

Success Stories

INNOVATIVE AND INSPIRING SOLUTIONS THAT IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN SCHOOLS AROUND THE COUNTRY

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Healthier Options for Birthday Celebrations

ROSA PARKS-EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

“As Director of Wellness I tried many times over the past few years to convince teachers to ‘change their ways’ when it came to birthday celebrations,” said Roberta Sipe. “It was a daily occurrence for children to bring [birthday] treats in. Often a class would have several birthdays in a day or a week and this all added up to too many calories!”

When second grade teacher Amy Strain finally tired of seeing all the high fat and sugary treats she came up with a new idea for her class. She asked her students to brainstorm ideas for a birthday celebration “menu.” When she shared her idea Sipe asked if she would pilot the program in her classroom, which she did with great success during the 2008-2009 school year.

“The alternative birthday celebrations have brought a greater sense of community to our classroom. The children wait with anticipation to find out what each person has chosen for his or her special celebration and cheer heartily when the announcement has been made. Everyone is included in these special celebrations making it a wonderful way for the children to connect with one another,” said Strain.

Last August, Strain gave a presentation to the rest of the staff and explained how easy it was to implement. She shared that her students realized they did not need to eat sweets at school and they preferred having the opportunity to select a special activity. The entire school has now adopted the birthday “menu” idea and Sipe said, “I have not seen a cupcake or cookie since!”

Teacher Lindsey Smith said, “The ‘Birthday Menu’ has been a huge success in kindergarten. It’s so neat to see the student’s excitement as they choose their special celebration. It really gives each individual child a time to shine and show their personality and creativeness to the rest of their peers.”

The “birthday menu” created at Rosa Parks-Edison Elementary school has been added to the Healthy Schools Program Resource Database.



Kindergarten student Priscilla Huynh celebrates her birthday with an extra painting session with friends.

Some examples from the Kindergarten Birthday Menu from Rosa Parks-Edison Elementary School:

- * Dance Party: The birthday boy or girl may bring a favorite CD from home to play while the class dances.
- * Extra recess: The class will enjoy 15 minutes of extra outside recess.
- * Guest Read Aloud: The birthday boy or girl may choose a special guest and/or a special book to be read aloud to the class.
- * Painting Time: The birthday girl or boy may choose for the class to have a special painting time.
- * Lunch with the teacher: The birthday boy or girl may spend lunchtime eating in the classroom with his/her teacher.
- * Overnight Stuffed Animal: The birthday girl or boy may choose a stuffed animal from the classroom to take home and enjoy overnight!
- * Special craft: The birthday boy or girl may lead the class in a craft project of their choosing, such as a foam bookmark or suncatcher.
- * Extra show-and-tell time: Every student can bring in a special object from home to share with the class.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 ROSA PARKS-EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | INDIANA
- 2 RUSSELL INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL | KENTUCKY
- 3 SANDY CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL | NEBRASKA
- 4 GAINESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL | FLORIDA
- 4 HAGEN ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | FLORIDA
- 5 GIBSON COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT | TENNESSEE
- 6 WEST BABYLON SCHOOL DISTRICT | NEW YORK
- 6 LONG MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | NORTH CAROLINA
- 6 PS 54 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | NEW YORK
- 7 BOONE AND LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS | MISSOURI
- 7 WILSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | OKLAHOMA
- 8 SOUTH HEARTLAND HEALTH DEPARTMENT | NEBRASKA
- 8 ROYAL PALM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | FLORIDA
- 9 DARE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT | NORTH CAROLINA
- 10 NORRIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | NEBRASKA
- 10 SUNRISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | FLORIDA
- 10 BELLVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL | FLORIDA
- 11 OREGON CITY HIGH SCHOOL | OREGON

SUCCESS STORY TWO

Breakfast Success in Rural Communities- A Crucial Component for Healthy Schools

RUSSELL INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL | RUSSELL, KENTUCKY

“We were looking for a way to increase breakfast participation and cut down on school tardiness,” said Allan Thompson, principal of Russell Independent School. “We accomplished that and so much more! I heard about how this was done at another high school but their scheduling was much different, so Linda Kiser (cafeteria manager) and I put together a plan that we now know is a ‘win-win’ for Russell Independent. What has been so nice is that we have been able to utilize existing staff and equipment so our costs have not gone up, but the end result is that more students are getting a healthy breakfast.”

The solution that worked for this school was to add a breakfast period after the first period class. All 550 students are required to attend and Kiser makes sure that a balanced breakfast is served in a quick and efficient manner. Since adjusting the school schedule to add in the breakfast period, breakfast participation (those that actually take the food) has increased from 14% to 43%.



The program has had other positive results as well. Student Trenton Fyffe said he has a little extra time to study for his next class and he is better prepared for the day after eating breakfast. Thompson also said in-house fighting has decreased and attentiveness in class has increased. Teachers take turns supervising so four days a week they have an extra break and can have departmental meetings during this time, which cuts down on after school meetings for them. Ruthie Lynd, health and physical education teacher, is thrilled to see so many students eating breakfast and utilizes this time to visit students she might not normally see during the school day.

Story continued on Page 3

Breakfast Success in Rural Communities, Continued from Page 2

Although Kiser said she could not be happier with their breakfast program this year, she still has big plans for the future. “I would like to put in a cold bar kiosk in the middle of the student union, which would open up one more serving line and I would like to add some new equipment. Currently, there are two serving lines in the cafeteria and one in the student union, where kids can eat and socialize in the gymnasium.” Thompson added that he would like to see some additional bench seating. There are also plans to renovate the cafeteria.

SANDY CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL | FAIRFIELD, NEBRASKA

When the wellness council at Sandy Creek discovered that nearly 25% of students were not eating breakfast before coming to school, they decided that they needed to take action, according to Brenda Searle, school nurse. The council, which includes administration, teachers, food service staff, the nurse, parents, students and community members, agreed that eating breakfast is a vital component of student wellness and that offering a healthy breakfast was something that they could do for their students.

Sandy Creek School is literally in the middle of a cornfield and all students ride the bus, with some getting on very early in the morning and riding for up to 45 minutes. There is not much time between when the buses arrive and the first period starts. The students used to sit in the hallway for 10-20 minutes waiting for class to start. Searle and Linda Skalka, food service director, felt that they could better use that time and ensure that students start the day with a healthy meal.

They started the process during the fall of 2009 by researching other school breakfast programs and visiting schools in the area that were serving breakfast. They also surveyed students and parents to determine needs and preferences. They found that their Healthy Schools Program’s Nebraska Relationship Manager, National School Nutrition Manager and the School Breakfast Toolkit were all helpful tools in their research and development phase. In December 2009, they presented their proposal to the school board. The school board supported the proposal and the K-12 school began serving breakfast on January 4, 2010. They are currently serving breakfast to an average of 35% of the student population and have been pleasantly surprised with this number.



One of the challenges they faced was how to feed 100 students within a 20-minute period in one cafeteria. They decided to set up extra tables on the stage for the elementary students and the junior and senior high students sit below. They thought that storage space might be an issue but found that they were able to

add some extra shelving in the kitchen to store their dry breakfast products. The administration supported the program by adding a few additional staff hours for one employee to arrive a little earlier and stay a bit later each day and to monitor the students they moved the paraprofessionals, who used to watch the kids in the hall, into the cafeteria.

Tips from School Nurse Brenda Searle on Starting a School Breakfast Program

- **Get buy-in to the idea. Provide the research on why breakfast is important and share that information with parents, staff, school board members and administration.**
- **Take a team approach to making it happen. While the food service staff here have been rock stars, other school wellness council members pitched in by helping with research, connecting to resources and gaining support from administration and the school board.**
- **Keep a “we can” attitude by thinking outside the box when obstacles present themselves.**

SUCCESS STORY THREE

Healthy Changes Keep Revenues Stable

GAINESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL | GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

Although every school in the Alachua County Public School District has an a la carte line to sell food items to generate revenue, Gainesville High school only sells items that meet the Alliance's Competitive Foods and Beverages Guidelines. Since the school opened the Purple Palace Café and started selling healthier options, revenue has increased.

What is really unique about the Purple Palace Café is that it is managed by two student clubs on campus, Consumer Sciences and the Academy of Health Professions. Director of Academy of Health Professions Janine Plavac explains, "With the current state of the economy where money for education has been cut left and right, the Purple Palace Café has been a phenomenal way for us to generate income for our clubs to allow our students to participate in outside educational opportunities. The profit has enabled the students to travel to competitions, organize field trips to museums and attend lectures by nationally recognized speakers. The revenue has also allowed the Consumer Science program to continue their food labs in the classroom because they now have enough money to purchase the necessary ingredients that the school could no longer afford to buy."

The cafeteria staff is responsible for preparing the food and the rest of the responsibilities are given to the student club members. Club members volunteer to work at the café during their lunch periods. They are responsible for keeping track of inventory, scheduling volunteers, setting up and clean up. Students are involved in product selection and provide feedback on the offerings. The Purple Palace Café is in an outdoor courtyard that has become a fun place for students to socialize.

The food service department purchases the food for the café and is reimbursed. The Purple Palace generates their profit by simply adding a quarter to the actual cost. Last year the café made over \$20,000 for food services and \$8,000 for the two campus clubs. Students have responded very positively to the healthy items and they sell out daily. When asked what key factors contributed to revenue success, Plavac emphasized the importance of offering a variety of healthy foods to choose from and making healthier alterations to popular food items.



She adds, "Kids don't know the difference between lower calorie and lower fat items compared to full calorie and fat items. They eat what is given to them as long as it tastes good."

Some items sold at the cafe include 100% fruit slushees, Jamaican beef patties, chicken teriyaki rice bowls, fresh fruits and salads. Plavac shares, "The Purple Palace Café is a win-win situation; we make money and the students are eating healthier!"

HAGEN ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

Hagen Road Elementary School, like so many schools, relies on fundraising efforts to generate revenue for school activities and supplies. Principal Richard Hughes wants to promote overall school wellness and believes that making simple health conscious changes such as fundraising practices can help build a healthier school environment. The school no longer participates in any fundraisers that involve candy or dessert items.

Continued on Page 5

SUCCESS STORY FOUR

Coordinated School Health and the Healthy Schools Program are Synergistic

GIBSON COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT | DYER, TENNESSEE

Although Gibson County Schools already had Healthy School Teams (school wellness councils) up and running in their schools when they joined the Healthy Schools Program, they “have enthusiastically embraced the Healthy Schools Program which has given me the chance to bring some new ideas and resources to the schools,” said Kellie Carroll, Coordinated School Health Director for Gibson County Schools. “The National Recognition Program awards each school individually and that is a great incentive for them to keep moving forward.”

In 1999 the state of Tennessee passed a bill establishing Coordinated School Health as the entity that would manage all school wellness initiatives in the public schools. By 2001, eight school districts had been chosen to pilot the concept and Gibson County was one of those districts. The goal was to have a Healthy School Team for each school comprised of staff, parents, students and community members. The Team would use the Centers for Disease Control’s School Health Index to assess the school, and then develop goals based on their assessment results. Gibson County’s Healthy School Teams have now been functioning for approximately eight years.

Carroll reports that it is not easy to maintain nine separate Healthy Schools Team’s in the district. There are always new team members and new principals that need to learn about the Coordinated School Health mission and process. It can be difficult to maintain momentum and to keep everyone focused on moving forward when people are pulled in so many directions. She said she has learned to overcome these challenges by offering an annual CSH overview during an in-service day. She provides water and snacks at every meeting and tries to coordinate with other school teams to make scheduling easier.

The Gibson County Healthy Schools Teams have worked to create staff wellness rooms in four schools, and have taken the lead in facilitating and scheduling programs such as Go Girl Go!, Better Me, and the More Matters Fruits and Veggies program in addition to maintaining compliance with the state scope of services. Gibson County Special School

Gibson County Special School District is one of six districts in the country that has been selected by an expert panel at the CDC as an “Outstanding Coordinated School Health Program.” Their “No Child Left on their Behind” walking program was also chosen by the Governor’s Office for recognition.

Advice from Kellie Carroll on starting an effective school wellness council:

- * Find a champion in the school that is passionate about health and wellness
- * Teams function better if they meet regularly and each member has a clearly defined role
- * Have clear goals and clear plans to achieve the goals
- * Keep students involved at every step

Healthy Changes Keep Revenue Stable, Continued from Page 4

During the holidays, students previously sold chocolate and cookie dough but now are involved with the Reindeer Gift Shop program that sells items such as gift-wrapping, ornaments, presents, and other holiday items. The children are just as enthusiastic about selling these items and the change has not triggered any significant shifts in revenue. Hagen Elementary is still able to reach their revenue goals, instead now in a healthier way.

Another main focus area for the school has been implementing healthier school lunch meals in the cafeteria. The process of implementing healthier lunch items on the menu has been gradual and revenue has remained in a neutral state, with student participation increasing. All breads have been changed to whole grains, with entrees served with whole-wheat rolls, hamburgers with whole grain buns, and sandwiches served on whole grain bread. A variety of vegetables are supplied by local farmers which allow the cafeteria to serve fresh corn on the cob, green beans, sliced carrots, and fresh salads that are made daily. White rice and refried beans have been replaced by brown rice and black beans. All chips and cookies have been removed from the menu.

Hughes commented on the reaction of students to the healthy changes, “We are amazed at how many more students are buying school lunches and that they are really eating most of their lunch.”

SUCCESS STORY FIVE

Healthy Schools Program Embedded in School Culture

WEST BABYLON SCHOOL DISTRICT | WEST BABYLON, NEW YORK

After a long history of operating a school foodservice program that generated revenue for the school district, the superintendent of West Babylon was alarmed when he saw that the meal program was beginning to lose money. The revenue loss was attributed to a convergence of events that included, but was not limited to, rising staff and facility costs and the elimination of high-revenue producing competitive food items sold on the cafeteria line, vending machines and the school stores.

At a district-wide meeting, the superintendent raised his concerns and suggested that perhaps the schools might have to consider re-introducing the competitive foods that generated higher revenue or risk losing parts of their budget elsewhere. All seven school principals unanimously and almost instantaneously agreed they would rather give up a fair chunk of their building budget to supplement the foodservice losses rather than go back to their previously unhealthy practices.

The asst. superintendent and Healthy Schools Program Champion Dom Palma credits the move by the principals to the Healthy Schools Programs' school based assistance and approach and the strength and success of the school wellness councils and their members, which include very active parents and students. The principals felt that reintroducing the junk food was not an option because of the comprehensive changes made across the district and the positive feedback from parents, staff and community members.

West Babylon schools have been participating in the Healthy Schools Program for almost four years. They have worked tirelessly to garner support and have overcome numerous obstacles, such as the "cupcake crisis"- parents first revolted when cupcakes for birthdays were eliminated. They have learned the importance of getting community and parent investment sooner rather than later.

Continued on Page 9

SUCCESS STORY SIX

Schools Turning More to Alternative Fundraisers

LONG MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | YOUNGSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

To raise some funds for the community walking trail that they are hoping to build, the Long Mill Elementary School wellness council decided that they needed to think beyond the usual school fundraiser options. They decided to host an event called, "An Evening FITT for Stars," to raise awareness of their activities in addition to raising money. The FITT acronym stands for "Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type" and was a message they wanted to share with students to remind them to stay physically active.

The school community came together in November to support the wellness council and to enjoy the show. Students and staff participated by singing, playing instruments, dancing, stepping and even stacking cups! The school is pleased to report that tickets for the event sold out and they were able to raise over \$800 with the \$2 entry fee.

PS 54 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

For Guy Garrison, physical education teacher at PS 54, what was so appealing about the Mighty Milers program was that it offered the school a way to raise money to fund their extracurricular programs while getting his students to move more. Students are encouraged to ask family, friends, neighbors and local businesses to sponsor them as they walk a 26.2-mile marathon, which they do over the course of a month.

The program is sponsored by the NYC Road Runner's Club. Mighty Milers rewards the students with gift cards, t-shirts, pencils, membership cards and medals. Garrison said that in addition to raising \$1543 in four weeks, the students were proud that they walked so many miles and that they were helping to support the school's basketball and track programs.

SUCCESS STORY SEVEN

Student Ideas Lead to Sustainable Changes

BOONE AND LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS | TROY, MISSOURI

Students at Boone and Lincoln Elementary schools (the two schools are adjoining) have seen many new wellness initiatives over the past four years, and many of them have been initiated by their peers! Each school has its own student wellness council but the two groups meet together so they can share ideas and learn from each other. Assistant Principal Amy Porter shared, “We are thrilled with what our kids have accomplished!”

The student wellness councils are made up of one child from each classroom in grades 3-5. The students are nominated by their teachers and each year ushers in a new group of students. The food service director, kitchen lead, two parents, school counselor, the physical education teacher and assistant principal also sit on the student council, which meets once per month.

Porter explains that the students host class meetings to talk to their classmates about wellness and then the council members report back to the larger group about the ideas that were generated. They kicked off the school year by talking about food. The students shared their thoughts and ideas about portions, foods they like and dislike and what changes they would like to see on the school menu, and the food service staff listened.



This year, students have seen chicken noodle soup, grilled cheese sandwiches with tomato soup and even breakfast for lunch, based on student suggestions. Students also asked for more oranges, grapes, sub sandwiches and eggs without cheese at breakfast. The students reported that they wanted to have more choices, like the ability to have water with lunch instead of only milk. They also wanted to be able to choose from various side items. Porter said that these changes have helped the students feel more empowered.

Last year the students came up with two ideas to help their peers move more: a walking club and a fitness calendar. The students brainstormed ideas for simple activities and exercises that kids could do at home and with their families. They created a calendar with one activity per day. Students are encouraged to do the activities and have their parents initial it and then they can be entered into a drawing for prizes such as pedometers, jump ropes and skip-its.

Students used to file into the gymnasium when they arrived at school and sit with their class, waiting for school to start. The students thought that this would be a good time to get moving so they suggested a walking program where classes keep track of their miles and the physical education teacher transfers it to a chart that represents the Katy Trail, a 225-mile bike train that spans the state of Missouri.

SUCCESS STORY EIGHT

Teacher Takes on Health Education

WILSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | LAWTON, OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma does not mandate health education, so physical education teacher Lisa Moore led the charge to offer a comprehensive health education program at Wilson Elementary School. National Health Education Manager Kathy Wilbur gave her some advice on her scope and sequence. Wilbur said, “There were times that she told me she was ready to give up but, to her credit, she stuck with it, even spending a lot of her free time working on the project.”

With no curriculum provided by the state or district, Moore had a great deal of freedom in designing the program. She has used online curricula, community partners and materials from the Healthy Schools Program to develop the curriculum. Moore has worked tirelessly to prepare lessons for the students. She has purchased games and programs to help bring health education to life.

Now she teaches health to all students K-5 every Friday. She works with the classroom teachers to help them find ways to complement her lessons throughout the week. In music class students are singing songs about nutrition and in physical education they play games that involve the food pyramid. Thanks to Wilson Elementary School's understanding and embracing of the crucial need for health education they are now eligible for the Bronze National Recognition Award.

SUCCESS STORY NINE

State Supports School Wellness Councils

SOUTH HEARTLAND HEALTH DEPARTMENT | HASTINGS, NEBRASKA

Schools across south central Nebraska are getting some assistance in forming school wellness councils from the state health department. The local South Heartland Health Department applied for a grant from the state to help schools in the area get their wellness councils up and running and they have relied on materials from the Healthy Schools Program to make this happen.

Now in the second year of the grant, coordinator Sandi Stevens is busy attending wellness council meetings at the seven participating schools, and helping them with their Inventories and action plans. "Next year we will really focus on sustainability and how to make this spread to all the schools in the district," said Stevens.

Stevens said that they really want schools to create action plans that are evidence-based and data driven. Before starting on the Healthy Schools Inventory, the councils collected BMI data on all of their students so they could monitor progress. Then they did a student survey to assess eating habits and physical activity levels. Stevens worked with each school to complete the Inventory, asking wellness council members to help collect the necessary information. She said that information from all of these data sources helped create their action plans.

They have been very impressed with the Healthy Schools Program Framework, action planning tools, toolkits and other resources. Stevens used the School Wellness Council Toolkit as a guide in helping to form strong and effective wellness councils in the seven schools. She said the parent tip sheets have also been popular as they are easy to print out and share with families.

Stevens' main goal for the three-year project is to help the groups "get their feet underneath them." "In the first year we just wanted to get these councils started and show them that they could succeed. In year two we started to look at policy and environmental changes that we need to address and the resources out there to help us. My big push next year will be to convince the school board that this is worthwhile and they should make an effort to support these schools in trying to create healthier environments."

SUCCESS STORY TEN

School Garden Yields Produce and More

ROYAL PALM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | MIAMI, FLORIDA

A school garden is so much more than what is grown within. Many schools find that a garden can help strengthen a community by bringing in parents, businesses and volunteers. Some schools use gardens as outdoor classrooms, to bring math and science lessons to life. Others find that working in a garden can be especially beneficial to students with special needs. This is what 5th grade teacher Marcia Cardona has found to be especially rewarding with her class garden.

Cardona feels that the garden has given her special education students "an opportunity to shine." She mentions that some of her students struggle with social interaction in the classroom, but when they are in the garden they are able to work well with their classmates and they take pride in their achievements. For all of her students, the garden has become an opportunity to learn about the importance of working together and taking responsibility. She said the enthusiasm has spread to their parents and even some local companies that have donated additional supplies. She is using the garden as an outdoor classroom and has found materials to help connect math and science concepts to the garden through hands-on activities.

With the help of a small local grant, Cardona was able to purchase gardening tools, soil and plants. The students designed the garden and asked their parents to come out on a Saturday to put it together. Cardona said that, "After just three hours of hard work a deserted area was transformed into a beautiful garden!"

They have had enough success with the vegetables that "students can go to the garden and make salads for themselves and our cafeteria manager uses many of the herbs from the garden." "This garden has definitely provided my students with lifelong lessons that will never be forgotten."



SUCCESS STORY ELEVEN

Afterschool Program Empowered to Focus on Health

DARE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT | DARE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

The afterschool program at this beachside school district has recently benefited from a wave of new resources, including the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's empowerME curriculum. The district took advantage of the program's "train the trainer" model and rolled out the eight-week curriculum last September with great success.

They celebrated the success of the program last October during the Lights On Afterschool event, where programs across the country take an opportunity to show their communities what they have to offer



for before and afterschool programs. Students and staff from Dare County showed the superintendent, school board members and parents how they had been "empowered" to live healthier lives. Students did yoga presentations, made granola and showed off their physical activity and fruit and vegetable logs. As part of the empowerME curriculum they had made posters that showed the barriers to being physically active, bumper stickers with healthy slogans and a collage with pictures of things they could do instead of being sedentary.

After the Lights On event there was so much enthusiasm for more physical activity that Afterschool Director Samantha Brown reached out to Michelle Owens, National Before and Afterschool Manager for the Healthy Schools Program to discuss what they could next to capitalize on this excitement.

Owens told Brown about the GO FAR program, a ten-week walking/running program with lessons on healthy eating which culminates in participation in a local 5K race. In March, half way through the ten-week program, students from across the district came together with their families to participate in the annual St. Patty's Parade, followed by a one-mile run. Brown said, "It was awesome to see 100+ Dare County elementary students running with moms, dads, grandmas, brothers and sisters."

Brown looks forward to everyone coming together again on April 17th for the Flying Pirate Outer Banks 5K race. They are planning a shorter final run for students under the age of eight. The Outer Banks Sporting Events and Outer Banks Running Club have become sponsors, purchasing new tennis shoes for children in need and serving as running coaches to the students.

Brown is thrilled about the community response to the program and she plans to offer the GO FAR program twice a year, which will complement the weekly yoga classes and empowerME activities offered through the afterschool program.

Healthy Schools Program Embedded in Culture, continued from Page 6

They have used the Six Step Process to make lasting changes in their schools and they have received recognition from the Alliance (six silver awards, one bronze) and beyond (voted "Healthiest School in America" by Health magazine).

All of the schools in West Babylon offer only foods and beverages that are in compliance with the Alliance's Competitive Foods and Beverages Guidelines. They removed fryers from the kitchens and worked hard to come up with innovative recipes that incorporated more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. They have changed celebrations and school fundraisers and they have adopted an elective based physical education program so that students can select physical activities that they will enjoy. All of these changes have netted results: they have seen a decrease of .5% in student BMI across the district. It just goes to show that when a school "goes healthy," there is no turning back!

SUCCESS STORY TWELVE

Using Technology to Spread the Word on Physical Activity

NORRIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | FIRTH, NEBRASKA

Physical activity breaks have become just part of the routine for students and staff at Norris Elementary School. By streaming segments of physical activity videos into the classroom they have made it very easy for all of the teachers to take physical activity breaks without having to lead them or think of new routines. They stream the videos four different times during the day and encourage teachers to use them once in the morning and once in the afternoon, they can choose which times will work best for their classroom.

The physical education staff selects the video segments for the school. They also created a guide with pictures to show proper form for select exercises. Physical education teacher Robert Brandt shared, "Students are enthused by the opportunity for additional, organized physical activity throughout the day. One student requested an exercise break before they started a timed assignment. Teachers have seen that students are able to quickly return to their content area learning time. This has really helped more students stay on task in the classroom and there is an increased awareness by students and staff that physical activity contributes to better health and learning."

SUNRISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA

Using the internet to reach out to students and families about physical activity was a natural move for Michelle Moore, physical education teacher. "I've always liked using technology and one day I was talking to our computer teacher about the school's website and found out how easy it would be to add a page for me to use."

Moore wanted a place where she could provide information on nutrition and physical education but also be able to share timely news about upcoming events. Florida Relationship Manager Amanda Gillespie said, "Michelle has found a great way to help her school meet a number of Healthy Schools Program criteria, such as encouraging students to connect with physical activity opportunities in the community and communicating to families about efforts to support the wellness policy."

SUCCESS STORY THIRTEEN

Rolling Back the Clocks for Health Education

BELLVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL | PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

There never seems to be enough time in the day. This, according to Principal Vicki Gibowski, is one of the biggest challenges in education. Gibowski, however, did not want to let this reality prevent her students from receiving health education. For the 2009-2010 school year she spearheaded a radical schedule change that actually put more minutes back in the day for teaching!

The school is now using an even/odd eight period day which allows them to recover between 10-13 minutes per day. Previously, students would change classes every 47 minutes. Gibowski said that students are more focused when they have slightly longer class periods and behavior improves because there is more time for students to get engaged in their classroom activities. This has resulted in having physical education classes that are 87 minutes long. Students have 12 minutes for changing clothes, a 25-minute health education class and 50 minutes for physical activity. The weekly schedule alternates so one week the class will meet two times and the following week it will meet three times.

Gibowski shares, "It is vitally important that students understand the need for moderate physical activity on a daily basis. The health education class provides us the opportunity to provide instruction to students and then demonstrate the need for physical activity. We have also worked hard to provide content area teachers the information and resources they need to help students live a healthier lifestyle. Students are taught health lessons in content coursework. We have physical activity breaks worked into the daily schedule as well.'

National Health Education Manager Kathy Wilbur traveled to Pensacola last year to offer professional development sessions during their in-service. She did a session for all teachers on how to integrate health education into their subjects and in the afternoon she worked with the physical education teachers to discuss developing a scope and sequence for their health education program.

SUCCESS STORY FOURTEEN

Accolades for Focus on Health

OREGON CITY HIGH SCHOOL | OREGON CITY, OREGON

By Ellen Spialeri, reprinted with permission from the Oregon City News

Senator Jeff Merkley stopped by Oregon City High School last week to learn the details about how OCHS has been named a Healthy School by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. He found out that the high school is one of only three in the state given a bronze level award from the Alliance, a national program that is a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation.

Then he congratulated Principal Nancy Bush-Lange for being named Oregon State Principal of the Year and finished by sipping a nutritious strawberry smoothie in the school's Bistro. "Oregon City High School stands out. Our national standards are very high and OCHS emulates those standards. It is one of the few high schools in the nation to be recognized, because this kind of work in a high school takes a little longer and takes a lot of leadership," said Ginny Ehrlich, the executive director of the Alliance.

"We are proud our school won the bronze award," Bush-Lange said, noting that changes in school policy include providing more nutritious meals in the cafeteria, offering extra hours of PE and fitness classes and removing soda pop from the vending machines. "Water is now the choice of drink for students," she said.

The Healthy Schools Program recognizes schools that create healthier school environments that promote physical activity and healthy eating among students and staff. "The focus is on reducing childhood obesity, and we send a palpable message – healthy food and movement" will lead to healthier people," Ehrlich said.

"We used to have a pop machine and we used to have candy bars and potato chips in the vending machines, but now we have juices and high-fiber snacks," said Associate Principal Kathy Johnson, as she led the senator and a group of about a dozen visitors on a tour of the school. When Merkley enquired about what constitutes a healthy snack, Johnson told him that the state now has regulations, so the vendors have to offer "fun, tasty products" that meet the new laws.

Another reason that OCHS won the bronze award, Johnson said, was because the gymnasiums on campus are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. most school days, and during lunch staff members volunteer their time to supervise in the gyms.



Photo courtesy of the Oregon City News.

Bonita Nippert, the area coordinator for health and PE, pointed out that the school offers alternatives to traditional PE classes or sports. "We have dance classes, we have fitness and weight training – some students find these more appealing than team sports," she added. The group also toured the in-school health center, which is

currently only staffed a few hours each week; Bush-Lange joked with Merkley that she could use his help in getting more funding to staff the center for additional hours.

The Bistro was the group's final destination, and there they met seniors Ashlyn Swisher and Kelvin McDonald, who handed out strawberry smoothies. "We are offering non-fat drinks, and baked goods that are higher in fiber and protein. We changed our smoothie base to be more nutritious; the strawberry smoothie is made from frozen strawberries, yogurt and a green tea base," said Evelyn Mast, the culinary arts instructor.

Ashlyn and Kelvin both noted that students have responded positively to changes in the Bistro, and added that high-fiber banana muffins are a favorite. Johnson noted that there are three levels above the bronze for Healthy Schools recognition – silver, gold and platinum. She added, "We are working toward the silver – we need a little more in the physical fitness program and we need more education for our students about living a healthy lifestyle. We are extremely close to silver status."