

How PTAs Can Support School Wellness

Healthy Students are Better Learners

As kids spend the majority of their day at school, these should be places that support them to be healthy and achieve their full potential. We know that healthy students are better prepared to learn. Kids with healthier eating patterns and enough physical activity tend to:

- Demonstrate increased learning ability, attentiveness and engagement;
- Have better grades;
- Behave better in class; and
- Miss less school time.

PTAs are critical advocates for better school food environments and increased opportunities for quality physical education and physical activity. PTAs also provide key input to discussions about District Wellness Policy revisions and implementation. Read more to find out how PTAs can support healthy changes to school environments to allow students to reach their full potential.



Support School Wellness Policies that Help Students Learn

The [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act \(HHFKA\) of 2010](#) requires all local educational agencies participating in federal child-nutrition programs to establish and implement local school-wellness policies that guide the district's efforts to create supportive school nutrition and physical activity environments. HHFKA requires schools to have parents participate in the development of school wellness policies. All parents have a right to work with their schools' wellness committee to help develop revised wellness policies, create plans for implementation, and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.

PTA members can and should be represented on a school wellness policy team. PTAs can help make sure the school wellness policy covers a variety of areas, including nutrition guidelines and education; physical activity goals; in-school student wellness activities; and a plan for evaluation.

Want to learn more? Some helpful resources include:

- [School Wellness Committee Toolkit](#) (Alliance for a Healthier Generation)
- [Parents for Healthy Schools](#) (CDC)
- [Wellness Resources](#) (USDA)
- [Model School Wellness Policies](#) (National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity)
- [Wellness Policy Tool](#) (Action for Healthy Kids)
- [School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity](#) (CDC)

Read your district's full policy at:

<https://tinyurl.com/CIUFSD-Wellness-Policy>

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Support Opportunities for Physical Activity



There are many ways that PTAs can advocate for and support better physical activity opportunities in their schools:

- Work with district and building administrators to ensure that students' physical education adheres to both [national guidelines](#) and [state standards](#).
- Organize fundraisers to pay for new equipment for classrooms, gymnasiums and playgrounds. Consider a fundraiser focused on physical activity. Some ideas include field days, team sport tournaments, and "a-thon" fundraisers. PTAs can also plan Family Fun Nights for students and parents that take place after school hours.
- Organize activities that promote physical activity, including forming a walking or running club or active afterschool activities.
- Support active transport to school by organizing a Safe Routes to School program, creating a walking school bus in which adults take turns supervising the route, and helping students participate in a Walk/Bike to School efforts.

Promote a Healthier School Food Environment

PTAs can work with their schools in a variety of ways to support a healthier food environment:

In the cafeteria:

- Encourage the district to sign up for the [Federal School Meals programs](#).
- Monitor the cafeteria to ensure that school meals meet the [USDA guidelines](#).

In the classroom:

- Support teachers to encourage healthy options, such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free dairy and whole grain rich foods, at classroom celebrations and parties.

In the school building:

- Advocate to replace fast-food marketing or blank walls with colorful visuals that encourage healthy eating, such as a mural or student artwork.
- Address unhealthy foods in vending machines and school stores by working with vendors to stock healthier items at eye level, remove unhealthy items, and/or replace some food items with non-food items such as school merchandise.
- Ensure that fundraisers during the school day meet [Smart Snacks](#) standards. Some ideas for healthy fundraisers include:
 - "A-Thon" fundraisers (e.g., Dance-A-Thon)
 - Singing/musical telegrams
 - Team sport tournament
 - Book/cookbook sale
 - Field Day
 - Sell healthy foods
 - Talent show or craft fair
 - Sell school logo merchandise
 - Yard sale or auction
 - School photo day

