Healthy Lifestyles Grants: Program Guide

Program proudly sponsored by:
National PTA Partner: The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation

The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation (HWCF), formed in 2009, is a CEO-led organization whose national, multiyear effort is designed to help reduce obesity—especially childhood obesity. Together with its 300+ members and partners, HWCF promotes ways to help people achieve a healthy weight through energy balance—calories in and calories out. It focuses its efforts on two critical areas—families and schools—through its Together Counts™ campaign which is used by 50 million students across the country. TogetherCounts.com offers free access to standards aligned, award-winning curricular resources and grant programs that help to build healthy communities and reduce childhood obesity.
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Healthy Lifestyles Grants: Program Introduction

National PTA’s Healthy Lifestyles Grants program was created to help local PTAs partner with schools and engage families in creating sustainable healthy lifestyles programs. Together, PTAs, schools and families can use the program’s tools and resources to identify and address challenges to providing healthy learning and home environments. The program focuses on a simple, everyday practice known as energy balance: finding a balance between the calories we consume and the calories we burn.

Today, one-third of American children and adolescents ages 2–19 are overweight or obese. If the current childhood obesity trend is not reversed, this will be the first generation to live sicker and die younger than its parents. Research also shows that obesity is associated with poor levels of academic achievement. Eating a well-balanced, healthy diet and getting the recommended amount of physical activity every day are important to maintaining a healthy weight and maximizing academic performance. Barriers to providing nutritious foods and opportunities for daily physical activity exist both at home and at school; these barriers can be reduced through a stronger family-school partnership focused on advocacy, mobilization and family education—PTAs areas of expertise.

PTAs can play an important role in increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in the school community by engaging families, teachers, administrators and students in programs and activities that encourage the school community to be active and to eat healthy foods.

The goal of the Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 program is to provide local PTAs with resources to:

- Use the Energy Balance 101: Enrichment Zone! curriculum to educate families about the importance of energy balance, nutrition and physical activity in achieving an active, healthy lifestyle.
- Empower families to partner with schools to advocate for and support the implementation of healthy changes around nutrition and physical activity.
- Provide families with tools to create an environment at home that supports the positive changes at school.

This guide supports those goals by providing PTAs with step-by-step information about developing and implementing successful Healthy Lifestyles Grants program initiatives. Whether you have received a National PTA grant, are looking to strengthen an existing health and wellness program, or are just getting started with your PTA’s health initiative, this guide is for you:

- **Recipients of Healthy Lifestyles Grants** can use this information to plan effective programs that meet grant requirements.
- **Experienced PTAs** who already have a Healthy Lifestyles or obesity prevention initiative at their school will find information about energy balance and new ideas to strengthen or expand existing programs.
- **PTA units new to the issues of nutrition and physical activity** may find that this guide inspires and supports them to begin a new Healthy Lifestyles initiative at their school.
Promoting Student Achievement: PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Research shows that family involvement supports 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
- Go on to postsecondary education

Parents often are unaware of their right to be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of their school's practices and policies related to nutrition and physical activity. Strong family-school partnerships, where parents are engaged and invested in their children's success, are not beneficial solely for academic and behavior reasons; they translate into strong health policies that are successfully implemented in schools, thus improving the schools’ overall wellness environment and improving student health and welfare in both the short-term and long-term.

PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships were developed with national experts and reflect the most recent research about how parents, schools and communities can work together to support student achievement. They include the following:

- **Standard 1 – Welcoming All Families into the School Community.** Families are active participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued and connected to each other, to school staff and to what students are learning and doing in class.
- **Standard 2 – Communicating Effectively.** Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.
- **Standard 3 – Supporting Student Success.** Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.
- **Standard 4 – Speaking Up for Every Child.** Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.
- **Standard 5 – Sharing Power.** Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence and create policies, practices and programs.
- **Standard 6 – Collaborating with Community.** Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

For more information about PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, including an implementation guide and assessment forms, visit: [PTA.org/Programs](http://PTA.org/Programs).
About Energy Balance

Human beings need energy to survive—to breathe, move, pump blood and think—and they get this energy from calories in foods and beverages. Energy balance is the balance of calories consumed from foods and beverages (“energy in”) with calories burned (“energy out”). Maintaining energy balance over time contributes to our health in positive ways. Teaching young people about energy balance gives them tools and information that can help them make good decisions now and set the stage for a healthy lifestyle into adulthood.

Adults often focus on weight gain or loss, but for children, energy balance means that the amounts of energy in and energy out support normal growth and development without promoting excess weight gain. In other words, children need to gain some weight as they grow, so an exact 1:1 ratio of energy in and energy out is not the goal for them. What is important for youth to understand is the need to balance their daily calorie requirements with regular physical activity.

Energy in and energy out don’t have to balance exactly every day, but the goal should be to maintain balance over time. How many calories we need each day depends on many things, including our gender, height, weight, age and activity level. The average school-age child needs between 1,600 and 2,500 calories each day. Estimated calorie requirements by age and activity level can be found at:


For children, energy balance focuses on the following:

- Having enough energy to do all the things they want to do and to grow up strong and healthy
- Practicing balance, variety and moderation in their diet
- Being physically active for 60 minutes each day

Energy balance requires a focus on both nutrition (energy in) and physical activity (energy out). For the Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 program, National PTA urges local units to take a balanced approach to the concept of a healthy lifestyle by including messages and activities that support both healthier food choices and increased physical activity.
Energy In

The following are some additional points to keep in mind as you plan activities to teach children and families about healthy food choices:

- The 2010 U.S. Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines encourage the following basic principles of a sensible diet: variety, balance and moderation.
- In addition to energy, many foods provide vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that help our bodies grow. It’s important for us to get the nutrients we need each day from food, so we want to eat plenty of nutrient-rich foods.
- No foods are “bad”—all can fit into a sensible, balanced diet using moderation. This means we may need to eat some foods less often or in smaller portions.
- The 2010 Dietary Guidelines include a section on “Foods and Nutrients to Increase.” These include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or fat-free milk products.

Energy Out

Keep the following additional points in mind as you plan activities to teach children and families about physical activity:

- It is recommended that children ages 6–17 get 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day. Physical activity means moving the body to use energy.
- Some physical activities require more energy than others. Activities that require a lot of energy are called “vigorous.” Examples include running, bicycling, jumping rope, karate, swimming and most competitive sports. Activities that use a moderate amount of energy include things like walking quickly, hiking, yoga and dancing. We should aim for moderate or vigorous physical activity every day.
- Physical activity may be aerobic (if it makes the heart beat faster), muscle-strengthening, bone-strengthening, or a combination. It is important to do a variety of different activities, because each activity uses different muscles.
- Benefits of activity are not just physical. Being active also can help you sleep better, reduce stress and feel happier, and it provides a way to have fun and learn to solve problems with family and friends.

Note: This section is adapted from the Together Counts Energy Balance 101 curriculum (www.togethercounts.com)
Recruiting Your Healthy Lifestyles Team

Recruiting a large and diverse team of parents/PTA members, students, school personnel and community volunteers will make planning and implementing your Healthy Lifestyles program much easier! When building your team, keep the PTAs National Standards for Family-School Partnerships in mind. Welcoming all families, communicating effectively, sharing power, and collaborating with the community are all strategies that will enhance your team interactions and help make your events a success.

Use the following suggestions to expand your thinking about who might be part of your team and how team members can be involved in your Healthy Lifestyles planning and activities.

Who Can Help?

Announce opportunities to help with the Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 program widely, rather than relying on the same small group of volunteers. You might be surprised to see who steps up!

- **Parents.** Think about parents who might have knowledge about or concern for healthy lifestyles; for example, those who work as nutritionists, medical personnel, personal trainers and aerobics instructors, or anyone with an interest in creating a healthy learning environment. Ask the principal to suggest parents who might be interested in getting more involved, and have your board members extend personal invitations.
- **Students.** Invite a representative of the student council or student government to participate on a planning team—or ask the student council to help with a specific activity or event. Consider contacting the local high school or middle school to identify students who might need community service hours to meet graduation requirements. Student athletic clubs and teams are another possibility.
- **School Personnel.** Recruit faculty and staff who have an interest in healthy lifestyles. For example, be sure to invite the participation of health and physical education teachers, school nurses, foodservice personnel and playground monitors.
- **Community Members.** Don’t forget to engage community members who care about children and their health. Consider approaching some of the following:
  - Representatives of local children’s hospitals or pediatricians’ offices
  - City or county parks and recreation departments or health departments
  - Food banks
  - Restaurants, chefs or caterers
  - Service clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, etc.)
  - Professional or semipro athletic teams, or recreational sports clubs
  - Grocery and sporting goods stores
  - The local YMCA, recreational center or community center
How Can They Help?

No two volunteers are alike—luckily, there are as many different ways to help as there are personalities. Just remember, when someone asks, “Do you need any help?” your answer should always be: “YES!”

- **Plan.** Recruiting a broad and diverse planning team may require a little more effort up front, but it will pay off with a revitalized group of volunteers who will enrich your school community with new ideas, perspectives, connections, talents and skills. Those who don’t want to serve on the main planning committee might be willing to join a subcommittee with a specific role, such as securing donations from local businesses or organizing a healthy cooking competition.

- **Promote.** PTA members who can’t make it to meetings might be willing to help promote the Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 program, messages and activities by writing press releases or newsletter articles, creating fliers or banners, updating the school sign board, making phone calls or spreading the word via social media. Teachers might agree to have their students make posters reinforcing messages related to the importance of good nutrition and physical activity, or to support specific initiatives. Student volunteers might be willing to promote Healthy Lifestyles messages during morning announcements or write an article about energy balance for their school newspaper.

- **Participate.** Ask family members who attend events with their children to come a little early for set up, stay a few minutes after to help clean up, or give a half hour of their time to staff a welcome table, run an educational booth or collect event evaluation forms. Families also could volunteer occasionally to lead a healthy lifestyles activity, such as staffing the breakfast cart one morning per month or leading the walking school bus in their neighborhood once a week. These low-commitment volunteer opportunities are a great first step to helping parents feel welcome, engaged and involved.
Planning Your Strategy

The first thing you must decide is what kinds of activities and initiatives will have the greatest impact on the unique energy balance needs of your school community and will be sustainable over time. Individual health behavior is determined to a large extent by the environment. To ensure that the whole school environment supports students’ health and academic success, it is recommended that PTAs move away from a strategy of delivering one-time events and toward a long-term, multifaceted partnership between the PTA and school that delivers education to families and students in a variety of ways, throughout the entire school year.

National PTA therefore suggests the following approach to address the energy balance needs at your school and create sustainable environmental change:

- Create **two family education activities or events** focused on the importance of energy balance, good nutrition and physical activity in achieving a healthy, active lifestyle.
- Partner with your school to **address one nutrition and one physical activity issue** throughout the entire school year.

Possible family education activities include the following:

- Provide **Together Counts** program tips in the PTA newsletter, on the website and through social media during Healthy Lifestyles Month (November), to teach families how to involve their children in meal planning. Find lots of tips here: [http://www.togethercounts.com/at-home/tips-tools](http://www.togethercounts.com/at-home/tips-tools).
- Hold a family fitness fair during Take Your Family to School Week in February.
- Create a cookbook that includes healthy recipes submitted by families.
- Invite a local chef to teach a healthy cooking class for families.
- Use the **Energy Balance 101: Enrichment Zone!** modules to offer a series of brief, fun afterschool or evening workshops that parents and children can attend together.
- Create a school-wide challenge using a **Together Counts** “Home to School” activity sheet. Offer an extra recess or healthy snack to the class or grade that brings back the most signed sheets (indicating that their family completed both activities) during the challenge period. **Together Counts** posts new activity sheets seasonally.

Possible yearlong initiatives include the following:

- Staff a mobile breakfast cart to ensure all students have access to a healthy breakfast every day.
- Host monthly healthy food “taste tests” for students, and add the most popular items to the school breakfast or lunch menu.
- Advocate for your school to participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Already a participant? Take it a step further by talking to your school’s nutrition staff about joining the USDA’s Team Nutrition ([teamnutrition.usda.gov/team.html](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/team.html)) and participating in the HealthierUS School Challenge ([www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/))—another way to win funding for your school by improving the school lunch program.
- Focus on increasing the presence of nutrient-dense foods and drinks at school and PTA events and fundraisers.
- Form a walking club for students and their families.
- Encourage school families to participate in **Fire Up Your Feet**: [PTA.org/FireUpYourFeet](http://PTA.org/FireUpYourFeet). Set a participation goal (number or percentage of families), and celebrate when it is reached.
• Facilitate the development of “walking school bus” and “bike train” initiatives to encourage more children and families to walk or bike to school safely.

Gathering Resources

Most PTAs have a limited budget and must plan carefully to achieve their goals for the year. Ideally, Healthy Lifestyles activities will be included in your PTA’s annual budget process from the beginning. If that’s not possible this year, don’t worry! Much can be accomplished with a small budget, particularly with the help of volunteers and by collaborating with the community.

National PTA awarded 25 Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 grants of $2,000 each for the 2015–16 school year. If your PTA received a grant, congratulations! This section will help you identify and gather additional resources you may need to complete your planned events and activities for this year, as well as to sustain your program into the future.

The resources you need will depend on your specific initiatives and activities. You might need to gather some or all of the following items:

• Refreshments
• Incentives/prizes for participants (e.g., pedometers, cookbooks)
• Small gifts to recognize volunteers
• Photocopying charges
• Stationery, printing and postage for solicitation letters to local businesses and other promotion activities

Don’t hesitate to ask for support (cash or in-kind donations) from local businesses. Make sure you have a letter ready to acknowledge their donation for tax purposes. The letter should include the school or PTAs tax identification number and a description of what was donated. If the donor provides goods (anything other than cash), keep in mind that IRS guidelines prohibit you from determining the items’ value—provide a description instead. Your letter also should say something like, “No goods or services were provided in exchange for this donation” (or state an estimated value of any goods or services you provided to the donor, if applicable).

Family-friendly businesses, or those with a natural interest in nutrition and physical activity, are great places to start when looking for donations. Some possibilities include:

• Grocery stores
• Sporting goods stores
• Gyms
• Local professional or semiprofessional sports teams
Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Once you have recruited your team and planned your programs for the year, it is important to let families and your community know what's happening.

Key Messages

Below are some important messages to emphasize as you spread the word.

About the Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 program

- Why it is important: One-third of American children and adolescents are overweight or obese. If the current childhood obesity trend is not reversed, this will be the first generation to live sicker and die younger than its parents.
- National PTA’s Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 program educates and empowers families to partner with schools to advocate for and support the implementation of healthy changes around nutrition and physical activity.
- The program also provides families with tools to create an environment at home that supports the positive changes at school.

About Energy Balance:

- Energy balance is the balance of calories consumed from foods and beverages (“energy in”) with calories burned from physical activity (“energy out”).
- Maintaining energy balance over time contributes to our health in positive ways.
- For children, the focus should be on having enough energy to do all the things they want to do and to grow up strong and healthy. They can do this by practicing balance, variety and moderation in their diet and by being physically active for 60 minutes each day.

About Family-School Partnerships:

- Parents have the right to be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of schools’ practices and policies related to nutrition and physical activity.
- Parents are an important part of their children's school experience and overall well-being.
- A stronger family-school partnership can break down barriers to providing nutritious foods and opportunities for daily physical activity that exist both at home and at school.
- Family engagement in school also supports academic achievement for every child.
- Research shows that family-school-community partnerships lead to more family engagement and greater student success.
Ideas for Promoting Your Event

Use the following suggestions to kick-start your plan to promote your school’s Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 initiatives and activities. Find helpful tools and templates at: PTA.org/EnergyBalance

At School:

- Host a school-wide assembly or ask teachers for permission to give brief presentations to classes about the concept of energy balance. (Use the Energy Balance 101: Enrichment Zone! curriculum for ideas).
- Include weekly tips about energy balance, nutrition and physical activity in students’ morning announcements.
- Transform one PTA meeting into a family-centered Energy Balance event. Use the Energy Balance 101: Enrichment Zone! for ideas, and invite families to bring their children along to participate. Or, try an activity from the “Activity Basket” as an icebreaker at your next meeting.
- Ask a student to write an article about energy balance for the school newspaper.
- Post inspirational posters and fliers in visible locations, including outdoors near student pickup and drop-off locations.

At Home:

- Ask volunteers to make personal phone calls to parents, encouraging them to participate in events and educational activities. Consider establishing a PTA “phone tree.”
- Post announcements on the school and/or PTA website or create a “Healthy Lifestyles” page for the year.
- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter) to generate buzz and stay in touch with team members. For example, consider starting a PTA Facebook page for your school. Invite your community to join and use it to post energy balance tips and reminders about upcoming events. Engage with the following Together Counts social media channels for inspiration:
  - Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HealthyWeight
  - Twitter: https://twitter.com/togethercounts
  - Pinterest: http://pinterest.com/togethercounts/
  - Blog: http://blog.togethercounts.com/
- Write an article about childhood obesity and the Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 program for a PTA or school newsletter that is sent home to parents.

In the Community:

- Work with school officials to customize media releases to invite local coverage of your Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 initiatives and events. Find templates on PTA.org/EnergyBalance. Don’t forget smaller, local media outlets, such as neighborhood association blogs and newsletters.
- Send invitations to local celebrities (consider sports team mascots, for example) or public officials to attend a school-wide assembly or family-education event.
- Ask a local radio station to be a media partner by announcing Healthy Lifestyles tips and events.
Event Planning Checklist

School-wide events (such as a family health day or fitness fair) can help bring the Healthy Lifestyles: Energy Balance 101 messages to life and engage a broad and diverse audience of families in your school community. If you decide to host a large event, use the following checklist as a guide to help your program run smoothly and achieve its goals:

8–12 Weeks Before Your Event

☐ Recruit your event team and begin holding regular planning meetings or conversations via phone or email.
☐ Review program goals. Decide the key elements of your event.
☐ Gather information from families and community partners to determine the dates, times and locations that are most appealing to families.
☐ Establish a budget and determine what additional resources you will need.
☐ Reserve needed space at the school or (if necessary) secure another free or low-cost location nearby. Be sure to consider accessibility for family members with mobility challenges.
☐ Reach out to speakers, community groups and other guests, to ensure that they are available on your planned dates. Make adjustments to the plan as necessary.
☐ Share your plan with school leaders to elicit their support.

6–8 Weeks Before Your Event

☐ Begin promotion to families. Add information to the school and/or PTA webpage, newsletter and other announcements and promote via social media.
☐ Contact community members for in-kind donations, if needed (e.g., refreshments, transportation vouchers, copying services).

4–6 Weeks Before Your Event

☐ Solicit volunteers needed for event day.
☐ Begin the process of translating program materials into other languages if needed.
☐ Secure any A/V equipment needed.

2 Weeks Before Your Event

☐ Finalize event logistics, including creating a detailed day-of-event schedule.
☐ Make sure you are familiar with any safety guidelines and emergency procedures specific to your location.
☐ Make arrangements for sign-language interpreters or other accommodations for families, if needed.
☐ Have a backup plan for inclement weather, including how you will let families know, in a timely manner, if your event must be canceled or rescheduled.
1 Week Before Your Event

☐ Make sure parking is available for families.
☐ Be sure all volunteers know their roles, when to arrive and where to report.
☐ Consider assigning dedicated, trusted volunteers to critical roles, such as:
  • Greeting attendees and staffing the membership table
  • Setting up and testing any audiovisual equipment
  • Serving as the single point-of-contact for media
  • Acting as “host” to attending officials, community partners or sponsor representatives
  • Responding to vendor questions and facilitating prompt payment
☐ Make sure you have all of the materials you need, including the following:
  • Welcome and directional signs (in multiple languages, if needed to fully represent your school community)
  • Copies of handouts
  • Sign-in sheets
  • Agendas/programs
  • Name tags
  • PTA “Event Bag” full of pencils/pens/paper/tape/scissors/other miscellaneous supplies that you may need in a crunch

Event Day

☐ Arrive early—at least one hour in advance—to begin setting up.
☐ Welcome and greet any invited guests.
☐ Check lighting and temperature for families’ comfort.
☐ Make sure your membership table is in a prominent location and looks welcoming.
☐ Post welcome posters and directional signs to guide parents.
☐ Ask the school principal and/or PTA president to greet families and thank them for coming.
☐ Clearly indicate where and how parents are to sign in.
☐ Track all volunteer hours for recognition and planning purposes.
☐ If volunteers are students who need community service hours, complete and sign their required forms promptly.
Recognize Partners and Volunteers

One of the last (and arguably most important) tasks of the year is to thank those who helped make your Healthy Lifestyles program a success.

Be sure to include all of the following groups in your recognition plan:

- Family member volunteers
- Students
- School personnel
- Businesses that provided donations (send an acknowledgment letter for tax purposes)
- Other community partners

Evaluate Your Program

Evaluation is a critical part of wrapping up your program. It is important to understand what worked and what didn’t, so that you can plan for an even more successful Healthy Lifestyles initiative next year. It is important to consider your evaluation strategy early in the process because data should be collected throughout the year, not just at the end.

In the simplest terms, you will want to measure four things:

- Did you reach your desired participation numbers?
- Did you do what you intended to do?
- Did it make a difference?
- Are the changes to the environment sustainable?

To answer the first and second questions, you simply collect information about your activities. What program events and activities were conducted? How many families were reached by educational messages and/or participated in activities? You also will want to track program promotion strategies. For example, how many local media, social media or website hits did you receive?

Looking at what you did is important, but it doesn’t tell the whole story. To answer the final two questions, you need to look at program outcomes. How satisfied were participants? What did families learn? How will they apply what they learned? What policy or environmental changes occurred at school as a result of your initiatives? Can the healthy lifestyles activities be carried over into the new school year?

Some strategies to gather this information include the following:

- A parent satisfaction survey can help your planning team gather more information about how attendees felt about specific activities or events. Did they understand the activities? Do they feel the information provided was useful? Do they intend to apply the strategies they learned at home? Will they come to another PTA family event?
• **Pre- and post-event knowledge surveys** can be used to assess more accurately what family members learned from a program. These are especially important when reporting grant results or applying for grants in the future.

• **Phone surveys** have the benefit of building stronger relationships with program participants and providing the most detailed information. However, phone surveys are very time consuming. It is only feasible to talk to a small number of participants in this much depth.

Another evaluation approach is to hold a debriefing meeting with your planning team to consider how successfully your PTA implemented this year’s program. Based on what you were able to accomplish this year, how might your goals change for next year, and how might you improve your program’s effectiveness?

**Plan for Next Year**

It’s never too early to begin planning for next year’s *Healthy Lifestyles* initiative!

Within a week or two after your event, take some time to:

• Note what you have accomplished during the 2015–16 school year, and consider your school community’s areas of greatest need. Will your nutrition and physical activity priority areas change next year, or will they remain the same?

• Make sure the *Healthy Lifestyles* program will be included in your PTA’s budget planning process for the next school year.

• Make a note for next year’s chairperson to watch for information and grant applications from National PTA during the summer.

• Track the budget amount and number of volunteer hours required to complete this year’s events and activities, to help next year’s chairperson plan realistically.

• Consider creating a folder or binder with all program information (samples of all materials used, along with the number of volunteers and hours needed, budget, etc.) for next year’s chairperson.

A robust *Healthy Lifestyles* program can be an excellent starting point for becoming a National PTA School of Excellence. School of Excellence is a recognition program that supports and celebrates partnerships between PTA and schools to enrich the educational experience and overall well-being for all students.

If your school is not already participating in the School of Excellence program, the work you are doing this year for *Healthy Lifestyles* has laid important groundwork that may contribute to success during the 2016–17 school year. Consider enrolling this summer; find more information at [PTA.org/Excellence](http://PTA.org/Excellence).
School-Year Planning Calendar

The information in this guide is intended to help you build a yearlong Healthy Lifestyles calendar that addresses your school’s unique needs and priorities. The following are some suggestions to spark your creativity:

**September**

- Make sure Healthy Lifestyles activities and initiatives are included in your PTA’s program budget and on the school calendar for the year.

**October**

- Participate in Walk to School Day. [http://www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org)
- Educate children and families about the nutrient-dense foods available through your school lunch program, during National School Lunch Week and Take Your Parents to School Day. [http://www.schoolnutrition.org/NSLW2014](http://www.schoolnutrition.org/NSLW2014)

**November**

- Kick off your yearlong initiatives with a school-wide assembly to celebrate Healthy Lifestyles Month.

**December**

- Throughout the month, provide families with tips for “Energy Balance During the Holidays” on your website or through your PTA’s email announcement system or social media outlets.

**January**

- Help families beat the cold weather by offering tips or holding afterschool workshops to demonstrate fun, indoor activities for children of all ages.
- Hold a poster contest to promote the fact that “There’s ‘Snow’ Better Weather for Physical Activity!” Posters can show children engaged in vigorous wintertime activities such as skiing, snowball fights, ice skating, sledding and shoveling snow.
February

- Host a family fitness fair during Take Your Family to School Week.
- Encourage children and families to balance those extra Valentine's Day treats by pairing up with a sweetheart (or friend) for some heart-healthy aerobic activity.

March

- Invite parents to enjoy a nutrient-dense breakfast with their children at school during National School Breakfast Week. [http://www.schoolnutrition.org/nsbw](http://www.schoolnutrition.org/nsbw)

April

- Hold a healthy cooking competition for students and families. Add the winning recipe to next year’s school lunch or breakfast menu.

May

- May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month—a great time to rev up family education about getting outside and playing together. [http://www.fitness.gov/be-active](http://www.fitness.gov/be-active)
- Participate in Bike to School Day. [http://www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org)

June

- Celebrate summer produce! Invite family members to participate in a special fruit- and vegetable-tasting luncheon with their children. Share information with families about the location and timing of nearby farmer's markets.
- Promote active camps and local summer recreation opportunities to help students stay active and maintain their energy balance during the summer.