to many students. Ask students to:

- ◆ put cotton in their ears and then listen to directions for other activities (hearing impairment)
- ◆ put plastic bags over hands and secure with a rubber band and then have them attempt to pick up a small item, such as a dime (simulates arthritic hands)
- ◆ smear non-prescription reading glasses with petroleum jelly or put plastic wrap over the lenses (demonstrates the difficulty of reading instructions on a medicine bottle for individuals with blurred vision)
- ◆ maneuver a wheelchair (or crutches) through a course of cones (helps participants realize how difficult it is for a disabled person to be mobile)

Drug Use Prevention

Contact your area Prevention Center, hospital, health department, rehabilitation center or law enforcement to provide information on drug use prevention. National organizations, such as MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) are excellent sources of information and materials.

Fire Prevention and Safety

Area fire departments are often willing to provide fire safety education for students. Information could be provided on eliminating fire hazards in the home and the importance of a family emergency plan. Stations to teach children how to make an emergency call, "Stop, Drop and Roll", and other fire safety issues are effective teaching tools.



Hand-washing

A demonstration booth on hand washing can be set up using spray-on products or glitter to simulate germs. Put the spray or glitter on one participant's hand and ask that child to shake hands with another. This will show how "germs" spread. Have the students rinse their hands in a bowl of water and point out how much glitter is still on the hands. Next, have them wash in soapy water and see the difference.

Heart Disease Prevention



The American Heart Association has many resources on heart disease. Representatives are often available to answer questions and provide educational programs.

Mental Health

Area mental health facilities have a wide range of programs available for public education. Contact them and explain the focus of your health fair to find topics that support your goals.

Nutrient Awareness

Ask a county extension home economist or local registered dietitian to present information and activities that emphasize the importance of a specific nutrient. For example, activities and information could be presented that focus on the importance of calcium. A dairy council representative would be a good contact person to promote this important nutrient!



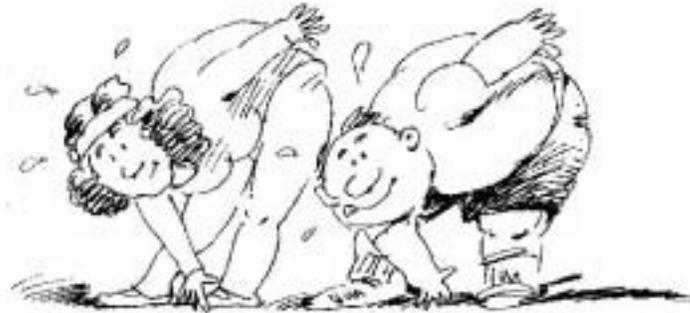
Nutrition

Nutrition covers a vast range of topics that might be appropriate for the health fair. The county Extension office, state agencies, medical personnel, local registered dietitians, FACS teachers and other health professionals are excellent sources of information. Determine which nutritional issues go along with your health fair focus and research the best sources of information and resources.

Obesity has become an increasing problem among many students in recent years. If this is a problem in your school, consider addressing this issue as part of the health fair.

Physical Activity and Fitness

Have local aerobic or fitness trainers or martial arts instructors put on a demonstration or lead the health fair participants in an activity that promotes physical fitness. Information on shoes, equipment, sports drinks and exercising safely are also good topics to address, particularly for older students. Younger students can learn the importance of being physically active.



Poison Prevention

Poison Control Centers can provide good information on poisonous substances, look-alike items, poisonous plants and other items.

Portion Sizing & Super-Sizing

Set up a display that shows the serving size of various foods. Compare this serving size to a portion a student might commonly consume. Information can be obtained from the county Extension office, state agencies, medical personnel, local registered dietitians, FACS teachers and other health professionals.

Producer Groups

Producer groups have a wealth of information about their products and frequently participate in school and community activities such as health fairs. Contact representatives of the wheat commission, pork producers council, dairy council, beef council, etc. to ask them to participate in your health fair.

Scavenger Hunt (using information from exhibitors)

It is often difficult to get health fair participants, especially youth, to actively learn and ask questions of the exhibitors. A scavenger hunt is a fun way to get more out of the information being provided. Prior to the health fair, ask each exhibitor to submit several questions that can be answered with information provided in their booth. (Be sure they also provide the answers to you!) Compile the questions on a Scavenger Hunt form. Assign groups of 3 or 4 and have them begin visiting the booths and finding answers to the questions. This could be a contest or a classroom assignment. Prizes for the winners are a good motivator!



Skin Cancer Screening and Prevention

A skin cancer exhibit should include the importance of sunscreen and protecting your skin, the dangers of overexposure and warning signs. Local health personnel might be willing to provide a skin cancer screening at the health fair.

Tobacco Use Prevention

Contact area health departments, state organizations and local agencies for information on tobacco use prevention. Many schools have high school students trained as Teens As Teachers and would enjoy having an opportunity to present their programs to the public and to school age children. Possible topics could include second hand smoke, smokeless tobacco, and the effects of smoking on the body.

Traffic Safety

The State Department of Transportation and the Highway Patrol have various public education programs available. A child car seat safety check lane could be set up. Contact the above agencies to find qualified and certified child car seat inspectors. Bicycle safety, walking or running safety, along with driving safety are important subjects to address.

Seminars for parents

If your health fair includes parents, educational seminars might be a way to draw parents to the fair and provide helpful information. Ask local professionals to present information on timely topics. Seminars can be any length ranging from 15 minutes to 1 hour.

Child Health

Child health might be addressed by providing a panel of physicians and health personnel. The panel might focus on specific issues and answer questions. If a panel discussion is held, be sure to explain that the panel members are not there to answer diagnostic questions, but to address child health issues.

Others topics that might be interesting and informative parent seminars include:

- Nutrition for Athletes
- Vegetarian Diets
- Food Allergies and Intolerances
- Obesity in Children and Adults
- Childhood Diabetes
- The Importance of Physical Activity for Children
- Secrets to Healthy Snacking
- Eating Disorders
- Secrets to Low-Fat Eating

