

# Fighting child obesity starts in schools

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Obesity is among the most important public health challenges in the United States — resulting in increasing prevalence of associated health problems, including diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia and sleep apnea.

Children's eating habits are crucial in the development of both childhood and adult obesity. Thus, addressing this issue necessitates a focus on childhood obesity, particularly in relation to the food provided in our schools. It is important to ensure that the food served in our schools contributes positively to the physical well-being of our students.

Ideally, this would involve proving a balanced diet with a focus on fresh, locally sourced produce and minimizing the presence of highly processed, sugary and fatty foods.

Our schools can also serve a primary role in shaping children's eating habits and dietary choices. Childhood habits often persist into adulthood, influencing long-term behavior. By fostering an environment that encourages nutritious choices, we can empower our youth to make better decisions about their diet, setting the stage for a healthier adulthood.

With the commitment of Mayor Donna Deegan to improve our community's health, this is an excellent opportunity for our community to work with Duval County Public Schools to optimize the nutritional value of school meals. It could be considered a down payment on the health of children and the adults they will become.

Prioritizing the health and well-being of our children is not just an investment in their immediate future, but a commitment to building a healthier community for generations to come.

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