

Guide to Putting on a Health Fair

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Before the Health Fair

So you want to put on a health fair. Before you do anything, get out some paper or a journal and answer these questions:

- Why do I want to do this?
- Who is my target audience?
- What do I want my audience to gain from this?
- When (approximately) do you want this to happen?
- Where is a good place?
- How are you going to get everyone to come?

There are no wrong answers, but the more detail the better. Now, there's one more essential question you need to answer (make it very detailed):

What topics should be at the health fair?

I had several topics that all fit into the main categories of eating habits, physical health, mental health, and drug prevention. I then asked each table to specialize. For example, both Wellness Pointe and UT Tyler Health Science Center came to teach about drug prevention, but Tonny from UT Tyler Health Science Center focused on vaping cessation while Partners in Prevention taught about not using marijuana. It helps to use a journal just to keep this all straight.

Now that you have your list of topics, start thinking of people who have the knowledge in this specific topic. They can be someone you know or you can simply call them and just start talking. The next page has a list of who I called and for what, but make this fair your own. Three fourths of the students have already seen the health fair, and some people thought it was not beneficial because they "already knew everything". If you felt like a topic was repeated too much, plan accordingly.

Calling people is where you will spend the bulk of our time, and keeping everyone (your principal, yourself, the people you invited) on the same page is also very important. Before you call, make a list of who you want to come. There are some important things to decide:

1. Should this be more resource based or information based? Resources are important, but knowledge is too. Having a food bank to hand out food would be an aspect of a resource-based fair, but bringing White Oak Family Medicine to talk about having a proper diet would be a knowledge based fair. Most fairs fall somewhere in between, but deciding if you want more resources or information available will affect what you ask your experts to bring.

2. How many groups do you want? I gave each grade a little under one hour and there were 15 tables, which would be about four minutes per table. The students spent ten seconds at some tables and a few minutes on others, and as a result had a lot of leftover time. Looking back, I would have put more tables or taken less time, but this is up to you.
3. Do you have the right date? It sounds like a silly question, but I couldn't read my own handwriting and told everyone the wrong day and had to go back and correct it.
4. How are you going to keep the crowd moving? I made a bingo card that table hosts initiated every time someone "learned something" and asked for gift cards to be donated as door prizes. When the card was filled, students could get in a drawing for the prize. I did it to make the fair fun, and I would suggest continuing this because some people wouldn't have participated if there was no drawing for gift cards.
5. How are you going to attract your audience? When I planned my health fair attendance for students was technically mandatory. As a result, I did not have to worry about this, but it is something to consider.

This is important: before you invite anyone to the health fair, know the date, time and place the health fair will be. Talk to the principal (I talked to him in the second week of school) and find a time when there isn't anything. I chose to have the fair in October because I wanted it done before I started applying to colleges, but doing it in the middle of football season was really stressful, so pick a month then meet with the principal to plan around all sports, school wide events, etc.

If you need to find more organizations, research who is nearby (for example, I found Partners in Prevention, an organization working to make youth drug free, by google search) and ask them to come. If you need more experts in that topic, ask the organizations you do have if they know anyone else who would be interested in coming.

A script for phone calls:

Hi, my name is _____, and I am a student putting on a health fair at White Oak High School. I was wondering if someone/you would like to come and raise awareness about _____, specifically _____. The fair will be on (month) (day) at White Oak High School from (time).

If they say yes, add:

Tables will/will not be provided, if you want to bring handouts or goodies there are ___ students in the high school, there will be a lunch break from ____ to _____. *Add something about being as interactive and engaging as possible here. Then give additional contact information like your email or phone number here so they can contact you about any questions they have later.*

When you call, have a specific topic you want them to cover. Some people have been to a health fair before, but most have not and need suggestions on what to bring. If they are unsure, they will bring exactly what you said, so be very specific about what you want when inviting people to come.

To find out useful numbers like the number of students in the school, students per grade, etc. ask Mrs. West or someone in the journalism department.

Some table hosts couldn't make it the whole day but found someone to take their place, and some wanted to share a table so they could have enough resources for everyone. Do what seems best, just remember to be flexible.

If you ask someone over the phone they are more likely to say yes than if you ask them on an email, but keep in mind to call during business hours. I used my flex to call everyone during school hours then used email because I don't like talking to people over the phone.

In addition to the lists below, student volunteers from Student Council, National Honor Society, and Mrs. Cook's math classes also ran two booths. If there is an activity you want to do (Pinterest is your friend) to engage people or cover a specific topic (not drinking sports drinks, amount of sugar in soda, distracted driving, etc.), student-run booths are great for that. Go to the sponsors of the organizations and ask to talk for five minutes at their next meeting and put out a sign up sheet. The sponsors for NHS are Mrs. Cook and Mrs. Faircloth, and the sponsor for Student Council is Mrs. Taylor.

Here is who came to the health fair in 2022:

Organization	Person	Category	Contact Info
White Oak Family Medicine	Dr. Johnson	Eating Habits (MyPlate)	(430)-625-2001
Registered Dietitian	Mrs. Langewisch	Eating Habits (Jeopardy game)	edlangewisch@hotmail.com
Partners in Prevention	Whitney Pierce	Drug Prevention (general)	(903)-237-1019
Wellness Pointe-shared with Partners in Prevention	I'm not sure-invited by Partners in Prevention	Drug Prevention	(903)-758-2610
UT Tyler Health Science Center	Tonny Williams	Drug Prevention (brought the lungs)	(903)-877-1477
Special Health Resources	Rachel Munoz	Drug Prevention (PARTS program to stop vaping)	rmunoz@shrt.net
UT Tyler Health Science Center	Dr. Ross-Young, licensed psychologist	Mental Health (talk about depression, anxiety)	Halle.Ross-Young@uthct.edu
Crisis Response Ministry	Jason Pointer	Mental Health (crime victim services)	(469)-212-7634
Anytime Fitness	Tami Johnston	Physical Health (exercise)	(903)-297-4740
Fire Department	Cameron Kizzia	Physical Health (car accidents, ways teens die)	(903)-759-6615
Police Department	Officer Morgan	Physical Health (drunk driving)	(903)-235-9979
UT Tyler Health Science Center	Dr. Crum	Physical Health (hand washing and vaccines)	(903)-387-0759

Walmart Vision Center	Patricia Willingham	Physical Health (vision screenings)	(903)-297-3063
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Note: DO NOT make the subject line of all your emails “Health Fair” or you will have some difficulty finding your emails later.

After or while you call everyone (note: it is an ongoing process), start planning how this will be set in motion. Here is a checklist of general things to do:

1. Talk to your principal: decide a place, date and time
2. Do some research and make a list of who you want to come
3. Start calling
4. Do some logistics - when does each grade go, how long are they there, when will table hosts arrive, how will they find the gym, etc.
5. Get your volunteers - ask students to help
6. Put up posters for health fair (don't wait until two days before like me) and make bingo card
7. Get donations for door prizes
8. Advertise (optional) - this is a good human interest story and makes the school (and you) look good. Write a press release (ask Mrs. West for help) and send it to a couple newspapers or news outlets if you want.
9. Send a list of your volunteers to the principal so they will be excused from class that day
10. Send reminders to everyone and ask if there are any questions (a week and day out)
11. Give front office the list of subject matter experts coming to the school so they know who is coming
12. Put on health fair
13. Clean up
14. Celebrate!

Student Volunteers:

I asked students to help me with the following things:

Set up

Showing subject matter experts to the gym and helping them set up their tables

Running a couple booths I designed

Running the drawing for bingo cards

Take down and clean up

Some tips for managing your student volunteers:

1. Just about everyone who signed up forgot the time and date. Keep a list of who signed up and ask the sponsors of your student groups to send out a message on Remind a few days before.
2. Some of them only signed up to get out of class. Tell them to stay off their phones and try to pair them up with someone they will not talk with the whole time. You want them to interact with other students, not talk to each other.
3. Have them run shifts and don't have too many people. This gives everyone a job and makes sure you're not wasting their time. I asked people to sign up for a time that's not theirs (for example, seniors should not volunteer the same time they participate). I only had six to eight volunteers per shift but I did need more for setup. Luckily, the girl's basketball team volunteered to help.
4. Do not let anyone leave until they have a replacement and trained someone else in their spot. After I explained this, transitions between grades went relatively smoothly. I had two volunteers who signed up to miss the whole day and they trained everyone else. I also left written instructions on every table for volunteers, but I don't think they read them.

I had the most trouble finding people willing to clean up. On the day of, the boy's basketball team unexpectedly showed up to help and the gym was clean in about fifteen minutes.

The thing with the door prizes:

I wanted to make this fun so students would pay attention, and someone recommended having students get a card signed at every table and be entered into a drawing. I thought it would make things exciting. It ended up being the only reason some people went to the tables at all. I spent a weekend asking local businesses for donations. Some people rang up a gift card, some asked to come back, and some gave me an email or phone number to talk to their marketing department. Always follow up because that is how I got about half of them. I received a total of eight gift cards and gave out two per grade, but more is better. To make things easier for you, here is who donated and is likely to donate again-

Sonic

Roughneck Donuts (they donated two coupons)

Dairy Queen

White Oak Creamery

Coffee-ology

Moe's Pizza
Whataburger

Feel free to add to this list! The more prize winners, the more happy people.

A note on timing:

The health fair was from 3rd period to 7th period with everyone taking a break for lunch and enrichment. If you split this time evenly by the four grades, they have 53 minutes each plus four minutes to switch. I used the 1st and 2nd periods to set up and clean up and was during the 8th period. Toward the end of each shift (a shift was the time for one grade) the students would start to get bored and rowdy, so try to keep them busy but not rushed. I highly recommend planning things so attendance can still be taken before students come.

Also, upperclassmen take dual credit classes, which mostly happen during 5th period and lunch. Dual credit students receive an attendance grade and are not excused for high school activities, so I had seniors go first and juniors go last in order that everyone could go to their dual credit class.

Tables:

To make things easier on the subject matter experts, I told them a table would be provided for them. The school does have 15 unused tables, but not in one spot. I spent the first two periods of the day of the health fair running to four different rooms to grab tables, and there still weren't enough. I ran to Principal Parker and he made a call. Someone brought the rest of the tables and we set up. Ask for extra tables because things will happen (I needed two more tables than planned), so just be as flexible as possible.

To keep everyone informed during the fair:

Print out schedules with transition and lunch times and put them on each table

Put directions on student tables

Ask to use gym sound system and use it to make announcements

Control traffic flow: I had to explain to a lot of people that you do not have to go to the booths in order before they spread out.

Things to give table hosts:

Schedule

Bottled water - to give out during break

Table and chairs

Lunch (optional) - some subject matter experts went out to eat in White Oak while some ate in the cafeteria. If you want to provide them snacks or find a sponsorship to provide

them lunch, that would be a great way to show your appreciation for them voluntarily putting up with high school students for about four to five hours.

To make sure you have everything:

Mentally go through the day in your mind. Do you need an extension cord? A box for the drawing? Pens for every table? When will you do what? Telling someone every single detail helps, and running through the day in your mind will help you be prepared.

Making the impact continue:

After all the time you poured into this, you want to leave an impact on the school. Someone suggested having students complete a Tik Tok challenge about the health fair (I think it's not a bad idea but I have no idea how to do that). Asking the Student Council to put up one poster a month reminding students to practice what they learned was another good idea someone gave me. The choice is yours. Have fun with this; it will make you feel better and make the fair more entertaining, which leads to longer attention spans.

The Day Of the Health Fair

Although I was really stressed the day before the health fair, on the day of the fair I was much calmer because I figured that no matter what I did or didn't do on that day, the health fair would still go on. The most important thing is to be flexible. I dealt with not having enough tables, people arriving late, forgetting about attendance, a volunteer not showing up, everyone asking about what the punch card was for, and one person who forgot to tell me they would be coming all at once.

This is okay, it's actually normal.

With the help of my volunteers, we adapted. I grabbed my sister's table from the twirl room and I'm still not sure where they pulled the other tables from. We scooted people over to make room. Students were told over the intercom to check in with their teacher before going to the health fair. I made an announcement on the gym sound system for instructions about the punch cards, and the person who forgot to tell me they were coming got a table and found a spot. I sent some students into the hall to show the subject matter experts where the gym was. Everything turned out okay.

When you need an adult to help, Mrs. Frazier is the person to go to. Every time I said I needed something, like an announcement to call my student volunteers out of class because they weren't where I needed them, someone needed more copies for student resources, etc. Mrs. Frazier had it covered and helped everything go smoothly. Principal Parker was in a meeting all day but still found time to stop by and see the fair, and he was very supportive of the whole project. One of the things I've learned is that people generally will support you if you just ask them for help.

You will miss every class that day, and I was more mentally exhausted after the fair than I ever was after any test, even the ACT. Be careful if you plan to do your make-up work after the fair, because you will be exhausted, but very happy.

When I started this project, I decided that if this caused one person to have a healthier lifestyle, it would be worth it. It turned out that I am the person who benefited from the health fair the most.

Student Feedback and Tips

In order to prove my project made an impact per the Gold Award requirements, I sent out two surveys, one before the health fair and one after. Only 34% of the student body answered the first one and only 20% answered the second one. As a result, I do not have a full picture of the student body, but here are some notable responses:

- Most students put “Constantly worrying to the point that it’s unhealthy” as their most unhealthy habit, with “no sleep” and “not drinking enough water” as their other top unhealthy habits.
- Students said that their healthiest habits were “exercising” and “Drinking the proper amount of water”.
- About 70% (from both surveys) of students think they would do a good job if they “were suddenly in charge of [their] own diet and exercise”.
- When asked what health topic needs to be addressed more at school, about 80% of students choose mental health. Many choose the short answer option and said all of them (physical health, mental health, eating habits, and drug prevention) need to be addressed more at school.

In the survey given after the health fair, I got a lot of feedback. Here are the most useful things:

What students liked:

- “There were interactive things to do. It was not just listening to people talk.”
- “I liked the intricacy of the details with plenty of examples.”
- “I liked getting to meet actual people who work on this stuff.”
- “[I liked] the people’s stories and intentionally.”
- “I enjoyed listening to the passion of most of the instructors.”
- “I think it was beneficial because health is not talked about enough in school.”
- “I liked the bingo cards. It forced students to actually get involved. Some students wouldn’t have talked to professionals if it wasn’t for the bingo cards.”

What they didn’t like (plus my comments on how to make a better health fair):

- “We had to walk around and get the slip signed by each table.”

This was technically optional, but I’m glad it made this person participate.

- “Too many people.”

There were about 100 students in the gym at any moment, so it was crowded and loud. Spacing the tables out or placing them differently might have helped with this.

- “I felt like maybe it wasn’t enforced enough to make sure kids actually listened instead of just coming to a booth and getting your bingo card signed.”

This is a good point. I recommend being more clear than I was to table hosts and tell them to make the students learn something before signing their card. However, whether students learn something is, at the end of the day, the students' decision.

- “It was a lot of repetition, we’ve already heard a lot of the statistics they showed us, it wasn’t anything new.”

This may be the case for some people. If they want to learn more about a topic, they can always ask the subject matter expert a question. If they don’t care, then at least they got time out of class and free goodies.

- “Some of the tables were boring, which drew attention away from what they were teaching.”

This was the case for a few of them because some topics are not easily made fun or entertaining. You have some control by suggesting the organization bring something interactive, but there’s not much you can do about this.

- “A lot of the tables were about the same subject.”

I asked each table to cover a specific subcategory to prevent this, but three of them still were about drug prevention. I feel like it was needed and that some repetition is acceptable.

- “I thought there was a little too much time provided, since I went to all the stations with time to spare.”

I miscalculated the attention span of my generation - they did not spend four minutes at each table. I would recommend having more tables or less time per grade to fix this.

I am so excited that you enjoyed the health fair so much that you want to continue this. Please remember that this is a lot. You do not have to do everything. Be kind to yourself. Delegate some things to others. Breathe. I am here for advice and help and I want to hear about how you do, so feel free to contact me.

Good luck,
Jordan Crum