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Atlanta Schools' "Wellness" Workshops Project

By Patricia Hawke

Atlanta Schools' "Wellness" Workshops Promote Nutrition and Physical Education

When Atlanta Schools opened at the end of August, a new project was initiated. The "Wellness" Workshop Project kicked off the school year with a workshop that included Olympic gold medalist Gail Devers, author Yvonne Butler, 300 students from the Atlanta School District, faculty members, and community leaders. This was the first ever Atlanta Schools' "wellness" workshop. Atlanta Schools' Margaret Fain Elementary School's Wings of Eagles dance troupe performed to illustrate how much physical energy is used in dance.

The first "Wellness" Workshop was co-chaired by Dr. Marilyn Hughes, the director of nutrition administration for Atlanta Schools, and Billette Owens-Ashford, Atlanta Schools' director of physical education and athletics. The goal of the "Wellness" Workshop Project is improve the health of the students by identifying health-related problems. It has been proven that health related issues can often have a direct affect on a student's academic achievement.

The inaugural "Wellness" Workshop for the Atlanta Schools had a variety of speakers and displays that provided resources on nutritional based activities and physical education activities. The keynote speaker was Dr. Yvonne Butler. Dr. Butler is a noted author whose book, "Healthy Kids, Smart Kids," discusses the impact of diet and exercise on learning and academic performance. Other speakers included Olympic track-and-field gold medalist Gail Severs who spoke about importance of exercise to health and how to stay physically fit.

Atlanta Schools' "Wellness" Workshop Project is part of a broad program that aims to provide both fitness and nutrition strategies for students and staff in all Atlanta Schools. Innovative strategies that will be used include yoga classes for teachers and students, vegetarian cafeteria lines, and walking trails. The overall plan was developed by the Atlanta Schools' Board of Education. The Board of Education will offer guidelines on how to implement the program and how the schools will be evaluated.

A major part of the plan is establishing wellness councils. These councils will be comprised of teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community and business partners. The council will

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assist Atlanta Schools in integrating nutrition and physical education into the current curriculum. The wellness council will also have a presence at events throughout the Atlanta Schools.

Recently, Atlanta Schools' wellness plan received a boost from the involvement of an Atlanta Schools' parent. Linton Hopkins has two children attending E. Rivers Elementary School. Hopkins is concerned about the nutritional value of cafeteria offerings at the E. Rivers Elementary School but unlike other parents, Hopkins is the executive chef of Atlanta's Restaurant Eugene and winner of this year's Atlanta "Iron Chef" competition. Hopkins has joined the Local School Wellness Council to help evaluate the school's cafeteria. Hopkins isn't the only trained chef to join the E. Rivers Elementary School's wellness council. Elisa Gambino, owner of pasta emporium Via Elisa, has along with eleven other parents joined the wellness council. Parental involvement is an important element to the success of the wellness councils. Currently, approximately 90 percent of Atlanta Schools' elementary and 65 percent of high schools have parents actively involved with the wellness council of their school.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more information on Atlanta schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk–12.com/Georgia/Atlanta/index.html>

Atlanta Schools' Public Engagement Partnerships

By Stacy Andell

Atlanta Schools' Office of Public Engagement

The Atlanta Schools' Office of Public Engagement is responsible for creating and fostering partnerships between Atlanta Schools, community volunteers, teachers, parents, national and local corporations, non–profit groups, and civic organizations in order to advance student achievement. The Office of Public Engagement was created as part of the ongoing educational reform that is occurring throughout the Atlanta Schools. The Office's aim is to connect the schools with any resource that could offer a positive influence on the success of the students in the Atlanta Schools. Many of these relationships are of a creative and ground–breaking nature. Several of the most successful partnership programs involve some of the largest corporations in the nation.

Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program

The Atlanta Schools has for many years been part of the Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" program. The Atlanta Schools partnership with Hewlett Packard is part of a larger program that has representatives from Hewlett Packard visiting over 600 schools in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. The main goal of the Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program is to encourage students, their parents and teachers to create and communicate with technology. The Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program is an interactive exploratory program that allows students to gain practical experience using digital photography and computers.

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Atlanta Schools' Price Middle School was one of the locations where students were exposed to the latest innovations in technology. The Price Middle School's students were able to see how this technology could be applied to their own assignments and projects. The aim at Price Middle School was to help the students by making their work more efficient. The students, principal and teachers at Price Middle School all profited from Atlanta Schools' participation in the Hewlett Packard's "Bringing it Home" Program.

Atlanta Schools' Long Term Partnership with General Electric

Atlanta Schools has been in a partnership with General Electric Energy since 1993 and will continue this partnership in the future. The partnership with General Electric involves several different ongoing projects and was originally started by former Atlanta Schools' graduates who now are employed by General Electric. The General Electric Partnership was started as a tutoring and mentoring program where General Electric employees would volunteer in schools in the area but it has grown to include Saturday SAT preparation, the Family Technology Resource Center, and scholarship programs. There are now more than 1,500 General Electric employees involved in the General Electric Partnership in some way. The General Electric Partnership has proved to be very influential in student SAT performance.

In 2002, General Electric donated \$1 million to Atlanta Schools' Southside High School as part of General Electric's national College Bound Grant Program. This donation to Southside High School was the first grant from the College Bound Grant Program to be given to a school in the Atlanta Schools. The grant is being used by Southside High School's "Strategic Design for Student Success" project.

The school wide project plans to double, by 2007, the percentage of Southside High School's graduating seniors who go on to four-year or two-year colleges or universities, or who enroll in technical institutions.

Stacy Andell is a staff writer for Schools K-12, providing free, in-depth reports on all U.S. public and private K-12 schools. For more information on Atlanta schools visit

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