



## Food for Thought

By Carey Dabney, Texas PTA Healthy Lifestyles

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A child's health impacts their ability to learn. Poor health and the ability to learn impact a school's bottom line.

Since 1946, when National PTA played a major role in enacting the National School Lunch Act, the issue of children's nutrition and wellness has remained a priority. When President Harry Truman signed the bill, he said that "no nation is any healthier than its children...The well nourished school child is a better student...He is healthier and more alert. He is developing food habits which will benefit him for the rest of his life. In short, he is a better asset for his country in everyway."

Creating healthier homes and schools where children are given healthy foods and have an opportunity to be physically active in a safe environment is crucial to the successful physical, emotional, and social development of our children and to the success of our schools.

In 2004 the Texas Department of Agriculture began implementation of the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy in schools that are part of the Federal Child Nutrition Program. As of this school year, all foods of minimal nutritional value, including candy and carbonated beverages are not allowed to be provided to students in grades K-12 until the end of the last scheduled class. Competitive foods, which include all food and beverages that are not provided by school food service, have different rules for elementary, middle and high schools. Both competitive foods and school food service meals can be further regulated by individual school districts through their local district wellness policy.

School health legislation and policies are created to improve the health of all Texas children. As children go back to school this year make sure you are aware of what is supposed to be happening on your child's campus and that you are part of helping your school and district create healthy school environments. Ask to see your school district's wellness policy. Be aware that even though every parent may not agree with every part of their district's wellness policy it is important for parents to support their school's policy for the benefit of each and every child in the district.

To learn more about the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy and Square Meals resources go to: [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org). To find out how PTA can help your school and families create healthier living and learning environments go to [www.txpta.org/programs/healthy-lifestyles/](http://www.txpta.org/programs/healthy-lifestyles/). To access your district wellness policy, contact your District School Health Advisory Council (SHAC).

Working together we can make a difference in the life of every Texas school child!

