



# It Takes A Village to Raise a Healthy Child: Collaborative Strategies for Nourishment of American Youth

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## Short-Term Impacts

**Children who have daily physical education classes exhibit better attendance and have a more positive attitude about school.**

A healthy, physically active child is more likely to be:

- academically motivated
- alert, and
- successful. (Kids Health, 2010)

Quality physical education promotes:

- physical,
- mental,
- emotional, and
- social development (Healthy Kids, 2010).

Children who come to school healthy, with a variety of experiences to draw on and a strong support system in place, have a greater likelihood of succeeding in school. (Scruggs, 2008).

**Balanced nutrition can have a positive impact on academic achievement by creating an optimal learning condition for the brain.**

Nutrition is an essential first step toward a student's readiness to learn. (California Department of Education, 2005). Healthy, well-nourished children are

- more prepared to learn
- more likely to attend school and class
- and better able to take advantage of educational opportunities.(CDC, 2010).

By adopting effective nutrition and physical activity programs, districts and schools ensure that the health of students is a top priority. (California Superintendent, 2008).

**Students that have families involved in their school are more likely to have better grades, higher attendance, and better social skills.**

A home environment that encourages learning is even more important than parents' income, education level, or cultural background. By actively participating in their child's education at home and in school, parents send some critical messages to their child; they are demonstrating their interest in his/her activities and reinforcing the idea that school is important (NYU Child Study Center, 2006-2010).

## Organizations

There are numerous organizations to which parents can turn to with their questions about the nourishment of their children. The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has been around for more than 100 years. It was created to meet a profound challenge: to better the lives of children. PTA encourages parent involvement through its hallmark **Family-School Partnerships** initiative and the accompanying National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. Parents, teachers, and the community can utilize this information to provide a better lifestyle and guidance for our youth. The PTA is one of many organizations promoting the healthy development of children.



## Theoretical Links

The recommendations indicated are supported by Jean Piaget's theory on Cognitive Development. Piaget's theory clearly explains the process of decision making throughout life that are based on one's own observations of the world. (Mayer, 2006)

Healthy eating patterns in childhood and adolescence promote:

- optimal childhood health,
- appropriate physical growth,
- intellectual development,
- prevent immediate health problems, and
- may prevent long-term health problems.

School health programs can help children and adolescents attain full educational potential and good health by providing them with the skills, social support, and environmental reinforcement they need to adopt long-term, healthy eating behaviors. (CDC, 2010)

## Long-Term Impacts

**Children who have a lot of physical activity are less likely to develop chronic illnesses and have heart attacks in adulthood.**

When children become overweight at a young age the more likely they will be overweight as an adult. In order to improve student's physical fitness, students must be physically active. It is very crucial for parents to reinforce the importance of physical activity with their children at home. Parents cannot rely on schools to do this alone. Parents need to create an effective routine that can continue to promote physical activity.

**Children and families that maintain a properly balanced diet make healthier life choices. They are more likely to do things together, which promotes healthier relationships among themselves.**

Offering your child a variety of nutritious foods from each of the food groups will help balance your child's daily diet so he is able to consume all of the things he needs to maintain good health. (Livestrong, 2010). Parents are a powerful influence on their children and the foods you purchase, prepare and offer your children can have a positive effect on their health. (Kids Health, 2010).

- Model healthy eating habits
- Shop for food can be a learning experience for your child. Talk about the different foods you see and encourage your child to pick out a new fruit or vegetable to try.
- With older children, explain the importance of whole grains or fresh produce, and read food labels together. (Kids Health, 2010)

**When a child's parents or guardians are involved in the child's school, they are more likely to graduate from high school and then proceed to post-secondary school.**

Families that are more involved with their child's education have children that are more likely to graduate and go on to post-secondary school (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002). Youth whose parents have high academic expectations and who offer consistent encouragement for college have positive student outcomes. Also, when parents are familiar with college preparation requirements and are engaged in the application process is most likely to graduate high school and attend a college (Harvard Family Research Project 2010).

## Recommendations

**Schools should provide daily physical education.**

Studies show that when children's exercise and fitness needs are met, children are more able to learn and achieve. (PTA 2010)

**School based programs should ensure students are maintaining appropriate food choices that correspond to the government's recommendations.**

School-based programs can play a vital role in promoting life long healthy eating. Healthy eating patterns in childhood and adolescence promote optimal childhood health, growth, and intellectual development; prevent immediate health problems, and may prevent long-term health problems (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2010, para. 1).

School health programs can help children and adolescents attain full educational potential and good health

**Families and school staff collaborating can support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school.** Research shows that family involvement promotes student success. Students with involved parents are more likely to: earn higher grades and pass their classes, attend school regularly and have better social skills, and go on to postsecondary education.

