

Harvard Public Schools

www.psharvard.org

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Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter is to let you know about the Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening that will be mailed home to you soon.

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 a vision screening test, a BMI can be a useful tool in identifying possible health risks.

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. In the Harvard Public Schools, we address our children's health and wellness with a comprehensive approach that includes health screenings, an extensive physical education program, and healthy lunch choices for all students.

Public schools in Massachusetts have taken heights and weights of students each year since the 1950's. According to the state's new BMI screening regulation, which was amended in April 2009 (M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 57 and 105 CMR 200.000), schools are mandated to collect the heights and weights of students in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10. Each child's height and weight is then used to calculate their BMI.

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 will be mailed directly to you by the school nurse.

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 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. This year, the height and weight screening took place in September and October in your child's physical education class. All children in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 have had their Body Mass Index (BMI) calculated. You will be receiving this in the mail in the next few weeks.

Please feel free to contact me at 978-456-4123 or cnigzus@psharvard.org with any questions you may have about the BMI information. 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,

Colleen Nigzus, RN, MSN
District Nurse Leader