**Growth and Development Information for Parents**

The Walton County School District in cooperation with the Florida Department of Health in Walton County provide student health screenings during the school year. These screenings are required by the School Health Services Act, **section 381.0056 Florida Statutes**, and are designed to detect health problems that could affect your child’s learning or growth and development. Screenings are performed as mandated by **Rule 64F-6.001-008, F.A.C.),** according to each child’s grade.

**What is Body Mass Index (BMI)?** The body mass index is a measurement that describes an individual’s weight-to-height ratio. Scientists and researchers have found the BMI to be a valuable tool in the study of obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Early diagnosis of a poor BMI can potentially aid in the prevention of disease and provide advanced warning of some health problems.

**Why did my child have his/her BMI done?** Each school year, children in specified grades are measured for height and weight to monitor their physical growth and development. Your child’s BMI is then calculated. This calculation tells us if a child is in the normal range for height and weight, or is outside the norm and has an increased potential to develop certain chronic diseases during childhood or adulthood. BMI is the recommended screening method for children and adolescents. It is based upon a child’s age and gender, calculated using a child’s weight and height, and compared to standardized growth charts. BMI screening is an additional School Health service to assist in appraising, protecting, and promoting the health status of your child.

**What does the BMI tell us?** Your child’s height and weight were measured and these numbers have been graphed on a BMI chart specific for boys and girls, constructed by the National Center for Health Statistics in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There is variability in height and weight among children and the BMI should not be used alone to determine the presence of abnormalities in growth and development.

If your child is above the 95th percentile range or below the 5th percentile range, this could indicate a future potential health problem. For example, diabetes, stroke or high blood pressure are associated with long term elevated BMI’s. Anemia, malnutrition, fatigue, and learning difficulties are associated with long term below average BMI’s. However, it must be emphasized that there are many factors involved in a child’s height and weight; i.e., genetics, metabolism, social and cultural factors may have an impact.

**What does the BMI not tell us?** The Body Mass Index is only one measurement used to determine health status. BMI results tracked over time and a thorough physical examination by a medical provider are important components that can help your provider assess whether or not there are health concerns associated with your child’s results.

**What do I do with this information?**

If your child’s BMI results are <5% or >95% a medical assessment with your private doctor or provider is recommended.

If your child’s BMI results are 85% to 95% and your child has risk factors such as family history of heart disease, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol a medical assessment with your private doctor or provider is recommended.

If your child’s BMI results are >5% to <85%, no action is necessary.

Please contact your school nurse if you have any questions.