

## Do you want to be healthy when you grow up?



Hi, Get Healthy Partners! As a Community Health Planner at Get Healthy San Mateo County, I work to improve student wellness by creating healthy school environments and addressing persistent health inequities amongst our youth. Here is why I'm so dedicated to this work:

Research shows that healthy kids are more likely to be healthy adults. Children and teens spend much of their young lives in school. So, creating healthy school environments is an enormous opportunity to ensure a healthy population.

Youth come from various backgrounds and many don't have a lot of healthy options in and around their homes. Schools can help level the playing field and give every child the opportunity to be healthy. Also, data shows that students who are healthy are better prepared to learn and excel in school. This sets youth on the right path to academic success. These early building blocks of health and school wellness are essential to easing a transition into a healthy adulthood.

There are lots of strategies to creating healthier environments in and around our schools. Whether it's providing nutritious meals, increasing physical activity, ensuring safe ways to walk and bike to school, or limiting sugary drinks and junk food in and around schools, schools can do more to invest in the development of the whole child. Unfortunately, most schools don't have all the resources they need to transform their school into a truly healthy place and need as much support as they can get.

Creating healthy environments for students requires strong collaboration between administrators, teachers, and other professionals along with authentic engagement with the broader school community including parents and youth. Our upcoming [School Wellness Summit](#) on February 25 and quarterly School Wellness Alliance meetings bring together a diverse audience to address student needs and share best practices. I hope you can join us!

With education linked directly to health outcomes and longevity, we have a lot of work to do to ensure every child in San Mateo County can grow up and be healthy.

Justin Watkins, Community Health Planner

*Staff Perspective: January 2015*

