

March, 2006

Dear Healthy School Committee:



Time to **Turn off your Screens and turn your activity level up!**

York Region Health Services and York Region Physical Activity Network are organizing and promoting the third annual **Turn off the Screens week from April 24 to 28, 2006.**

We are challenging students and their families to turn off their televisions, video games and computers for one week, except for use with homework. If this goal is too much of a challenge, even reducing the length of time spent in front of screens is an indicator of success. The primary goal is to increase the activity levels of our children and youth and their families.

The research is compelling. Obesity among Canadians and Canadian children has increased dramatically over the past 20 years. It is estimated that one third of children are overweight (Raine 2004). We know that physical activity is a key element in preventing serious health problems like heart disease, diabetes and obesity. Television, computer, and video games are occupying children for more than 28 hours a week.

Turn off the Screens 2005 in York Region showed a marked reduction in screen time, 66% of participants who had greater than 25 hours of prior screen time were totally screen free during this campaign.

How can your Healthy School Committee help in this important campaign?

- Work with your school council to participate in **Turn off the Screens week**
- Encourage your principal to develop a whole school approach. Schools can order the **Turn off the Screens Tool Kit** from York Region Health Services by the deadline of **April 7, 2006**
- Provide information to parents through your newsletter
- Strategize for prizes and or incentives for students who participate (review the Tips for Schools)
- Ensure that materials go home to families by April 7, 2006. If your school chooses not to participate, encourage parents to order the parent package on line. The parent package will be available on our York Region website at the beginning of April, 2006 at www.region.york.on.ca or email sharon.hall@york.ca
- Organize activities for students in your communities, during this week
- Encourage and support children and youth in their attempts to be screen-free for a week
- Be a role model; get involved **Turn off the screens and turn your activity level up!**

For more information about **Turn off the Screens** visit www.tvturnoff.org or contact York Region Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

Sincerely,

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