

THIS MONTH: HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

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Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Parents want to be certain they're doing the right things to ensure that their children grow into healthy, happy adults. But how often are they given the opportunity to learn how to encourage nutritious eating and increase their families' level of physical activity?

PTA/PTSAs are encouraged to plan events and activities that will help families adopt healthy lifestyles. Together, we can make sure our children grow up healthy! ☆

Some Things to Think About

Before you get started

Take a close look at your PTA's capacity before deciding which or how many events to host. You can plan just one event or host a series of events over the course of a week or the month.

Be open and creative about the timing of your events.

Consider whether a breakfast, daytime, or weekend event might allow more people to attend than something scheduled in the evening.

Think strategically about the events that you plan and what their long-term effect on your school community might be.

- A family 5k walk might get your community interested in creating a walking club.
- The winning recipes from a healthy recipe contest could be compiled into a cookbook that could be sold to raise money for future wellness programs.
- Turning off the school's vending machines for a day could launch a campaign to remove junk food from the school grounds.

During the event

Take pictures, and provide a comment book in which attendees can write down their thoughts. Photos and stories can be extremely useful in discussions with community leaders. Set up a membership table. Community events are a great way to illustrate the value of becoming a PTA member. Don't forget to let community members and extended family members know that they don't have to have a child attending your school to support your PTA with their membership.

Have a sign-up sheet for parents and other community members who would like to help with future PTA Healthy Lifestyles programs. Find those passionate volunteers who will become your next champions for school wide change. Make a point to introduce yourself to every community leader in attendance. If you have a particular issue that you would like to discuss with them, let them know that you will be calling their office to schedule an appointment shortly. Don't corner them for a conversation at the event.

After the event

Send a survey to parents to collect their feedback and suggestions. Carefully analyze the survey responses and use that information in planning your next event.

Follow up with community leaders who attended your event. If possible, send them a picture of their family at the event, along with a thank-you note for their support of your PTA.

Send a thank-you note to parents who attended, especially the new members you recruited. Let them know that you appreciate their support, as well as their recognition of the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles.

Evaluate your relationships with partner organizations. Would you like to work with those organizations again? On what other projects could your organizations partner? Are there members of those organizations that you would like to recruit to join your PTA?

Submit a press release to the local media that talks about your accomplishments and your future plans. ☆



Share with us!

Has your PTA/PTSA held Health and Wellness Events? Have you used your creativity to come up with great activities? Let us know!

Michigan PTSA is looking for great examples of successful programs to share with other PTA/PTSA officers. Send a description of your meeting activity, discussion or project to 7402 Westshire Dr. Suite 115, Lansing, MI, 48917 or email us at communications@michiganpta.org ☆

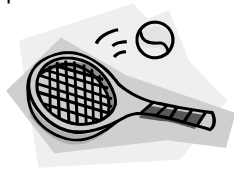
Establish your objectives

While your ultimate goal is to promote healthy lifestyles in your school community, it's helpful to define concrete objectives for each particular event for your team to work toward achieving. These objectives will keep you on track throughout the process and provide a sense of accomplishment once your event is over. Reaching your benchmarks also gives you information to share with decision makers in your community and will help in future advocacy and fundraising efforts.

Your objectives should be attainable with a reasonable amount of effort, and there should be clear indicators of success. Be creative and consider what objectives would be most important to *your* PTA; those objectives can be related or unrelated to health and wellness.

Recruit your team

Look for volunteers outside your usual group of parents and community leaders. There are most likely people who are passionate about nutrition and physical activity who could lend a helping hand—even if they've never worked with PTA in the past. ☆



Does Your School Have a Wellness Policy?

It Should Include:

- Nutrition education goals.
- Physical activity goals.
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on the school campus.
- Ways for parents, students, school administrators, the school board, and the school food authority, as well as the general public, to get involved in developing the wellness policy.
- Other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness.
- Plans for evaluating the school wellness policy. ☆



How Do I Get People to Participate?

Be creative in the ways you announce your event to the school community.

- Send parents an invitation to your event that tells them how the whole family can get involved.
- If your healthy lifestyles event will center around a theme, decorate the school accordingly. Do the decorating a few weeks before the event in order to build awareness.
- Invite a relevant speaker (e.g., a local pediatrician, a member of your school food service team, an advocate with a success story, a school nurse) to the PTA meeting prior to your event. After the speaker's presentation, remind the audience about your event.
- Hold a student essay or art contest about the importance of healthy lifestyles; announce the winners at your event.

Use community resources to publicize your event.

- Talk to your local cable provider about placing an advertisement on the community access channel.
- Place an announcement of your event in the weekly newsletters of social service, religious, and other community organizations.
- Make a brief announcement at a school board meeting and other community wide meetings.
- Submit a letter to the editor of your local newspaper; talk about the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles, and invite the entire community to your event.
- Create a press release and distribute it to your local media.

Involve key community stakeholders.

- Schedule office visits with your superintendent, government representatives, and community leaders to discuss health-related issues of importance to your community. During your visits, present these leaders with personalized invitations for their families to attend your event.
- Once you have the commitment of a few leaders, publicize their attendance. This might spur their peers to also attend.
- Invite local radio hosts or news anchors to host your event. Consider asking them to broadcast live from your location. ☆



Food For Thought

What You Need to Know About Physical Fitness

Studies show that when children's exercise and fitness needs are met, children are more able to learn and achieve. Given the growing epidemic of obesity and the link between physical activity and academic performance, parents and schools must work together to make quality daily physical education a priority in schools and to give children more opportunities to be physically active throughout the school day.

Unfortunately, the trend is that children are becoming less physically active:

- In 1969, 42 percent of children ages 5 to 18 walked or biked to school; in 2001, only 16 percent did.
- Almost all public elementary schools schedule physical education for their students, but only 17 to 22 percent (depending on grade level) provide physical education on a daily basis.
- About two-thirds of young people in grades 9 to 12 are not engaged in recommended levels of physical activity. Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2005.
- In 2005, only about half of students in grades 9 to 12 attended physical education classes on one or more days in an average week when they were in school.

This inactivity is not only harming children's health but affecting children's academic success. Physical activity improves children's academic performance.

- Studies show that providing more time for physical activity (by reducing class time for academics) can lead to improved test scores.
- Children who have daily physical education classes exhibit better attendance and have a more positive attitude about school.

Adapted in part, with permission, from Action for Healthy Kids, "Building the Argument: The Need for Physical Education and Physical Activity in Our Schools," www.ActionForHealthyKids.org. ☆

Active Ideas For Your Family

- ☑ Schedule regular times throughout the week for your family to be physically active. Help everyone find something active that they enjoy and feel successful doing.
- ☑ Have everyone write down personal goals; then track everyone's progress.
- ☑ Place a chart on the refrigerator and update it regularly as a family.
- ☑ Use a pedometer to determine which activities require the most steps.
- ☑ Give physical activity-oriented gifts; keep the recipient's skills, interests, and/or objectives in mind.
- ☑ Always use the stairs.
- ☑ Play upbeat music while you twist and shake through your chores.
- ☑ Discover what free and low-cost physical activity areas are near your home (e.g., parks, bike trails, hiking trails, tennis courts, swimming pools).
- ☑ Start a garden. Have family members plant vegetables, fruits, and flowers.
- ☑ Walk, jog, or run on a family treasure hunt.
- ☑ Host a sports party where you play traditional games like basketball, softball, volleyball, tetherball, etc.
- ☑ Roller blade as a family.

Adapted with permission from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 101 Tips for Family Fitness Fun, www.aahperd.org/naspe/. ☆

10 Activities For Kids

1. Take your dog out for a walk
2. Start up a playground kickball game
3. Join a sports team
4. Go to the park with a friend
5. Help your parents with yard work
6. Play tag with kids in your neighborhood
7. Ride your bike to school
8. Walk to the store for your mom
9. See how many jumping jacks you can do
10. Race a friend to the end of the block ☆

Don't Forget the Phases of Exercise



1. Warm up
2. Stretch
3. Exercise
4. Cool down
5. Stretch Again

Foods For Wellness

Serving healthy snacks to our children is important to providing good nutrition for growth and development, supporting lifelong healthy eating habits, and preventing costly and potentially disabling diseases, like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity.

Healthy Foods

- Fruits and vegetables: Almost all of the snacks served to children should be fruits or vegetables. Do taste tests, or let kids choose (or vote for) new fruits and vegetables to try. Fruit can be served whole, sliced, cut in half, cubed, or in wedges. Canned, frozen, and dried fruits are easy and usually need little preparation.
- Healthy options include fresh fruits and vegetables; frozen fruit; applesauce; fruit cups or canned fruit (in juice or light syrup); dried fruit and fruit leathers (without added sugars); fruit salad; fruit juice popsicles; and homemade smoothies. Vegetables can be served with dips like hummus, bean dip, or salad dressing; in salads; or as veggie pockets in whole wheat pita.
- Healthy grains (whole grains that are low in fats and sugars): Serve mostly whole grains, which provide more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains do. (Whole wheat [or other whole grain] should be the first ingredient listed.) Healthy whole grain options can include English muffins, pita, or tortillas; breakfast cereal; crackers; rice cakes; popcorn; tortilla chips; granola; cereal bars; breadsticks; or flatbreads. Refined grains, such as pretzels and goldfish, should not be everyday offerings. Be sure to read nutrition labels to pick options that are low in sugars, saturated fat, and trans fat.
- Low-fat dairy foods: To protect children's bones and hearts, make sure all dairy foods are low-fat or fat-free, such as yogurt and low-fat pudding. Since cheese is the number two source of heart-damaging saturated fat in children's diets, choose lower-fat cheeses, serve small portions, and serve cheese with other foods, like fruit, vegetables, or whole grain crackers.
- Nuts and trail mix: Since nuts are high in calories, it is best to serve small portions (a small handful) and serve them along with another snack, such as fruit.



Healthy Beverages

- Water: Water should be the main drink served to kids at snack times. Water satisfies thirst without adding calories or sugars (and it is low-cost!).
- Seltzer or sparkling water: Look for calorie-free varieties, flavored or unflavored.
- Low-fat and fat-free milk: Milk is a terrific source of calcium and vitamin D, but it is also the number one source of heart-damaging saturated fat in children's diets. Choose fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) instead of whole or 2% (reduced-fat) milk. Soy and rice "milks" (fortified with calcium and vitamin D) also are healthy options.
- Fruit juice: Choose only 100% fruit juice, but limit juice to no more than 6 ounces (a little less than a cup) for 1- to 6-year-olds and no more than 12 ounces (1 1/2 cups) for 7- to 18-year-olds. Avoid juice drinks, which, nutritionally, are no better than soda pop. The label should list 100% juice. Avoid drinks with sugar or high fructose corn syrup in the ingredient list.

Reprinted with permission from the Center for Science in the Public Interest, "Healthy Snacks for Children," www.cspinet.org ☆

Did you know...

that protection against some diseases wears off as children enter the preteen and teen years?

- Talk to your child's health-care provider and the school nurse about the recommended and required shots for your child.
- Take your child to the doctor for a checkup.
- Make sure your child is up-to-date on the recommended shots for his or her age group.
- Keep a record of the shots your child gets and the dates he or she gets them. ☆

Hold Yourself Accountable

Create a daily log for you and your child.

Chart how much time you spent being active and what activities you participated in.
Record the food that you ate throughout the day.
Include what your mood was for the day. ☆



If you would like to read more information or are looking for age specific food guides, download *PTA Healthy Lifestyles: A Parent's Guide*, which can be found on National PTAs website at www.pta.org under Leadership Resources, Local Unit Leaders, Programs, Healthy Lifestyles. ☆