About a thousand third-graders descended on the Byrnes Health Education Center this week for Children's Wellness Days. It's the 35th year the York Hospital Auxiliary has coordinated the event, partnering for the first time with the Byrnes center.

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"Preventive health education is always best delivered as early as possible," said Anne Bahn, president and CEO of the health education center.

Wellness covers everything from eating right to respecting each other. So the children spent time in 15-minute sessions on a host of topics including nutrition, respect, online safety and dental health. Here's a look at what kids learned about and what parents can do to help keep kids healthy:

**Eating healthy**

Health educator Mary Smith talked with children about the food groups and what they should eat in their meals.

"The more colorful your plate is, the more variety, the more healthy your food is," Smith said, later explaining, after a question, that meant colorful fruits and veggies, not colorful ice cream. Students
mixed in some exercise, too, running in place and pretending to jump rope, before placing their hands on their chests to feel their hearts working.

Smith said parents can stress variety in their kids' meals.

"Ask them to eat a little of everything," she said, and in the end kids will develop a taste for more foods.

**Being safe online**

Nikole Tome, a health educator with Byrnes, talked to students about cyber bullying, what to do if they encounter strangers online, and how they can be careful by making sure they don't share personal information online.

They can also be good "digital citizens" by thinking through their online posts, she said. Before posting something, they should ask themselves questions, like whether the post is true, helpful, inspiring, necessary and kind.

"Parents really need to make sure they educate themselves," Tome said, adding that the technology children use isn't always the same as what adults use.
Want to learn more?

The Byrnes Health Education Center offers programs for parents on the same topics they cover with kids. Program topics include cyber safety, substance abuse, bullying and more. Find out more at www.byrneshec.org.

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