



ABOUT US

healthy bodies • healthy minds

Wellness in the Schools (WITS) inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools. Through meaningful public/private partnerships with school leadership, teachers, chefs, coaches, parents and kids, WITS develops and implements programs that provide healthy foods, healthy environments and opportunities for regular play to help kids learn and grow. WITS programs serve approximately 30,000 public school children across New York City, Kentucky and Florida.

COOK FOR KIDS

In partnership with local departments of education, WITS operates the Cook for Kids programs in public school cafeterias and classrooms to promote healthy eating and combat childhood obesity. WITS trains culinary school graduates, who partner with cafeteria staff to prepare daily scratch-cooked meals and educate families about the importance of eating healthy food. Through our WITS Labs and WITS BITS, a series of seasonal cooking and nutrition classes, WITS Chefs also teach children and their families how to prepare healthy, delicious, and affordable recipes using whole, unprocessed foods. As a member of First Lady Michelle Obama's Chefs Move to Schools planning team, WITS recognizes the importance of engaging the culinary community and partners with local chefs and restaurants to lead special events, act as wellness ambassadors and inspire students.

Your program redefined food for the students, their families, and the school.

COACH FOR KIDS

The Coach for Kids program brings trained coaches onto public school recess yards to encourage even the least active children to engage in fun and healthy physical activities. Coach for Kids actively combats schoolyard bullying by building positive social skills through play and fosters a sense of excitement around fitness. Despite CDC recommendations that children participate in at least 60 minutes of activity each day to stay healthy, many public schools have severely reduced opportunities for students to exercise. Coach for Kids helps students come closer to meeting the CDC's activity benchmark by focusing recess time on games and engaging exercises.

I have never seen so many students interested and engaged in fitness activities.

GREEN FOR KIDS

In Green for Kids, WITS combines edible gardening with environmental education in a way that is interactive and accessible. Utilizing mobile, hydroponic Tower Gardens as our vehicle, WITS brings the school garden experience into classrooms and cafeterias for hands-on learning and through regular harvests. WITS educators also work with students in the cafeteria to introduce, implement, and improve recycling and composting programs. Through Green for Kids, WITS introduces sustainability into every part of the school day for a cleaner, greener place to learn and grow.

These gardens allow every student, regardless of location, to commune with nature.

learn more at www.wellnessintheschools.org



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Leadership

NANCY E. EASTON Founder and Executive Director

In 2005, Nancy co-founded Wellness in the Schools (WITS) with the goal of inspiring healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools. As Executive Director, she has helped WITS grow from three schools to over 60, serving approximately 30,000 students. Nancy has been named a Food Revolution Hero by acclaimed chef-food activist Jamie Oliver, and Ann Cooper, the “Renegade Lunch Lady,” recognized her as a Lunchbox Hero for her dedication to school lunch reform. Prior to WITS Nancy spent 15 year working for the New York City Department of Education, serving as a teacher mentor and, ultimately, a School Leader. Nancy is a founding board member of Girls on the Run Manhattan and serves on the board of Friends of Princeton Track and the Samara Fund. As a lifelong athlete, Nancy has completed several marathons and triathlons, including the Ironman distance triathlon. Nancy lives with her husband and their three children in New York City.

CHEF BILL TELEPAN Executive Chef

After graduating from The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Bill furthered his formal education at some of the world's top kitchens. He apprenticed with the legendary Alain Chapel at his eponymous restaurant, a Michelin three-star in a small town outside Lyons, trained with Daniel Boulud at Le Cirque, Gilbert Le Coze at Le Bernardin, and spent four years as the executive chef at Gotham Bar & Grill with Alfred Portale. Bill has also written a book entitled Inspired by Ingredients (Simon and Shuster) to present his unique cooking style and most popular recipes. He serves on the Chef's Advisory Board of the Institute of Culinary Education and City Harvest's Restaurant Board. In 2005, he opened his acclaimed Michelin-starred restaurant 'Telepan' on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Bill lives on the Upper West Side with his wife and daughter, whose school food experiences inspired him to join WITS in revolutionizing the public school cafeteria experience.

STEVE WEATHERFORD Head Coach

Steve Weatherford, punter for the New York Giants, is nationally recognized for his extensive philanthropic work, and his incredible strength, physique and approach to health and fitness. On the philanthropic side, his primary outreach is focused on children, health and fitness, and family. Under the umbrella of his foundation, the Steve Weatherford World Champion Foundation, Weatherford mentors close to 150,000 kids in his roles as Health and Fitness Ambassador of the Boys and Girls Club of New Jersey, and as “Head Coach” for Wellness in Schools. He also serves as spokesperson for Second Chance Toys, the Breast Cancer Awareness Foundation, The Steve Weatherford Charity for Ghana, Rush the Punter, which is held in his hometown of Terre Haute, Indiana to raise money for United Way, and Kicks for Kids. In 2013, Weatherford was recognized for his outstanding community service by the NY Giants organization with the coveted Wellington Mara Award. This year he has been nominated for the Walter Payton Award. Featured in Men's Fitness, for his "maniacal" workout routine, teammates call Weatherford the "strongest player pound-for-pound" on the team. His commitment to health and fitness is showcased regularly through his column in USA Today called PressTime, and through his health and fitness tips on his many highly populated social media channels.

learn more at www.wellnessintheschools.org



COOK FOR KIDS

Our Programs

WITS CAFÉ

The keystone of Cook for Kids, the WITS Café program operates within public school kitchens to support the implementation of scratch cooking, healthier school lunch recipes and the expansion of salad bars. WITS Chefs work alongside school food staff in the kitchens, training them in basic culinary skills and scratch-cooked recipe preparation. In the WITS Café program, we are driven by the following specific goals: increase the use of scratch-cooked recipes; make a fresh salad bar and homemade dressings available daily; eliminate flavored and sugar-sweetened milks; provide fresh drinking water daily; offer fresh fruit and a vegetable at every lunch service; and use whole grain pastas/breads and rice in school food recipes and products. Throughout the year, we offer WITS Café Days, special cafeteria visits by local restaurant partners (WITS Chef Partners), to prepare an interactive meal during lunchtime. These experiences help to engage students in the cafeteria, encouraging them to select healthy foods and try new menu items. WITS Café Days act as a complement to the WITS Play Days, part of the Coach for Kids program.

WITS LABS

The WITS Labs are a series of seasonal cooking classes, during which children prepare and taste seasonal and local farm-fresh recipes. Taught by a WITS Chef, the WITS Labs introduce the importance of eating locally and seasonally, the fundamentals of cooking, and the essentials of nutrition. In the Labs, the WITS Chef leads a short nutritional lesson focusing on the featured ingredient. The students then learn and complete a basic recipe using the ingredient. Recipes are given to children to take home and at least one of the recipes is prepared in the cafeteria.

WITS BITS

WITS BITS are simple and short (20-minute) classroom lessons during which children learn basic nutrition concepts through hands-on demonstrations. WITS Chefs teach students interactive lessons about healthy food and eating that allow students to learn by seeing, listening and doing. Some examples of WITS BITS lessons include: Eating the Rainbow; MyPlate Introduction; Vegetable ID; Blubber Burger (teaching children about the fat content in processed foods); and Sugar Overload (comparing sugary sodas and sports drinks to water and low-sugar beverages).

coach for kids

OUR PROGRAMS

healthy bodies • healthy minds



WITS PLAY DAYS

WITS Play Days are special activity days led in tandem with the WITS Fitness Partners, local athletes or fitness studio owners and trainers who bring a unique skill set to the recess yard. Together, WITS Coaches and Fitness Partners offer a special activity day for students where they learn new games or a new set of fitness skills. Each Fitness Partner brings something different to the WITS Play Day based on their area of expertise; activities include soccer, tennis, yoga, running, football, basketball, and baseball as well as creative activities and games. WITS Play Days act as a complement to the WITS Café Days, part of the Cook for Kids program.

FAMILY FITNESS FUN NIGHTS

Family Fitness Fun Night (FFFN) is a component of the Coach for Kids program during which students and their families participate in fitness classes led by the WITS Coaches and WITS Fitness Partners (e.g. yoga, zumba, soccer). Complete with a healthy dinner and water donated by Mountain Valley Spring Water, FFFNs provide an opportunity for the entire family to come together in a fun and festive atmosphere. Each school is offered the opportunity for one FFFN per semester.

WITS FIT BREAKS

WITS Fit Breaks are opportunities for kids and teachers to energize the classroom and incorporate additional time for fitness activities during the school day. WITS Coaches train teachers and school staff to lead short, 10-minute activity bursts for their students. These short WITS Fit Breaks are opportunities for kinesthetic learning, where physical activity and academics are combined. Short physical activity breaks between academic time are proven to help activate the brain, improve on-task behavior, and strengthen students' ability to focus. In combination with the Coach for Kids Recess program, WITS Fit Breaks help students to reach the CDC recommended 60 minutes of activity each day.

WITS BULLY PREVENTION ALLIANCE

WITS and the National School Climate Organization join forces to help promote a wide community of “upstanders”. As part of BullyBust’s Upstander Alliance, WITS works to empower youth to prevent harmful harassment, teasing, bullying, and cyberbullying across our schools today. We know that students can positively change the way we communicate with the right tools and supports. WITS Coaches utilize resources from the Upstander Alliance to help student teams create targeted engagement projects focused on preventing bullying and raising awareness.

learn more at www.wellnessintheschools.org



Cook for Kids: WITS Café Tier 1

Through the Cook for Kids and Coach for Kids programs, Wellness in the Schools (WITS) inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness, and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools. Childhood obesity affects not only our children's health, but also their ability to learn and perform in the classroom. Studies show that school-based obesity interventions are effective at improving health and academic performance.

Required from school

- A school-based wellness committee that meets each month.
- A designated liaison on the school wellness committee that works closely with the WITS Chef to schedule monthly wellness committee meetings with parents, students, and other interested members of the community.
- A commitment and desire to making your school a healthier place for students to nourish their minds and bodies.
- A \$25,000 financial commitment (including WITS Labs).

Provided by WITS

- A WITS Chef to work 5 days a week, to implement the program and to achieve goals (see below).
- Training of SchoolFood kitchen staff and promoting culture shift through wellness committee meetings, WITS Labs, WITS BITS, WITS Café Days, Family Fitness Fun Nights, and parent programs. See attached summaries for program descriptions and fees.
- Sponsorship by a local restaurant and chef, including training and recipe development.*
- Communication with NYC Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood.
- Strategic planning for implementation of new lunch offerings (fresher, more plant-based, less frozen and processed).

WITS Café Goals

We strive to achieve the following:

- To provide meals made from unprocessed ingredients.
- To offer a daily salad bar that has at least two lettuces, three additional vegetables, and one fresh composed salad.
- To provide salad dressings made from scratch.
- To ensure that fruits and vegetables served are fresh.
- To offer whole grain pasta, bread and rice.
- To ensure access to water daily at lunch.
- To eliminate sweetened milk.
- To support sustainable cafeteria practices such as composting and waste reduction programs.
- To eliminate the service of meat products at least one day per week.

*Not guaranteed.

Wellness in the Schools *inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools.*



Cook for Kids: WITS Café Tier 2

Through the Cook for Kids and Coach for Kids programs, Wellness in the Schools (WITS) inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness, and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools. Childhood obesity affects not only our children's health, but also their ability to learn and perform in the classroom. Studies show that school-based obesity interventions are effective at improving health and academic performance.

Required from school

- A school-based wellness committee that meets each month.
- A designated liaison on the school wellness committee that works closely with the WITS Chef to schedule monthly wellness committee meetings with parents, students, and other interested members of the community.
- A commitment and desire to making your school a healthier place for students to nourish their minds and bodies.
- A \$15,000 financial commitment (including WITS Labs).

Provided by WITS

- A WITS Chef to work 2 days a week, to implement the program and to achieve goals (see below).
- Training of SchoolFood kitchen staff and promoting culture shift through wellness committee meetings, WITS Labs, WITS BITS, WITS Café Days, Family Fitness Fun Nights, and parent programs. See attached summaries for program descriptions and fees.
- Sponsorship by a local restaurant and chef, including training and recipe development.*
- Communication with NYC Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood.
- Strategic planning for implementation of new lunch offerings (fresher, more plant-based, less frozen and processed).

WITS Café Goals

We strive to achieve the following:

- To provide meals made from unprocessed ingredients.
- To offer a daily salad bar that has at least two lettuces, three additional vegetables, and one fresh composed salad.
- To provide salad dressings made from scratch.
- To ensure that fruits and vegetables served are fresh.
- To offer whole grain pasta, bread and rice.
- To ensure access to water daily at lunch.
- To eliminate sweetened milk.
- To support sustainable cafeteria practices such as composting and waste reduction programs.
- To eliminate the service of meat products at least one day per week.

*Not guaranteed.

Wellness in the Schools *inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools.*



Cook for Kids: WITS Café Tier 3

Through the Cook for Kids and Coach for Kids programs, Wellness in the Schools (WITS) inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness, and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools. Childhood obesity affects not only our children's health, but also their ability to learn and perform in the classroom. Studies show that school-based obesity interventions are effective at improving health and academic performance.

Required from school

- A school-based wellness committee that meets each month.
- A designated liaison on the school wellness committee that works closely with the WITS Chef to schedule monthly wellness committee meetings with parents, students, and other interested members of the community.
- A commitment and desire to making your school a healthier place for students to nourish their minds and bodies.
- A \$10,000 financial commitment (including WITS Labs).

Provided by WITS

- A WITS Chef to work 1 day a week, to implement the program and to achieve goals (see below).
- Training of SchoolFood kitchen staff and promoting culture shift through wellness committee meetings, WITS Labs, WITS BITS, WITS Café Days, Family Fitness Fun Nights, and parent programs. See attached summaries for program descriptions and fees.
- Sponsorship by a local restaurant and chef, including training and recipe development.*
- Communication with NYC Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood.
- Strategic planning for implementation of new lunch offerings (fresher, more plant-based, less frozen and processed).

WITS Café Goals

We strive to achieve the following:

- To provide meals made from unprocessed ingredients.
- To offer a daily salad bar that has at least two lettuces, three additional vegetables, and one fresh composed salad.
- To provide salad dressings made from scratch.
- To ensure that fruits and vegetables served are fresh.
- To offer whole grain pasta, bread and rice.
- To ensure access to water daily at lunch.
- To eliminate sweetened milk.
- To support sustainable cafeteria practices such as composting and waste reduction programs.
- To eliminate the service of meat products at least one day per week.

*Not guaranteed.

Wellness in the Schools inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools.



Cook for Kids: WITS Café Goals

Wellness in the Schools (WITS) works in collaboration with school partners to create healthier places in which to learn.

In the WITS Café program, WITS places trained culinary school graduates (WITS Chefs) into public school cafeterias to train on the implementation of the Alternative Menu. In doing so, WITS Chefs help kitchen staff transition to a healthier, more scratch-cooked menu, familiarize students with new menu items and encourage them to try healthier options. WITS works together with school food staff to achieve the following goals in the cafeteria:

Goals for WITS Café:

- To provide meals made from unprocessed ingredients.
- To provide a salad bar daily that offers two lettuces, three additional vegetables, and one fresh composed salad.
- To provide salad dressings made from scratch.
- To provide at least one fresh fruit daily (not canned or in syrup).
- To ensure that vegetables served are fresh (frozen only when necessary and never canned).
- To offer whole grain pasta, bread and rice.
- To ensure access to water daily at lunch.
- To eliminate sweetened milk.
- To support sustainable cafeteria practices such as composting and waste reduction programs.
- To eliminate the service of meat products at least one day per week.

***Wellness in the Schools** inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools.*

September-2015

K to 8 Alternative Lunch Menu

Feed Your Mind

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1	2	3	4
		9	10	11
		Creamy Ranch Grilled Chicken Sandwich with Deluxe Toppings Hummus Grab & Go with Crunchy Carrots Cookie Treat Eat Your Colors Sweet Potato Waffle Fries First Day of School	Chicken Cacciatore Penne with Garlic & Herbs Eat Your Colors Roasted Zucchini Fresh Apple	Pizza Chicken Italiano Falafel-Rito Eat Your Colors Cold Bean Salad
14	15	16	17	18
Chicken & Broccoli Vegetable Lo Mein Eat Your Colors Crispy Egg Roll with Duck Sauce Rosh Hashanah	Pesto Chicken Wrap Eat Your Colors Seasoned Roasted Sweet Potatoes Rosh Hashanah	Toasted Cheese & Tomato Bagel Eat Your Colors Seasoned Wedge Cut Potatoes	Arroz Con Pollo Eat Your Colors Plantains Sofrito Black Beans Fresh Apple	Pizza Garden Veggie Cheese Calzone Eat Your Colors Kale Salad
21	22	23	24	25
Mexicali Chili Warm Taco Boat Served with Rice Salsa Eat Your Colors Confetti Corn	Turkey Burger with Deluxe Toppings Hummus Grab & Go with Crunchy Carrots Cookie Treat Eat Your Colors Crunchy Carrots	Chicken Tacos with Fresh Toppings Taco Sauce Spicy Black Bean Burrito Eat Your Colors Sliced Cucumbers with Ranch Dipping Sauce Yom Klppur	Tuscan Roasted Chicken Baked Penne Toasted Garlic Roll Eat Your Colors Roasted Chickpeas with Basil Pesto Fresh Apple Eid al-Adha	Pizza Pineapple and Ham Falafel Parmigiana Eat Your Colors Green Garden Salad
28	29	30		
Cheesy Baked Rotini Toasty Breadstick Eat Your Colors Roasted Zucchini	Texas Chicken Chili Rice Bowl Lentil Chili Rice Bowl Cookie Treat Eat Your Colors Seasoned Roasted Sweet Potatoes	Veggie Quesadillas Empanadas Served with Salsa Eat Your Colors Broccoli Trees		



Offered Daily: Milk (1% low fat, fat free & fat free chocolate), Fresh Fruit, Canned Fruit, PB&J, and Cheese Sandwiches
Flavor Station: Granulated Garlic, Red Pepper Flakes, Parmesan Cheese, Oregano
Dipping Sauces-IND: Asian Sesame, BBQ, Caesar, Chipotle Ranch, Honey Mustard, Jalapeno Ranch, Ranch
Condiments: Ketchup, Mustard, Mayonnaise, Thai Chili Sauce, Hot Sauce
Dressings: Asian Sesame, Balsamic, Caesar, Chipotle Ranch, Ranch, French, Honey Mustard, Lite Italian, Jalapeno Ranch



Menu is Subject to Change





Cook for Kids: WITS Labs

WITS Labs are the component of the Cook for Kids program that takes place in the classroom. WITS Chefs teach interactive cooking classes to children 4 times each year during the first two years of our program, as a concentrated introduction. Beginning the third year of the program, Chefs teach the Labs twice each year.

Goals

- Children will make the connection between recipes from WITS Labs with menu items in the cafeteria.
- Children will understand the seasonality of local produce and the rationale for eating seasonally and locally.
- Children will develop basic cooking techniques and learn related vocabulary.
- Children will learn basic nutrition facts.

Required from school

- A school-based wellness committee.
- A designated liaison on the school wellness committee.
- A 4-day schedule to support the implementation of classes.
- One designated room or space for the classes.
- A \$2,500 financial commitment for WITS Labs 4 times a year (plus \$10.00 per child without in-kind donation).
- A \$1,250 financial commitment for WITS Labs 2 times a year (plus \$5.00 per child without in-kind donation).

Provided by WITS

- Recipes and curricula selected in conjunction with menu items in the cafeteria.
- Tastings of seasonal and local farm-fresh foods.
- Lessons about the essentials of nutrition.
- Exploration of the fundamentals of cooking.
- Four Family-Friendly Take Home recipes linked to each lesson.

LABS Schedule (subject to change)

- Rotation I and II (first and second year schools)
 - September: Tomatoes (tomato sauce)
Apples (apple sauce)
 - December: Beans (vegetarian chili and hummus)
 - March: Potatoes (roasted potatoes and potato salad)
 - May/June: Greens (with different dressings and dips each year)
- Rotation III (third year schools, and ongoing)
 - September: Kale (kale salad)
 - March: Carrots (braised carrots)

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Cook for Kids: WITS BITS

The WITS BITS are designed to be short classroom activities (~20 minutes), taught by WITS Chefs. Chefs may choose to teach all lessons to all kids, or use as requested or needed. WITS BITS emphasize simple food and nutrition concepts, as well as reinforce healthy choices in the cafeteria. Below is a suggested order, but not necessary to follow.

Eating the Rainbow + Salad Bar Introduction and Etiquette

My Plate + Offer vs. Serve

Healthy Snack Attack

Brown Bag Challenge (courtesy of Harlem Children's Zone)

Blubber Burger (courtesy of Share Our Strength)

Fabulous Fiber (courtesy of Share Our Strength)

Sugar Overload (courtesy of Share Our Strength)

Vegetable Tasting (a.k.a. Radish vs. Cucumber!)

Far Out Foods

Smoothies for Summer

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Cook for Kids: Cooking with WITS

Cooking with WITS (i.e. Cooking with Jenny) is an optional component of the Cook for Kids Program. The WITS Chef uses WITS Labs and WITS BITS curricula to teach a small group of parents easy and healthy recipes and nutrition lessons. Parents will learn the same recipes and lessons that kids are learning during WITS Labs and WITS BITS, respectively. This mini cooking class/demo takes place right after drop-off in the morning and is about 30 - 45 minutes long. Parents will receive a small tasting and take-home recipe at the end. Siblings not in school may join.

Required from school

- A designated liaison from the school who works closely with the WITS Chef to support planning and logistics.
- A designated space with electric outlets and large enough to fit up to 25 adults and children.
- Cost of perishable materials, recipe ingredients and consumables (tasting cups, spoons, forks etc.).
- Outreach, advertise, and manage RSVPs of the class.

Provided by WITS

- A WITS Chef to teach up to 10 mornings (after drop-off) during the school year.
- Easy and healthy recipes selected in conjunction with menu items in the cafeteria and with WITS Labs and WITS BITS.
- Lessons about the essentials of nutrition.
- Exploration of the fundamentals of cooking.
- Tastings and take-home recipes.

Sample WITS Labs recipes

- Homemade Tomato Sauce (WITS Tomato Labs)
- Homemade Apple Sauce (WITS Apple Labs)
- Vegetarian Chili (WITS Bean Labs)
- Hummus (WITS Bean Labs)
- Roasted Potatoes (WITS Potato Labs)
- Healthy Potato Salad (WITS Potato Labs)
- Homemade Salad Dressings (WITS Greens Labs)
- Kale Salad (WITS Kale Labs)
- Braised Carrots (WITS Carrot Labs)

Sample WITS BITS Lessons

- Eating the Rainbow
- Healthy Snacks
- Blubber Burger
- Fabulous Fiber
- Sugar Overload

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Coach for Kids: Family Fitness Fun Night

Family Fitness Fun Night (FFFN) is an optional component of the Coach for Kids program where families can participate in fitness classes run by the WITS Coaches and enjoy a healthy dinner at the school. FFFNs provide an opportunity for the entire family to get moving together, allowing the children to pass on the lessons they learned from WITS Coaches. Each school is offered one FFFN in the fall and one in the spring. FFFN is 2 hours long, typically from 5:30pm to 7:30pm.

Required from school

- A designated liaison from the school who works closely with WITS staff to support planning and logistics.
- Use of at least three designated areas (auditorium stage, dance studio, or any other available athletic spaces) and school gym to host classes (school secures the space and pays for the rental fees, if any).
- Outreach, advertise, and manage sign-ups from families. School must provide the final number of attendees two weeks before the event; maximum number of 200 participants.
- Choose and commit to a Fall FFFN date by the end of September; choose and commit to a Spring FFFN date by the end of February (with approval from WITS).
- A \$1,000 fee.

Provided by WITS

- 1.5 hours of sports activities led by WITS Coaches and fitness experts from a variety of backgrounds (e.g. dance, yoga, basketball, tennis, soccer). Typical schedule includes a choice of two different parent and child fitness/wellness events throughout the evening.
- Dinner, water from Mountain Valley Spring Water, and a healthy snack.
- A WITS Chef to assist with dinner service.

Wellness in the Schools inspires healthy eating, environmental awareness and fitness as a way of life for kids in public schools.

Dynamic Duos

Bill Telepan and Nancy Easton

When Bill Telepan walked into his daughter's school four years ago, the last thing he expected to find was a new calling. Telepan, chef at the noted Manhattan farm-to-table restaurant that bears his name, paused to learn more about an organization called Wellness in the Schools (WITS), whose mission is to combat childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating at public school cafeterias. "How can I help?" he asked Nancy Easton, who founded WITS in 2005 with two other PS 87 parents, Rachel Tore and Kirsten Brashares.

At the time, WITS volunteers were in just three schools. Today, this unique partnership between a nonprofit and the school food provider for New York City's Department of Education, SchoolFood, has expanded to 35 schools in three boroughs. Thanks in part to Telepan's stature in the food world, WITS has raised enough money to hire 16 professional chefs.

"Children rely on adults to help take care of them. Why should we give them food that is processed and bad?" says Telepan. "We have to feed them well for them to get a good start in life."

Nationally recognized nutrition expert Keri Glassman agrees, adding, "By incorporating healthy eating habits and choices into their lives at school, a program such as WITS helps to instill the importance of total health and nutrition as part of a kid's culture. This should be on par with learning about history, math or literature. Changing food culture begins with simple lessons that children will take away and incorporate into their lives."

Telepan started his work with WITS by preparing healthy items on the lunch line at his daughter's cafeteria. Sure, the staff still served feedlot burgers (precooked and then frozen and reheated), but at least kids had options. Infrastructural issues soon revealed themselves, however,

School kitchens, for example, often lacked basic tools like sharp knives and large pots. Telepan's involvement grew as he focused on helping Easton increase the organization's impact.

Since then, the team has refined their partnership: Telepan develops recipes and trains the WITS chefs. Easton writes the curricula for cooking and nutrition classes that some WITS schools offer students and parents. They raise funds together.

WITS has always been creative with its resources, encouraging volunteers to bring their own knives and working

with SchoolFood to source better ingredients, such as local produce and grass-fed beef. Last year, after receiving a \$10,000 grant, WITS served local grass-fed burgers—from Slope Farms in the Catskills—at 18 WITS schools. The Department of Education was impressed and plans to serve these burgers city-wide.

And Easton and Telepan, who were just named "Food Revolution Heroes" by the crusading school lunch reformer Jamie Oliver, will not give up until the organization they are so committed to becomes obsolete. — HANNAH WALLACE



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Chef Laurielle Clark helps Kammand Sammak, 7, stir a pot of tomatoes for a Wellness in the Schools cooking class at AmPark Neighborhood School on Oct. 3.

Kids cook-up healthy dishes

By Shant Shahrigan Posted 10/10/13

Students at AmPark Neighborhood School (PS 344) learned some of the ingredients for healthy living during an Oct. 3 cooking class. Two chefs from the Wellness in the Schools Initiative, a non-profit that provides food and fitness programs for public school students, showed about two dozen children in Megan Collins' second-grade class how to create a simple tomato sauce, imparting lessons about healthy eating along the way. "When you cook, it gets a little messy," chef Laurielle Clark said at the start of one of four sessions during the week. Second grade student Kammand Sammak, who is 7-years-old, was elated with the prospect, saying, "I like messy!" Ms. Clark and fellow chef Annie Hanrahan placed half-pieces of roma tomatoes facedown on placemats for the students. Before instructing them how to dice the tomatoes for a homemade sauce, Ms. Clark explained why she prefers that to the readymade alternative in a jar. "This particular sauce, mushroom and ripe olives, has about 15 different ingredients in it," she said, holding up a store-bought example. "That's a lot of ingredients. Some of them I can't even pronounce... like something-glutamate. If there are ingredients in a jar or a dish that you can't pronounce, would you want to put it in your body? You want to find out what it is first."

Let the dicing begin

Ms. Clark encouraged students to help their parents make a four-ingredient sauce the next time pasta is served at their homes. Then, the dicing commenced. The students gleefully cut up their tomatoes – donated by Whole Foods along with the rest of the ingredients – with large plastic cutting knives. Tomato juice squirted and giggling abounded as the children sliced the fruits before setting the cut pieces into several bowls. Ms. Clark then called upon her young charges to demonstrate the rest of the process with a hotplate. Two boys and two girls alternated pouring olive oil, grating garlic into a pot and seasoning with salt and pepper. The second step elicited a small uproar as the smell of simmering garlic spread across the room.

Healthy lifestyles

Principal Christine McCourt said the cooking lab is consistent with AmPark's overall mission of encouraging students to practice a healthy, conscientious lifestyle. "The culture that AmPark tried to establish from the original principal seven years ago is, we try to encourage healthy habits, healthy living, physical movement – everything that we can," Ms. McCourt said. Three additional cooking labs are scheduled at AmPark this school year. Wellness in the Schools provides several sessions during their visits so all students can participate. Ms. Clark said the future classes will likely offer recipes and instruction for making veggie chili, rosemary roasted potatoes and salad dressing. Along with the classes, the Wellness in the Schools Initiative provides a salad bar and a menu with low-fat items for AmPark's cafeteria. Ms. McCourt said the school makes a contribution to the non-profit to participate, with \$2,000 going from AmPark to Wellness in the Schools last school year. The second graders managed to contain their enthusiasm and remain seated as Ms. Clark and Ms. Hanrahan distributed cups of al dente pasta with mildly sweet red sauce. While some of the students were grossed-out, most devoured their portions. "It tastes so good!" Charles Ampah, 7, told classmates sitting near him. "I wish I could take a whole bottle." Wellness in the Schools runs cooking and fitness programs at 57 schools throughout the city. Ms. Clark and Ms. Hanrahan are challenging themselves further in upcoming cooking labs at other Bronx and Manhattan schools: They plan to introduce fastidious young palettes to kale.



SCHOOL LUNCH, PREPARED BY A CHEF: ROASTED BROCCOLI AND PESTO PASTA. YUM!

Third-graders from PS89 in New York City take part in Wellness in the School's Cafe Day, where chefs made healthy lunches for students (also below).

WELLNESS IN THE Schools

BY WENDY S. GIMAN FOR USA TODAY



FORMER NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL NANCY EASTON and her Wellness in the Schools program provides an example of change for the better.

Working with New York City Department of Education foodservice—which feeds more than a million children and is second only to the military in food purchasing—her program touches 25 schools in three boroughs. Students participate in a lab once a quarter where they learn to cook a seasonal dish, like vegetarian chili. That dish is placed on the school menu once each week in some form, from a popular burrito to a topping on rice. Students know what they're eating, since they made it.

When Easton was a principal, she watched children come to school “with a bottle of something bright orange, usually along with a bag [of something] bright orange.” When she became a mother, she and her fellow parents showed up at school meetings and made their voices heard in an effort to make changes to the school cafeterias. That voice turned into Wellness in the Schools (WITS).

Figuring out how to make this happen took cooking expertise.

Joining Nancy was fellow parent Bill Telepan, a world-class chef and four-star restaurant owner. He went into the schools and trained the staff on cooking techniques. He helped develop menus that offered fresh food with ingredients that could be prepared from scratch for a large number of students. Initially they were in just a handful of schools. As the program grew, Easton and Telepan started an Americorps-type program for recent culinary school graduates who help teach the staff and prepare meals. Today, Telepan draws on his WITS background to help with the Chefs Move to Schools program.

And what about the students? Sometimes the kids don't take to new dishes right away, but it's about repeat exposure. The kids went from eating processed, unidentifiable chicken to real meat served barbecue-style or with Mediterranean spices.

But the problem of poor eating habits must be approached outside of school, too. WITS has a home component where chefs teach workshops for parents outside of school hours. And students take home a brochure with recipes that parents and children can make together.

STEVE WEATHERFORD DIARY: COMING OUT OF A SLUMP WITH A RENEWED SENSE OF URGENCY

By Conor Orr/The Star-Ledger on September 24, 2013 at 8:00 PM



Punter Steve Weatherford gives fans an inside look at the Giants.
(John O'Boyle/The Star-Ledger)

On September 24, 2013 at 8:00 PM Entering his third year with the Giants, punter Steve Weatherford has a unique personality in the locker room and outside of it. Through The Star-Ledger, he agreed to keep a diary that will keep fans up to date on his life. For the previous entry, [click here](#). Next week, we'll get into some developments from Steve's charitable efforts around town. He was named the health and fitness ambassador for the Boys and Girls Club of New Jersey and signed on to mentor 77,000 children from across the state. He will keep them schooled on the important aspects of health and nutrition. He was also named the "Head Coach" of fitness for more than 50,000 children in New York City in conjunction with the Wellness in the Schools program. The program helps bring trainers right to recess to encourage more activity. This week, though, he talked about keeping positive during an 0-3 start. The Giants are no doubt disappointed by their current situation, and Steve tells us why he thinks they'll climb out of the hole.

I feel like we have all the tools to be 3-0 right now and we're the opposite. We're especially disappointed after this weekend after everything coach Coughlin has gone through with his family. Personally, I really wanted to win this game for him and his family. He's been such an amazing leader and he's treated me so well. But we didn't play well, we didn't execute well and I think that's 100 percent on the players. There was much more than just X's and O's with this last game. Carolina, not to take anything away from them, they're a good team, but they're not better than us and certainly not 38 points better than us. There's a lot of football ahead

of us. We still have a shot to do something special this year but we have to get it started and I think getting that first win to create that momentum is of the utmost importance this week.

Coming in to work on Monday, it was more shock than anything. You're riding home on the plane and thinking to yourself: Did that really just happen? It's the National Football League and if you don't bring your A-Game every week, any team can beat any team.

I think we have to band together, pull together and stay positive -- really bring more fight and energy into the games on Sunday. Myself included. You're going to meet adversity in every game but it's the way we react to the adversity. I think we need to embrace the adversity. We have one of the best quarterbacks in the game and best head coaches in the game. I think by staying positive as a veteran, that can have a trickle-down effect. As for giving the speeches and firing guys up, that's a role for guys like Antrel Rolle, Justin Tuck and Zac DeOssie, a guy that's been known to get people fired up at halftime. We want to play well for our coach. He puts so much time and effort into preparing for the season and for each game. We owe it to him, we owe it to our fans, we owe it to our ownership and our general manager. And I think moving forward, you're going to see a renewed sense of urgency and energy from that locker room after the talk that coach gave us on Monday.