

SNAP: School Nutrition and Activity Project

Teacher Information Letter



Dear Teacher:

In the next few weeks, we will be conducting a School Health Survey with grade 5 and 6 students across the province, including your school. **We have tried very hard in the preparation stages, and will be working with your principal, to make sure that this causes very little, if any, disruption to your daily routine.** However, we will need approximately 30-45 minutes to do a survey with your students and we will be collecting data at the same time about their heights and weights (see below).

The study has two parts: 1) to obtain data on the eating habits and physical activity of the grade 5 and 6 students of PEI; and 2) to assess children's height and body weight. We will collect the data every two years, and use this information to help understand whether the new nutrition policies are effective in improving eating habits and helping children to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight.

Why are we doing this study now?

As you know, school nutrition policies have been adopted in elementary schools across the province. Schools are changing a lot of what they serve and allow to be sold at food, and this study will provide important information about the eating habits, physical activity and weight status of children on PEI, and whether all this hard work is having an impact! The project is supported by the school boards and Department of Education.

We would like to conduct a short (15-20 minutes) in-class survey of your students (after they have parental permission), and to have those children weighed and measured in a separate area. The process for the study is outlined below.

Process:

1. An **information letter and consent form** will be sent home today to all grade 5 and 6 students. Thank you for doing this. Parents who wish for their child to participate will complete the consent form which will be taken back to school by the student by _____. **You do not have to do anything but send the form to the school office unopened, and we will pick up the forms from the office.**
2. On a date scheduled with your principal, students with parental consent will be asked to complete a paper and pencil **survey of eating habits and physical activity in class**. The survey will take about 15-20 minutes. A trained researcher will conduct the survey in your classroom, with your permission.
3. Children with parental consent will then be asked to be weighed and have their height measured in a separate private area. Heights and weights measured by researchers have been proven to be much more accurate than heights and weights that are self-reported by participants.

We will be collecting the weights and heights of grade 5 and 6 students across PEI so that we can compare them to weights and heights of other grade 5 and 6 students in a few years. **No one - including the students themselves - will be told their individual weights and heights.** Students will be asked to be weighed and have their height measured in a separate private area. We will be using strict guidelines (developed for measuring children from the Centres for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia) to make sure that information is kept private and that we are sensitive to children's needs, and that we get accurate information.

We will:

- use a special electronic scale with a display which is held by the researcher across the room, which will make sure that the student, or any other student, cannot see what their weight is;
- use trained research assistants to make sure they are sensitive to children's concerns and can answer children's questions; we will assure students that this is not about appearance, it is about assessing children's health over time.
- make sure measurements are taken in a PRIVATE area so that others can't see or hear the measurement. Results will NOT be shared with the child, parent, or with anyone at the school.
- upon completion of the project, only present average weights, and the total number of children overweight. Students' individual weights and heights will be kept private.

Only students with written permission from their parents, and who are willing to participate themselves, will be included in the study. If the child is not comfortable with being weighed, he/she will have the right to refuse to have this done.

We will explain to students that their participation in the study is voluntary. Students are also free to withdraw from the study at any time before or during completion of the survey.

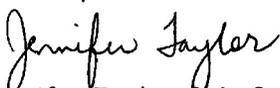
This survey will be anonymous: we will make sure that students do not put their name on the survey. The research assistant will gather all surveys together and place them in a large envelope.

For your information, this project has been reviewed and approved by the UPEI Research Ethics Committee.

We are very grateful for your participation. We simply cannot conduct research in the schools without supportive teachers like you. If you have any questions about the process described above, or wish more information to assist you in reaching a decision, please call Dr. Jennifer Taylor (University of Prince Edward Island) at 566-0475.

Thanks Again!

Sincerely,



Jennifer Taylor, PhD, Paul Veugelers, PhD
Co-Principal Investigators, SNAP Project

