The Van Buren Community Schools Wellness Committee met on October 15, 2008 at 5:00 PM in the high school library. The meeting started with introductions of committee members. Members present were: Sara Sprouse, Dr. Karen Stinson, Whitney Atwood, Sheila Parsons, Tonja Jirak, Judy Thomas, Bonnie Watson, Jenny Smith, Doris Strait, Abby Golden, Gwen Pedrick, Terry Jester, Chuck Russell, Mike Plecker, Chuck, Banks, Dr. Tim Blair, and Vicki Shepard.

After introductions, monitoring of the current wellness policy was discussed. Sara Sprouse talked about the Student Wellness Index survey that was done in 2006. She plans to attend a workshop on this and re-do portions of the index this year. She informed the committee that the areas that received the lowest results in the 2006 survey were staff wellness, family & community involvement, and nutrition. Ideas from committee members for monitoring the wellness policy included: electronic monitoring of the lunch program (including # of lunches purchased and items purchased, physical fitness pre- and post-test results, measurements (height, weight, BMI), and health screenings.

When looking at the current policy, some concerns were voiced about how to ensure enough physical education time for all students. We currently do not meet the recommended amounts of PE time in our policy. Also, there was some discussion of recess time for elementary students on rainy days. Depending on the availability of the gymnasium, some students have recess time in their classrooms where physical activity must be limited.

One of the bright spots mentioned was the progress of the school lunch program. Judy Thomas informed the committee on the changes that had been implemented. These include: using whole grains as much as possible, fresh fruit at least once per week, cutting sodium in the meals, using skim or 1% milk, and instituting a “Grab and Go” line at the Jr/Sr high. Judy reported that the Grab and Go has been a big success and includes foods such as salads, wraps, crackers, fruit roll-ups and yogurt.

Sara then shared information from Dixie Daugherty (Van Buren County Hospital) about grants that they are pursuing. These include a Wellmark grant, a Rural Outreach grant and a Harkin community grant.

In the “brainstorming” portion of the meeting, some of the ideas that were discussed included the Live Healthy Iowa Kids program, featuring a 100 day fitness challenge, and the Horizons mentoring project that could help transport senior citizens to the Fairfield Rec Center for fitness and water classes.

It was decided that the next committee meeting would not occur until January or February, after Sara had time to conduct the Student Health Index survey again. Sara will contact us when the meeting is scheduled.