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HEALTHY LIVING BEGINS WITH SCHOOLS

AIA Healthiest Schools programme empowers students to lead Healthier, Longer, Better Lives

EDUCATORS are extraordinary beings who hold tremendous responsibilities. They guide students' academic and personal development, shape values and behaviours, create a conducive learning environment, collaborate with parents, and more.

Going the extra mile, educators also keep children's physical and mental health in check – given the prevalence of obesity and mental health issues among Malaysian children.

The National Health Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2022 reported that one-third of Malaysian teenagers aged 13 to 17 are overweight or obese, while NHMS 2019 revealed that one in 20 Malaysian children aged five to nine are estimated to have mental health issues including developmental concerns.

With this in mind, AIA Malaysia set out on a mission to inculcate healthy living through its AIA Healthiest Schools programme, endorsed by the Education Ministry.

Designed to encourage healthy living habits among students aged five to 16 by promoting healthy eating, active lifestyles, mental wellbeing, as well as health and sustainability in schools, the programme provides carefully curated resources free of charge to teachers to easily integrate health and wellbeing concepts into existing teaching plans and curriculum.

The programme – available in English, Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin – is open to all government, private and international schools of primary and secondary levels.

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AIA Malaysia recently hosted an enriching AIA Healthiest Schools workshop for the nation's passionate educators, who spent the day learning about holistic wellbeing as well as practical and effective approaches to incorporating wellness concepts into schools.

The workshop was led by AIA Malaysia's partner LeapEd – an organisation dedicated to whole-school transformation and student-centred learning. It delved into holistic health, emphasising not just physical fitness but also mental and emotional wellbeing.

From incorporating mindful practices into daily routines to fostering healthy eating habits, the workshop also offered actionable steps to create a healthier school environment.

Teachers were equipped with practical, easy-to-implement techniques, and learnt strategies to foster resilience and promote positive mental health among their students. Participants also engaged

in various activities and discussions which explored the multifaceted aspects of a healthy school environment.

Muhammad Daneil Faliq Akmal who teaches at SK Seksyen 24, Shah Alam, said the productive session focused on leveraging available resources to create impactful initiatives within school communities.

"The programme provided a wealth of online resources, serving as a one-stop shop for educators seeking guidance in cultivating healthier habits among students and the larger school community," he said.

Noting that the workshop dissected the concept of a healthy school and emphasised the importance of a balanced approach that intertwines physical and mental health, teacher Mackenzie Yap from REAL Schools in Cheras, KL, shared that topics like personal development, hygiene practices, and mental wellbeing, acknowl-

edging the interconnectedness of emotional, spiritual, and social factors in nurturing a healthy school community were truly helpful.

Qistina Artini, an educator at Beaconhouse Sri Murni, also in Cheras, said the workshop gave teachers a golden opportunity to connect with others from diverse schools.

"This interaction opened doors to a treasure trove of ideas and experiences. Teachers shared insights, learnt from each other's experiences, and gained fresh perspectives – fostering a collaborative environment for innovative approaches to promoting health in schools," she said.

AIA's Healthiest Schools programme enables participating institutions to gain access to a wealth of knowledge and expertise for the creation of vibrant, health-focused environments that nurture not just academic growth but overall wellbeing.

The workshop clearly highlight-

ed the potential benefits awaiting schools that integrate AIA's programme into their curriculum.

This empowers the schooling community to embrace healthier lifestyles and pave the way for a brighter, healthier future.

School competition

The AIA Healthiest Schools programme was launched by AIA Group in 2022 as part of its environmental, social and governance strategy with the purpose of bringing positive impact to the improvement of children's health across the region.

The first edition of the programme was held in four of AIA's 18 markets: Australia, Hong Kong, Thailand and Vietnam.

But that's not all. The programme includes a competition which serves as a platform for schools to showcase their impact and success in driving better health outcomes among students, in addition to building a community that shares best practices and sparks innovative ideas around promoting health and wellness.

Prizes totalling US\$100,000 are up for grabs for schools from the participating countries that demonstrate the best health and wellness efforts.



Scan QR code to register for the AIA Healthiest Schools programme and to learn more about the competition.