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# Reading Public Schools

*Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow*

Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter is to let you know about the Body Mass Index (BMI) screening that will be taking place the week of February 12th, as part of Physical Education classes. 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 an eye screening test, a BMI can be a useful tool in identifying possible health risks.

Massachusetts schools have taken heights and weights of students each year since the 1950's. According to state regulations, schools 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 BMI, and the results will be made available to you.

The school nurse will supervise your child's screening and will make sure your child's privacy is respected at all times. 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 not be shared with others without your permission. Parents/guardians can request in writing that their child not participate in height/weight screening by contacting the school nurse.

It should be noted also, of course, that BMI does not tell the whole story about a child's health status, as it does not distinguish between fat and muscle. For example, if children are very athletic and have a lot of muscle, their BMI may be high even though they are not overweight. That is why we encourage you to share the results with your child's health care provider, who is in the best position to evaluate a child's overall health and can also further explain the results of the BMI screening. If applicable, the health care provider can also talk with you about whether there are steps that could be taken to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Mary M Giuliana RN BSN*