



JOHN O. AGWUNOBI, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H.  
SECRETARY



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JOHN L. WINN  
Commissioner of Education



September 1, 2005

Dear Superintendent:

As you begin a new school year, we extend greetings on behalf of the Department of Health and Department of Education. The United States Congress recognizes that schools play a critical role in promoting student health, preventing childhood obesity, and combating problems associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity. To formalize and encourage this role, Congress passed Public Law 108-265, which requires each school district participating in the National School Lunch Program and National School Breakfast Program to establish a local wellness policy by the beginning of school year 2006-2007.

This requirement provides districts with the opportunity to develop policies related to school food services, nutrition education, physical activity, and other food-related activities such as vending machines, classroom rewards, celebrations, and fundraising. The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity provides model school wellness policies on their website, which can be viewed at: <http://www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/WellnessPolicies.html>.

The epidemic of overweight and obese children has increased markedly in recent years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that among children and teens aged 6-19 years, 16 percent (over 19 million young people) are considered overweight. This is a 45 percent increase over the estimates from a 1988-1994 study. Approximately 60 percent of obese children have associated cardiovascular risk, such as elevated blood pressure, blood sugar, triglycerides, or cholesterol. As a result, the current generation of American children is the first in history to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

We encourage you to review the enclosed **Governor's Task Force on the Obesity Epidemic Recommendations** at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/GTFOE/>, especially those recommendations focusing on schools and parents, as you adopt policies and initiate programs locally to help fight this epidemic. If we can be of any assistance, please contact Carol Vickers, Director, Coordinated School Health Program, at the Department of Health, at (850) 245-4330, extension 2794, [carol\\_vickers@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:carol_vickers@doh.state.fl.us); or, Penny Detscher, Director, Coordinated School Health Program, at the Department of Education, at (850) 245-5089; [penny.detscher@fldoe.org](mailto:penny.detscher@fldoe.org).

Sincerely,

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H.  
Secretary, Department of Health

Sincerely,

John L. Winn  
Commissioner, Department of Education

JOA/JW/cbv