Sudden Cardiac Arrest is the #1 killer of student athletes and the leading cause of death on school campuses. With more than 23,000 youth lost, that’s more than one youth stricken nearly every hour, each day, year after year.

It’s a misconception that Sudden Cardiac Arrest just happens and there is nothing we can do about it. The truth is, we can save these young lives—we just need to be prepared.

An SCS victim needs immediate intervention within three to five minutes of collapse, and the average EMS arrival is six to 12 minutes. What’s more, the chances of survival decreases by 10% each minute emergency intervention is delayed. That’s why it’s critical to have an accessible automated external defibrillator, or AED) with an onsite with a plan in place to use it. Just like fire drills and extinguishers have become a standard in schools, despite the fact that a fraction are lost to fires as compared to sudden cardiac arrest, so, too, must cardiac emergency preparedness become a priority.

Ideally, our school’s AED would become part of a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan that would ensure our community’s readiness to save a life when seconds literally count.

While CPR can be a bridge to life, an AED is the only way to restart the heart. It’s designed for bystanders to use, which will happen if we train our community to Call – Push – Shock: Call 911, start hands-only CPR and use our AED.

Evidence shows that schools with AEDs and emergency action plans have a survival rate of up to 64% (versus the national statistic of 8%). We must demand that AEDs are in our schools and youth centers, and that communities are effectively prepared to use it.

The number of AEDs should correlate to the size as well as the on- and off-site athletic activity of the school, as an AED needs to be retrieved within three minutes of a victim’s collapse.

Parent Heart Watch advocates for sudden cardiac arrest prevention in youth, as their vision is to eliminate preventable deaths and disabilities from SCA by 2030. They have many resources that could assist us in making our school heart safe.

The media reports weekly on youth stricken by SCA, and sadly, so many who are lost. And it’s sadder still that studies show these reports represent less than half of actual incidents. (See Facebook @phwsca for the most recent news reports.)

We are committed to not letting this happen on our campus.

Therefore, we ask that you approve funding to underwrite a new AED for our school and support our initiative to implement a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan to ensure our