

CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS HEALTH SERVICES

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Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter is to let you know about the state's new Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening Program for students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. A Body Mass Index, or BMI, is a measure that is used to show a person's "weight for height for age." It is calculated using an individual's height and weight. Just like a blood pressure reading or an eye screening test, a BMI can be a useful tool in identifying possible health risks.

According to the new regulation which was passed in April of 2009, schools must now collect height and weight measurements on students in the noted grades. These measurements will then be used to calculate each child's BMI and the results will be mailed home to parents or guardians. The purpose of the BMI Screening Program is to give you information about your child's weight status and ideas for living a healthy life.

Massachusetts schools have taken heights and weights of students each year since the 1950's. According to the state's new BMI screening regulation which passed in April 2009, schools must now collect the heights and weights of students in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10. Each child's height and weight will then be used to calculate their BMI. The results will be mailed home or directly communicated in writing to you.

The school nurse will supervise your child's screening and will make sure your child's privacy is respected at all times. The results of your child's height, weight, and BMI measurements are strictly confidential – the results will be kept in your child's school health record and mailed to you directly.

A BMI does not tell the whole story about your child's health status. BMI does not distinguish between fat and muscle. For example, if a child is very athletic and has a lot of muscle, his or her BMI may be high even though he or she is not overweight. That is why we encourage you to share the results with your child's health care provider. Your child's doctor or nurse is in the best position to evaluate his or her overall health and can explain the results of his or her BMI screening. They can also talk with you about whether there are steps you can take to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

We are very interested in making sure that all our students are healthy. All children in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 will have their height and weight measured and will have their Body Mass Index (BMI) calculated. If you would not like your child's height, weight and BMI measured in school, please send a written request to your school nurse.

Please feel free to call your school nurse with any questions you may have about the BMI screening. Additional information about children's wellness and fitness is available upon request or you may access the state's resources at www.mass.gov/massinmotion/.

Sincerely,

Janet Donnelly, RN, BSN, NCSN
Nurse Leader