

Topic: Schools Need Fitness 101

1st Place

Christina Stampfly

Giles County High School – TN

Secondary

The naive young girl walks into the seemingly welcome place. Unfortunately, she is sadly unaware of what is going on around her. Between every crack and crevice await billions of germs to become stirred out of palace by the footsteps of their victims. Snack machines full of dangerous foods wait around every corner. They glow as if to say, "Come, see what I have. These snacks are good for you." Just beside the untruthful machines, sits a gym filled with inactive kids. These kids are the victims of this dangerous place called a school.

American schools are being attacked by a monster that has grown so slowly over the years and now is in disguise. This monster blends in with the habits of eating too much and no exercise. This monster is "obesity and unhealthiness." America must defend itself against these strong monsters that are attacking the school systems. Schools need fitness!

Schools today try to prevent obesity by providing healthy food in the cafeterias. In contrast, these same schools do not limit the quantity of food that one person can receive. This should be the first step in fighting the terrible monster. Schools should not only provide healthy eating; they should enforce it! Many schools today provide healthy food in the snack machines, but, again quantity is not limited. Students today have developed the bad habit of eating when they are bored. There is no stopping line for these unfortunate victims. Schools must provide these stopping lines.

The monster of obesity is also attacking our educators. Education is the most powerful key that can be used to lock out the monsters. Unfortunately, the key is lost in many schools. Many students are not taught good habits at home, so they must be taught at the all powerful school. Many teaching plans exclude that of healthy eating and correct fitness. The speaker last night at the HOSA conference sadly stated, "There are only a few students that get only half of the exercise that is needed over a five day week." How sad! Students must be taught how to exercise very soon!

Many schools should put aside thirty minutes every day at school for an exercise period. The schools should also provide a one hour snack time during the day. This would mean that snack machines would only be on for an hour everyday. If education systems made these small changes, a lot of improvement would be seen in many students. Unfortunately the horrible monster would still be lurking in the cafeterias. To permanently overcome the cruel beast, quantity must be limited in cafeterias!

Who will be the leader in the fight against the monster of obesity? Who will be the main solution? Who will save the students from the dangerous snack machines? HOSA students can be the hero! HOSA students can be the hero! HOSA students can help other students and teachers become aware of the disastrous problem that is occurring everyday. HOSA can provide informative posters and provide ideas to the school leaders. Information is the main solution.

The healthy girl walks into a most welcome place. She is ready to learn. Most of all she is ready to live!

2nd Place
Jenny Ditter
Waukesha Academy of Health Professions – WI
Secondary

I think that schools are beginning to recognize the growing problem of obesity in America. I believe that some schools are making an effort by offering healthy foods and drinks out of vending machines, and by putting a stop to “candy style” fundraisers in schools. I think that while these changes do make a difference there is more that the schools should be doing.

First of all, good physical and nutritional fitness is a lifestyle that should be taught early on. Education on a healthy lifestyle should start in elementary school or earlier when children are beginning to make their own choices about food and physical activity. It is much easier and more successful to teach a child how to make healthy choices when they are young, than to try and change their unhealthy habits when they are in high school.

One way to promote a healthy lifestyle to young children is to make it fun! Instead of having kids run the mile twice a year, choose something that more kids will enjoy. Ask for ideas from the kids themselves and then take a vote. This way kids will be excited about baseball, kickball, or soccer. When kids have more choices, they will usually find something they like, and if young kids find a sport or game they like to play, they will be more likely to continue the healthy habit to high school and beyond.

The third thing that schools should incorporate into making school a healthy place is education. Teachers should be educating students on why it is important to make healthy choices. It is essential for young children to know and understand how these choices will affect them personally now and in the future.

Lastly, schools should make a bigger effort to get students involved in extracurricular activities. When kids are involved in things like sports, music, or clubs such as HOSA, they are busier and less likely to park in front of a T.V., video game, or computer for the night. Parents are also an important part in teaching good physical and nutritional fitness. It is very important that parents encourage their children to try new things and be involved from a young age. Kids will not usually stay in every club or sport they try, but instead will learn what they enjoy doing and stick to it. By the time students get to high school it is usually too late to join a sport, most kids have been involved for many years, and tryouts can be competitive and intimidating for a first-time player! For these reasons it is important for kids to get involved in activities at a young age and find out what they love to do.

In conclusion, I think that schools are moving in the right direction, but now is the time to really take action. It is the responsibility of the schools, parents and students themselves to work together as a team and ensure a long and healthy lifestyle.

3rd Place
Courtney Smith
Ledford High School – NC
Secondary

In modern America, technology is growing at a rapid pace. More people are using televisions, computers, and other electronic devices on a regular basis. The youth in America today are commonly referred to as the “Electronic Age,” because of their constant exposure and use of electronic equipment. However, technological advances are not the only things growing. Research studies consistently show the growing rate of obesity in America, especially in the school-aged population.

Many schools nation-wide focus attention into educating children about the up and coming computer software or the latest gadgets on the market. In many cases, physical education is now optional, and more students are encouraged to enroll in a digital communications class instead. Even elementary aged boys and girls are expected to complete homework assignments using the World Wide Web. While educating children on technology is advantageous, it should NOT be the priority. The expanding waist lines of students across America demand schools to re-focus the attention.

Nutritional and physical education should be a required part of the school day. Required health courses provide knowledge and information as the school bell dismisses students into the world of technology and fast food. For younger students, schools need to allot recess time for students to play outside, or in a gymnasium. Older students can be encouraged to exercise after school by being offered discount memberships to a local gym. Lunches at schools should contain healthy choices such as yogurt as an alternative to ice cream. Nutritional and dietary information should be included on lunch items to encourage students to make a healthy choice. Grade school plays a pivotal role in shaping the youth’s ideas of fitness, and the school system must step up to the challenge of educating the “electronic age” of physical well-being.

The children are our future, and their health should be the school’s top concern. Despite hours of electronic education, students cannot function in the digital world if they cannot function physically. With proper nutritional and physical education, the youth of America can stand at the forefront of the modern era feeling fit, strong, healthy, and full of the energy to conquer the world of technology. The students are the future, and the schools must shape the future to ensure a healthy, thriving America in years to come.

1st Place

Candace Carter

Chesapeake Center for Science and Technology – VA

Post-Secondary

Middle school and high school are already challenging with the pressure to get good grades, being the most popular, and staying healthy. Yes, staying healthy! Today there are more than sixty percent of students that are unhealthy. Promoting fitness in our schools would solve this problem by more the half by providing various items of healthy food, ensuring the education of what it takes to maintain a healthy life-style, and encouraging exercise among students.

Today, the vision of the student population in schools is unhealthy. Schools in this day and age offer fruits, juice, and vegetables within lunch and breakfast. Vending machines are now also changing from sodium-loaded, carbohydrate – containing snacks into high protein and fiber snacks. Yes, these items are healthy, but are students just buying them because they are just hungry between lunch and classes and have no other option, or because they actually want the food choice they select? A solution would be that during lunch, schools should offer a salad-sub-wrap line. If foods were more tempting, but in healthier varieties, more students would buy them, instead of being forced to buy them. Vendors could sell diet sodas and flavored water. Trail mix and even M and M's with peanuts should be acceptable. Fitness starts with healthier food choices.

Physical education is offered during the freshman and sophomore years. Schools are now offering this course throughout junior and senior years as well. However, this class only promotes the physical part of fitness, and not the “how to” part. There is a class called Nutrition and Wellness. This could not only teach what is healthy, but students make healthy foods also. Basically, if students knew what healthy was – not just salads, but whole wheat-breaded pizza then fitness would increase. If students took Nutrition and Wellness in the freshman and sophomore years of high schools, then understanding how to eat healthy can be maintained during their junior and senior years.

Lastly, schools have track and weight lifting. During lunch or before school, students should be encouraged to walk the track for five to ten minutes. Also, after receiving and eating their lunch, they could walk the lunch room; safety should be ensured by hall monitors. Furthermore, weight lifting classes should be offered to general public, and just the athletes. This way, more students could be fit and healthier in no time.

Possibly, students are too stressed to think of fitness or just forget about. Because students are the future, it should be the school's job to promote fitness by providing high-protein and fiber foods in vending machines, at lunch, and at breakfast; providing a variety of foods, presenting the knowledge of fitness to all students, and encouraging (not deterring) fitness and exercise to students for the first to twelfth. The principle of fitness should and will be at the finger tips of every student who derives health.

2nd Place
Stephanie Blakenship
Meridian Community College – MS
Post-Secondary

When I was in high school, it was not a healthy place. We had coke machines on every corner and candy bars at the school store. At lunch we had at least two items that were fried everyday. We also had physical education every day and after school practice so we got our physical activity for sure.

Now when I walk down the halls of that same school, there are no coke machines or school stores. Even the lunch menu has changed! While those changes were taking place they were also changing the student's class loads. More classes with less physical activity! What is the point of trying to change the student's way of eating, if the school is just going to decrease the amount of physical activity the students receive?

I honestly believe that some teachers believe that as long as a student eats right they are considered healthy. We know that it is not true but at the same we have to question ourselves what can we do to help? I think it's great the school took the time and consideration to try to change the way we live but we need to look at each child individually and observe from all angles. We need to figure out how the child eats at home and how much physical activity they get while they are at home. Also, we need to inquire about home-life. Are they living in a two-parent home or one parent home? The student may consider these questions as nosey but they can make a difference. Single mothers may work long hours and come home to over-priced healthy groceries or a cheaper, quicker, less healthy food. With being a single mother, the decision is easy.

The school needs to educate the students as well as the parents. The teachers could give a survey to each child in homeroom to find out as much as possible about each child. Show videos about unhealthy lifestyles and ways to avoid them. Maybe we find cheaper but healthier foods for the students while at home. Also, put physical activity back in school! We can eat healthy but if we don't exercise what good is it doing? We should make every student take P.E. not just the athletes. It's an hour a day five days a week. Not too bad. It doesn't even have to be a strenuous activity it could be as simple as walking. Also, there should be an after school program whose parents work late. We could fee them healthy snacks and just do some kind of physical activity. One person can make a difference. One person can change a life or save one. Will it be you?

3rd Place
Jodi Balderamma
North Georgia Technical College – GA
Post-Secondary

First day back to school, look around at all of your friends. What have they been doing over summer vacation? Swimming, biking, climbing, dancing, touring, hanging, or what? That summer fun comes to a halt for the next nine months. Why? Because of school! Is school a healthy place for children?

All day, beginning at 8:00a.m., students are sat down to begin learning and retaining. While metabolism slows so do activities. The school bell rings and English class begins a long with breakfast. Usually an on the road breakfast takes place for most children. Schools offer breakfast, but students have to scarf down a bowl of cereal or a Nutrigrain Bar. What do school officials say about this? What is being done to promote better nutrition, more activity, while maintaining a strict budget?

Most grammar school children have the opportunity to exercise and play for thirty minutes to an hour daily. By the time the children are ready to do any of the activity and class begins fifteen minutes has gone by. Older children have a physical education class that usually lasts one hour or so. But should probably have more to do with nerve stimulation. Stimulation of the brain is accomplished through activity. If students were allowed 10-15 minute breaks between class to walk, then there could be a possible improvement of grades and metabolism.

School lunches! Most schools are on a budget and buy in bulk quantities! Those that buy children's lunches are usually not the ones eating them. Pizza, hamburgers, fried chicken, sandwiches, french fries, potato tots, and onion rings. These food items are many that are presented in a week to students. Foods that are full of cholesterol, little fiber, and high in saturated fats! Where is the Vitamin B,C,A,D needed for growth, immunity and strength? Some children are on low incomes and may buy foods from vending machines such as crackers, cookies, M&M's, or honeybuns! Others may not even eat lunch at all! There go the nutrition, stimulation, and weight topics.

What can our schools do? Remove vending machines! Budget better lunches. Ask their students what they prefer and discuss menu's with parents as well. Implement learning with physical activity. Make children and teenagers aware! Educate! Let the students create posters, make a skit/play. Promote better nutrition.

Are these solutions realistic? Yes! The vending machines can be removed. For those children with no money, discuss a plan for that child to eat. There are government programs for reduced lunches or free ones. Take ten minutes of each class to stretch or walk. Educate and promote nutrition. Have the lunch room provide healthy snacks and better lunches (salads, fruits, vegetables). Not only educate on types of foods, but the preparation of those foods. In Physical Ed have planned activities that require the student to be active. Do monthly weights to decrease obesity and promote exercising. After all these early habits set the foundation for health for the rest of our student's life's!