

Dear United Families/Guardians,

Good personal hygiene plays a critical role in promoting a positive self-image and reinforces healthy habits. We encourage these good hygiene strategies at school and encourage you to do the same at home.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, hormonal changes between the ages of 8-14 in girls and 9-14 in boys are the biggest causes of body odor in the ever-changing bodies. Other factors like sweat, dirty clothing, tight clothing, old sneakers/shoes especially if worn without any socks, food choices, failure to bathe regularly, dirty bedding, poor hygiene, odor from private areas, bad breath caused by lack of brushing, tooth decay or gum infections, and smoking can make body odor unpleasant for other students who are in close proximity.

So where should parents start with personal hygiene for their students?

Turns out this discussion is a tricky one!

If we push too hard, we're nagging and our children tune us out. If we don't bring it up at all, they could be the target of unkind comments or exclusion from interactions with their friends and peers.

While poor personal hygiene can affect a student's overall health – for instance, making a child more prone to infections or rashes — **the social consequences can hurt even more.**

Most parents assume that because we can smell sweaty feet or notice greasy hair, that our children will as well. Unfortunately, it often doesn't work that way, and many kids need multiple lessons on this important component of personal care.

Experts agree that personal hygiene for secondary students includes: showering and washing hair, using deodorant, wearing clean clothes, maintaining oral health, managing female personal care, preventing and caring for acne, and, perhaps, shaving. Managing these tasks can seem daunting for some kids, causing them to ignore personal hygiene issues altogether. (Not that refusal to bathe, shower, or complete a simple task of brushing one's teeth can be a sign of a mental health issue, such as depression.) For most, however, it comes down to one simple point: They just don't feel like doing it. This is when you, as the most influential person in their life, enforce healthy body habits.

This isn't a "one and done" conversation. ANYTIME is an excellent time to talk to your student about good hygiene practices.

If a student comes to school with an odor or smell that is causing a distraction to the learning environment, we as the school can/will offer the following options for them to choose from:

1. Wipe down with cleaning wipes.
2. Offer change of clothes which we will then receive back at the end of the day (students will be sent home in their own clothing).
3. Give them time to shower here.

If the student refuses one of the above choices, they will be sent home (parent pick up) to clean themselves up and return to school.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Nurse Samie, School Nurse.

Thank you for your understanding and support,

Samantha Walker, BSN RN
United Community School Nurse