


# PTA Health & Wellness Initiative: “When You Know Better, You Do Better”

By Wendy Diaz, PTA Health and Wellness Co-Chair, East Cobb County Council of PTAs

Maya Angelou is famous for her line “when you know better, you do better”. It got me thinking, that phrase really sums up what we are trying to do here in East Cobb regarding promoting health and wellness in our East Cobb schools. When you empower the STUDENT with the knowledge of the importance of eating well and exercising regularly, you can start to make a real difference in their personal AND academic lives. Research shows that kids who move more aren't just healthier, they also tend to do better academically, behave better in class and miss fewer days of school. We know more about health and wellness NOW than EVER before, yet we are the unhealthiest we have ever been. In less than two decades, more than 85% of our population will be overweight or obese. Children are developing health issues such as Type II diabetes, ADHD, asthma and obesity at staggering rates. One statistic I came across recently stated that 1 out of every 3 children born after year 2000 will have diabetes and WE are doing this to them!

So, how can you, as a parent, get involved in the Health and Wellness initiative? It starts at home. Be a role model for your child. Be active every day with some sort of exercise. Start eating whole foods such as dark leafy vegetables, whole grains, juicy ripe fruit, complete proteins, and limit fats and refined sugars. Eliminate foods in your pantry that contain artificial flavors, colors, additives and trans fats. Encourage your child to limit the unhealthy extras offered at school such as ice cream and vending machine snacks. Next, get involved at your child's school. What can you do? Here are some ideas:

- Join your school's Health and Wellness committee. Your PTA doesn't have one? Grab some friends and create one!
- Organize “walk” or “bike to school” days at your school.
- Offer to help write grants for money for schools to have equipment for H&W programs.
- Attend Lunch and Learns to increase your knowledge of H&W issues.
- Create a “Health and Fitness Week” at your school.
- Write your Congressman regarding federal nutrition guidelines, school lunch programs, importance of exercise.
- Attend Cobb County School District's Farm to School initiative meetings.
- Volunteer to help facilitate your school cafeteria's “produce of the month” program.
- So remember, when you know better, you do better. Be involved and make a difference!

Note: November is PTA's Healthy Lifestyle Month, a perfect time to make a commitment to get involved at the school level. Check out the resources available at [www.pta.org/healthy\\_lifestyles.asp](http://www.pta.org/healthy_lifestyles.asp). 



Wendy Diaz, East Cobb County Council PTA Health and Wellness Co-Chair, lives in northeast Cobb County with her tennis coach husband, Stephen, and two sons: Dominic, a 4th grader, and Derek, a 2nd grader at Garrison Mill Elementary.




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