



everychild.one voice.

7859 W. 38th Avenue
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033
303-420-7820

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Contact: Michelle Winzent

MichelleWinzent@copta.org

Dear Colorado State Board of Education Members:

As Colorado's original and largest parent engagement group advocating for student well-being and optimum achievement, Colorado PTA is strongly supportive of obtaining ongoing accurate and truly representative social, emotional, behavioral, and health information about our adolescent students. We believe that the anonymous Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS) with a passive consent process is the best way to obtain such information.

Our youth face ever-increasing challenges to fulfilling their potentials. A few examples are the following: (1) significant mental health issues such as feeling hopeless, being victims of bullying, attempting suicide (Colorado has one of the highest adolescent suicide rates in the nation); (2) poor nutrition and lack of adequate physical exercise, contributing to poor school performance and one of the fastest rising rates of youth obesity in the country; (3) unsafe sexual behaviors and teen pregnancies; and (4) increasing teen and pre-teen use of mind-altering prescription and non-prescription drugs, some of which are made more available than ever by the growing number of marijuana infused edibles and devices that vaporize nicotine and marijuana, giving exposure to much higher doses of these drugs than any time in the past.

Although Colorado PTA believes that an opt out consent option for the HKCS yields the most representative and reliable data, we think that districts and schools should be able to determine for themselves how they engage their parents in a survey that they decide to administer. If the HKCS were not voluntary and anonymous, we understand why an active consent process would be required of all participants. However, because it is a voluntary and completely anonymous survey, our position is that school administrators should decide which consent process works best in their respective communities.

Requiring all schools to use an opt in consent process would place significant cost and staff time burden on the schools and may prevent some schools from participating in the survey. Research also suggests that an active consent process results in a less representative sample, since many hard-to-reach subgroups, including groups at high-risk of substance use and other problem behaviors, are under-represented in written consent surveys.

Accurate and representative data provided by the HKCS is an invaluable resource for cost-effective programmatic decisions, policy development, allocation of precious resources, and implementation of preventative student supports. Additionally, HKCS data enables funders to quickly and efficiently prioritize projects that meet the most important needs of students. It is only through thoughtful deliberations, based on reliable and current facts, that the needs of students can best be met, giving them the opportunity to achieve their fullest potentials.

In many ways our youth are crying out to be heard, and providing this platform for them to voluntarily and anonymously report the increasing obstacles and challenges facing them can in itself be empowering.

In summary, Colorado PTA strongly supports the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey and a passive consent process but is also supportive of allowing schools and districts to make the ultimate determination of active or passive consent for their participants. We urge you to consider the importance of inclusive and representative data from the HKCS to providing the optimal educational environment for Colorado students.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this extremely important matter.

Colorado PTA