

## **Health and Wellness Round Table Recap:**

The following is the list of topics called out during our “brainstorming” portion of the Health and Wellness Round Table discussion.

### Nutrition issues:

- unhealthy rewards, class celebrations and fundraising
- unhealthy competitive foods/vending machines
- marketing unhealthy foods to children
- unhealthy ASP snacks
- childhood obesity
- illness prevention through better nutrition
- nutrition education - teaching folks how to read labels
- supporting quick, healthy meals
- healthier school lunches
- out of control portion sizes for food, in general
- student access to H2O for lunch

### Physical activity issues:

- recess restriction as punishment

### Environmental issues (crossover issues with wellness):

- green cleaning
- acknowledging poor air quality and students participating in outdoor activities
- reducing chemical toxins in foods (pesticides etc.)
- encouraging school garden programs
- establishing outdoor classrooms
- recognition for schools with these programs

### Emotional/Mental Health issues:

- self-esteem/body image

### Child Safety issues (crossover issues with wellness):

- teen pregnancy
- drug abuse
- safe driving
- parent-hosted drinking parties
- heavy backpacks
- tattoos, piercings

### Clinical health issues:

- funding for school nurses
- mandatory immunizations

While it would have been impossible within the time frame of this one round table event to have adequately discussed each and every one of these wellness topics, the previous list is a good indicator of the issues which our attendees felt are most pressing at this time.

**Attendees all agreed** that in order to address these issues and to overcome the problems our communities are currently facing with regards to wellness, that **education** must take place before any action in a positive direction can occur.

An observation, noted by Kim Arasin and Natalie Rogers:

There was much **discussion/disagreement** amongst attendees in regards to **who should be the target audience of this wellness education effort.**

Several people felt that reaching children through integrated curriculum is the best method to deliver wellness messages, while others felt that targeting students is not effective.

Some people felt that unless Principals and School Districts are proponents of their own Wellness Policies, and begin to hold schools accountable for adhering to those policies, that there is little hope for change or improvement.

Another group of attendees felt that Teachers (having a considerable amount of influence on their students) are not being educated enough about their role in student wellness and that classroom activities often have significant impact (positive and negative) on wellness in the school environment.

Some attendees contended that it is the parents who need the targeted wellness education in order for positive changes to occur.

Analysis of observation:

**Q: So who is it, exactly, that needs targeted wellness education?** Is it our **Students?** Is it our **Teachers?** Is it our **Administrators and School Districts?** Is it our **Parents?**

**A:** The answer to this question is, without a doubt, **ALL OF THE ABOVE.** Passing the buck gets us nowhere.

A call to action:

We are **ALL** integral parts in improving the wellness environment for every Georgian. We **ALL** have a crucial role to play in effecting the positive changes that must happen in order to keep our citizens healthy and productive. We are **ALL** responsible for taking positive actions to reduce the number of people who must rely on an overburdened healthcare system.

What is YOUR role?

Some of us are parents and must do our part by educating the children/families we raise and by leading healthy lifestyles, ourselves.

Some of us are School District Department Heads, Administrators and Staff, and we must do our part to educate ourselves as to the importance of Wellness Policy compliance in our schools, especially as it translates to test scores, student achievement and behavior.

Some of us are Teachers, whose students spend more of their waking hours in school than at their own homes, and we must do our part to model behaviors that do not send mixed messages about the importance of wellness.

Some of us are community Leaders and must do our part, not only to educate ourselves about the importance of wellness, but also to develop systems that support and encourage the pursuit of wellness in the corporate world, private sector and faith communities.

In short, no person is excused from his/her role. If we are all committed to accepting and performing our roles with unwavering dedication, we will all succeed.

Essentially, we should ALL “go back to school” (pun intended!) on these wellness issues, because we live in an ever-changing world and the problems facing our young people today are vastly different than the ones we, ourselves, faced as youngsters.

Modern times call for new and innovative measures to promote wellness and to address the health crises our children are potentially subject to.

**-Back to Round Table Recap:**

Before the Health and Wellness Round Table discussion came to a close, many attendees offered help in expanding the scope of GaPTA’s Health and Wellness Committee by lending their time, expertise and contact networks. Through the development of these networks, the Health and Wellness Committee’s knowledge and resource base will increase exponentially and enable GaPTA to better serve all Georgians in achieving wellness.

Kim Arasin and Natalie Rogers would like to thank all who participated in the Health and Wellness Round Table Discussion. We encourage you all to continue to communicate with us and with each other so that, together, we can succeed in our goals for local community, state, national and world-wide wellness.