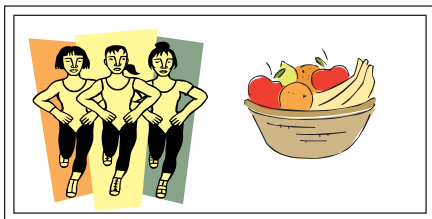


## Wellness Corner

~ by Connie Bjornstad



At Okoboji Community School education is not the only priority for students. The Okoboji School District has implemented a Wellness Policy that promotes healthy students by supporting wellness, good nutrition and regular physical activity as part of the total learning environment.

Samples of “wellness in action” include incorporating physical activities in middle school guidance classes to help teach lessons on building teamwork. An example of one such activity is the “Sitting Circle”; in this activity students support one another. These types of team building activities were continued while participating in a day long retreat at Camp Foster.

Parents may have noticed some changes in the school’s monthly menus. More fresh fruits are being added and more whole wheat products (versus white bread foods) are being served.

Instead of whole milk, 1%, skim and skim chocolate milk are the milk choices. There is also a milk machine at the high school, and vending machines now offer healthier beverage choices. Seventh and eighth grade students, along with the high school students, can choose to eat foods from the salad bar for lunch rather than the regular school lunch. Elementary students must now take a sample of each food served at lunch. This encourages them to try something new to eat. Parents are reminded of the importance of having breakfast before the school day begins. Okoboji Community School serves breakfast at all the schools and for 90 cents the students receive juice, milk and one or two food choices.

Physical activity is an important part of the Wellness Policy. Due to the increase in obesity in both children and adults, the PE department began tracking the 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students’ height, weight, and Body Mass Index (BMI). This number is calculated from a child’s weight and height and is a reliable indicator of body fat. BMI is a method of screening for weight categories that may lead to health problems. The PE department is also exploring ways to make parents aware of these findings so both school and parents

can work together to make all students healthy and ready to learn. All students in kindergarten through high school participate in physical education activities. This school year the high school has added more fitness based activities including Tae-bo and an intensive fitness class.

Okoboji Community School is dedicated to working with students to develop healthy eating habits and an enjoyment of physical activities throughout their school years and into adulthood. The new Wellness Policy is a means to help achieve that goal. Watch for additional articles on wellness activities in future Okoboji Outlooks.

*Connie Bjornstad is the K-4, 9-12 school nurse for Okoboji Community Schools. She has been with the district over ten years and is a graduate of the University of Iowa. She and her husband, Chris, have four grown children. Connie also served as the volunteer coordinator of the “Reading is Fundamental” program for the school for eighteen years and is a member of the Dickson County Board of Health. She enjoys bicycling, baking and gardening in her spare time. She can be reached by contacting Julie Davies at [JDAVIES@okoboji.k12.ia.us](mailto:JDAVIES@okoboji.k12.ia.us).*