

Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) is the nation’s leading nonprofit and largest volunteer network which specifically addresses the epidemic of overweight, undernourished and sedentary youth by focusing on changes at school. With teams in every state, AFHK provides expertise, volunteers, programs and resources nationwide through a unique collaboration of more than 20,000 members. For the past several years the Colorado team has focused on engaging parents in school wellness efforts.

Colorado AFHK launched **THE PARENT NETWORK** in the fall of 2010 as a response to parent demand for increased peer to peer communication and collaboration around school wellness activities between parents in different Colorado school communities. By providing parents with opportunities and resources to connect with each other, with Action for Healthy Kids and its partners, and with their school communities, **THE PARENT NETWORK** is designed to:

<p>Parent ⇄ Parent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☼ Link parents across the state in a peer network to share successes, strategies, tools and resources related to school wellness and healthy living through motivational events, a mentoring program and social networking.
<p>AFHK ⇄ Parent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☼ Provide parents with educational opportunities to learn how school systems work and the most effective strategies for creating healthy environments. ☼ Provide parents with easy access to innovative, proven school wellness programs developed by AFHK and its partner organizations. ☼ Offer technical assistance and mini-grants to empower parent champions and legitimize their efforts within their school communities.
<p>Parent ⇄ School Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☼ Mobilize parent and other school champions with the necessary tools and support to take action in the areas of nutrition and physical activity in their own schools and at home. ☼ Recruit, build and train a statewide network of designated School Wellness Champions to serve as liaisons in their school districts and promote communications about school wellness issues and opportunities between Colorado AFHK, its partners, and Colorado school communities across the state.

PARENT NETWORK activities are intended to help parents take ownership of the portions of the school food and physical activity environment which they do control – such as fundraising programs, celebrations, rewards, and family events. Network activities are also intended to educate parents about the portions of the school food and physical activity environment which they may not control, *but which they can influence* – such as school nutrition services, wellness policies, school gardens, recess, nutrition education, and classroom rewards.

Most importantly, Network activities are designed to help eliminate the feelings of isolation and helplessness which frequently accompany school wellness work. Through their participation in Network activities parents will join a growing community of like-minded individuals. In the process parents will learn more about the link between school performance, nutrition and physical activity, and how attention to these factors in the school **and home** environments can support higher academic achievement and healthier, happier children.