



Section

06

Healthy Lifestyles at Home and School:

PTA Meeting and Event Ideas

In this section we offer ideas and tools for you to use in planning PTA meetings or events on the subject of nutrition and wellness. In your Back to School Kit you will find a DVD from National PTA's partner, Parents' Action for Children, that was designed specifically to engage parents on this subject. We encourage you to use this DVD as a tool to jumpstart a discussion about nutrition and wellness at a PTA meeting or event.

Healthy Lifestyles at Home and School: PTA Meeting and Event Ideas



Parents are essential allies for any school that wants to improve student nutrition and wellness—but it can be hard to connect with today's busy parents. PTAs play an important role in getting parents' attention and inspiring discussion and action.

Here are some simple, practical suggestions for incorporating this topic into your regular PTA or community meetings.

Setting the stage

Nutrition and wellness can be a sensitive, emotionally charged topic for many parents. Parents who themselves are overweight or whose children are overweight may feel that this is a personal issue that they want to deal with privately. Your message to parents should focus on the fact that children benefit most when schools and parents work as partners to promote student health. Reach out to all parents, not just parents who are worried that their children may be overweight: poor diet, even in non-overweight children, can affect brain development and performance in school. Establish the PTA as a valuable resource for parents who are looking for information and guidance.

The DVD included in your Back to School Kit was created by Parents' Action for Children to help you jumpstart a conversation with parents

about child nutrition and wellness. Additional materials are available at www.parentsaction.org.

Ideas for guest speakers

Ask a representative from your school's wellness/health council to attend your meeting and talk about the council's plans to improve student nutrition and wellness, as well as ways for parents to get involved.

Invite a local pediatrician, nurse or nutritionist to talk to parents about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity. Many pediatric practices will volunteer to speak to your PTA about ways for parents and schools to improve nutrition and wellness. Make sure you allow time for parents to ask questions.

Reach out to groups in your community/city/state that are working to improve student nutrition and wellness, and invite them to talk to your PTA about ways to get involved.

For example:

- Action for Healthy Kids has teams in all 50 states and the District of

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Columbia that are working to improve student nutrition and increase opportunities for physical activity. To find out more, visit www.actionforhealthykids.org.

- Find out (ask your principal) if your school is involved in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Team Nutrition program. If your school is already involved, ask your Team Nutrition School Leader to speak at your meeting about the work that's being done. You can find more information about Team Nutrition at www.fns.usda.gov/tn.

Getting the ball rolling. Plan a healthy fundraiser (one that doesn't involve candy or brownies) to raise money for athletic teams or gym equipment. Take an idea from the Healthy Fundraisers handout in this notebook, and ask for volunteers to plan and coordinate.

Making things light. Plan some fun activities.

- Organize a healthy snacks contest where students come up with healthy snack ideas. Have students present their "prototypes" at your meeting, ask parents to vote for their favorite snack and present the winner with an award from the PTA.
- Divide parents into two teams and ask people to guess how many calories are in different kinds of junk foods that are available in your school's vending machines or a la carte lines. People will be surprised at how wrong they can be!

Advertise your event to as many people as possible. Playing up your focus on nutrition and wellness might help attract parents who aren't "regulars" at your meetings.

Provide take-home materials.

Photocopy the parent handouts included in this notebook and have them available for parents to take home after your meeting.

Get feedback. Ask participants to tell you what they thought about the meeting/event, and what nutrition/wellness topics they'd like to see covered in future meetings.

Dealing with time constraints?

- If you can't devote an entire meeting to this subject, you might choose to spend a smaller amount of time on nutrition and wellness at a series of meetings. For example, distribute a fact sheet or handout from the *Healthy Lifestyles at Home and School Notebook* and spend 15–30 minutes discussing ideas for PTA action on that topic.
- If there isn't any time to discuss student nutrition and wellness at your regular PTA/community meeting, distribute handouts from the *Healthy Lifestyles at Home and School Notebook* at the end of your meeting and encourage parents to read them at home.