



## SAMPLER

# IMPROVE STUDENTS' HEALTH WITH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**Keeping fit and healthy are targets for which we strive.  
School and family partnerships can keep these goals alive.**

Good health—a product of good information and good practice—is an important focus for school, family, and community partnerships. Parents, teachers, and others can work together to help students stay healthy and safe at school, at home, and in the community.

Physical and mental health habits that children develop—about nutrition, active play, self-confidence, and positive relationships—may have life-long consequences for their well-being.

- Childhood obesity, for example, may lead to diabetes, but both conditions may be prevented or treated with family and school information and actions to improve nutrition and increase exercise.
- Adolescents in middle and high school may engage in high-risk behaviors and unhealthy choices that can derail progress and success in school. Bad decisions may be redirected if parents, educators, and community partners work in concert to guide and support students' healthy and positive behaviors.

At the most basic level, healthy students who attend school every day are more likely to achieve academically than are students who are frequently absent from school. When students feel healthy and safe in school, they are better able to concentrate on instruction and schoolwork. When students attend school regularly, teachers are able to proceed with classwork and homework without having to review or reteach skills to those who missed class.

Good student health, then, benefits both students and teachers. Better health can be the result of school, family, and community partnerships on health-related practices.

The activities in this *Sampler* were conducted by schools working with NNPS over the

years. They illustrate how schools at different levels—preschool, elementary, middle, and high school—are designing and conducting activities with parent and community partners to help students stay healthy.

The practices activate the six types of involvement and illustrate different roles for parent and community partners in promoting student health. They show how to encourage exercise and fitness; enlist community health services to offer students and families information, screenings, and immunizations; focus on healthy foods and eating habits to prevent or combat childhood obesity; encourage local sports teams to motivate students on healthy behaviors; reduce students' stress; and more.

## Improve Classroom Teaching

The sample health-related activities were conducted by school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) and engaged teachers, students, and parents across grade levels. Individual teachers and grade-level teams may adapt the activities to strengthen partnerships with their own students' families and communities. For example, individual teachers could adapt Nourish Expo to link topics of nutrition, exercise, and good decisions to units of work in science, social studies, or other subjects. Teachers could conduct student-family-community forums on factors that stress students at particular grade levels to improve students' mental health and behavior as in the Meaningful Community Discussion activity.

The ten examples in this *Sampler*, arranged alphabetically, are a few of many excellent activities in NNPS annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. See more on good health goals at [www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org) in the section Success Stories.

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## Review of Research: Family and Community Involvement to Improve Student Health

Joyce L. Epstein, Director, NNPS

According to the World Health Organization, *health* is the “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” In childhood, this definition reinforces the connection of good health and student success in school, and opens important opportunities for school, family, and community partnerships.

Most children are, generally, healthy and grow successfully to young adulthood. Some, however, have or develop serious health or mental health problems that require attention, and can best be addressed if parents, teachers, and others work together on treatments and solutions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2012) reported that more than one third of children and adolescents in the U.S. were overweight or obese. Other studies found that fewer than 10% of children get enough physical activity to foster good health and that targeted interventions can correct this problem (Foster, et al., 2008; Schwimmer, Burwinkle, & Varni, 2003). Overweight and lack of exercise are associated with serious risks of heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, pre-diabetes, and other indicators of poor health. As students move into adolescence parents and teachers must be vigilant for early warning signs of eating disorders; early drug, tobacco, and alcohol use; early sexual behavior; bullying or being bullied; and other behaviors that require immediate attention and care.

Many studies confirm that students who feel supported by their families are less likely to experience emotional distress and anxiety, practice unhealthy eating behaviors, consider or attempt suicide, or disengage from school at the secondary level (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). Other studies indicate that family and school partnership programs reduce students’ drug and alcohol use, improve students’ grades and test scores, and increase high school credits earned (Dilley, 2009; Haas & Fosse, 2008). This means that a good partnership program should help prevent serious health and mental health problems through high school.

**Family and Community Involvement in Student Health.** CDC not only reported statistics on child and adolescent health, but also shared information on how school and family partnerships contribute to students’ good health and well-being. The School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS), for example, provided useful information about school health policies and dietary and physical activities at the state, district, school, and classroom levels (Michael, Dittus, & Epstein, 2007; CDC, 2012). The CDC’s Coordinated School Health program for schools includes examples of how the framework of six types of involvement (Epstein, et al., 2009) can be activated to focus on student health:

**Type 1: Parenting**—Conduct workshops for parents and students on eating healthy foods, the benefits of exercise, and other health issues; conduct parent-to-parent forums and support groups on student development.

**Type 2: Communicating**—Share information and health tips in the school newsletter, website, blog, or in other connections.

**Type 3: Volunteering**—Organize parent and community volunteers who teach dance classes, aerobics, karate, yoga, or who conduct walkathons and other sports activities after school.


**Type 4: Learning at Home**—Design health and science interactive homework activities that enable students to discuss age-appropriate health and mental health topics with a family partner.

**Type 5: Decision Making**—Encourage PTAs/PTOs or other parent associations to support parent networks on health and mental health activities.

**Type 6: Collaborating with the Community**—Conduct health fairs to introduce students and families to local agencies and social services; engage community health services to provide immunizations for young children.

The studies and field work in schools confirm the connections of student health, higher attainment, and the roles that families and communities play in helping students maintain good health across the grades.

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## BROCK ON THE MOVE

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### **BROCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SLIDELL, LOUISIANA**

**T**he health, exercise, and nutrition campaign at Brock Elementary got a jump start last fall when First Lady Michelle Obama visited the school to kick off her *Let's Move* Campaign. To actively support the nationwide initiative, the school launched Brock on the Move. The program promotes the health of its students by focusing on nutrition and exercise.

Using the community connections of its business partner, Brock held an event at the Camellia City Farmers Market, just down the block from the school. There, the school's cafeteria manager conducted a presentation on healthy snacks, complete with tastings. The Nutritional Advisory Council (NAC) students helped with the snacks, which were provided by the school food service.

The school nurse and two others who volunteered their time checked attendees' blood pressures and heart rates; a local hospital provided literature on health and nutrition, and the market vendors offered samples of their fresh, locally grown foods.

These activities led up to the big event—a one-mile walkathon through surrounding neighborhood. Brock students, teachers, and families walked through the area on sidewalks rather than in the street to avoid the need for a march permit or police escorts. A toddler in a stroller and someone's dog joined the walkers as passers-by honked their support. Businesses along the way provided water to the walkathoners. At the end, each participant received a medal and a certificate, as well good feelings of building school spirit and doing something good for themselves. The local newspaper published a story about Brock on the Move with many photographs.

"It was really a family and community event," said the principal, pleased with the planning and the results. "It was great to see the students and parents participating together, and how the community embraced us."

A student was quick to share his favorite part: "I liked the snacks!"

With this event, Brock met several important goals. The school increased parental involvement, sponsored a community outreach project on healthy habits, and demonstrated the importance of exercise and good nutrition for students, staff, and families. The school also learned the power of partnerships, according to one organizer. One business owner who is on the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) explained that planning and conducting Brock on the Move "opened up opportunities for relationships with many other [partners]." She added that the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) had helped the ATP understand the importance of meaningful and effective relationships.

The school aims to keep its students, staff, and larger community moving by sponsoring other activities, as well as a similar healthy-walkathon next year. The ATP assessed the event and decided to start planning earlier in the year for the spring activity and have a Plan B in case of inclement weather. This year, Plan A for the Brock on the Move activity worked just fine.



# FAMILY FOOD FRIDAYS

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## **CESAR TARRANT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HAMPTON CITY, VIRGINIA**

**A** good practice got better this year at Cesar Tarrant Elementary. The year-old Family Food Fridays program added a dimension and reached more families in need of food.

With the help of a local food bank, the school offered Food Backpacks for Kids every Friday, packing enough nutritious food for one child for the weekend. Because the school could accommodate only 50 students through this program, though many more applied, it started the second phase, a U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Distribution Site at the school. Once a month, also on Fridays, families with limited incomes could pick up food at the school.

About 60 adults and 110 children used the two federally-funded programs.

Cesar Tarrant is a Title I school with many students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches. In addition, many children are from single-parent homes or are being raised by grandparents who need assistance. “I found a growing number of parents who came into the Parent Resource Center for support in the form of food,” said the parent involvement facilitator.

The school made some changes in the backpack program this year, requiring parents to pick up the food at school, rather than just sending it home with students. This encouraged the parents to build a relationship with the school and with the parent involvement facilitator, who would check with parents to see if they had other needs.

“The Food Friday program helps the community by providing food to feed families when food becomes short at the end of the month,” said a parent. “It also allows parents to communicate with other parents in the school and get to know them. Sometimes I meet neighbors that I didn’t know before.”

The food distribution program is a community effort. The food bank approached the school about undertaking the weekly backpack program,

and later about becoming a food distribution site. A faith-based school partner shared the work of the distribution program, with a Sunday school class picking up and packing the food.

Families who used the program often volunteered to distribute the non-perishable food items from noon to 5 p.m. on the third Friday of the month. Neighborhood leaders publicized the food programs, as well as rideshare opportunities for those who did not have their own transportation.

“Giving food to families provided a sense of belonging and trust in the school environment as well as helping students academically because we were meeting a physical need,” said the parent liaison. The practice also encouraged proper nutrition, consistent eating habits, and family meal times. Food Fridays had an important impact every day of the week.



## H<sub>2</sub>O FOR LIFE

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### LARKSPUR MIDDLE SCHOOL VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

**M**uch of the world faces a shortage of potable water, but there are people who want to change that—including the students and faculty at Larkspur Middle School.

Larkspur Middle adopted H<sub>2</sub>O for Life as its community service project for the 2010-11 school year. H<sub>2</sub>O for Life pairs schools in North America with schools in developing countries to bring WASH—that is, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene education—to the students.

With more than 1,500 students, Larkspur is one of Virginia's largest middle schools. Wanting to build a sense of community, the school's ATP and parent coordinator explained, "we think serving others and becoming aware of global issues people are struggling with will allow our students to achieve a common goal and work as a team with their community."

To tie this service project to the school's plan for continuous improvement, Larkspur sought to involve staff, students, parents, and community members in H<sub>2</sub>O for Life. The Student Council took a leading role. It advertised the program and related service-oriented fundraisers, and led a school-wide assembly on the plan to connect with and raise money for a partner school in Haiti that lacked access to clean water.

In mid-October, the school kicked off the project by celebrating Global Hand Washing Day. In that week's announcements, the school advertised the essential hygiene of hand-washing, provided facts on how germs spread, and detailed the difficulties for those in developing countries who have no access to standard sanitation. Students also watched a slide show about water usage and attended a student council assembly.

The first fundraiser was a Halloween dance. The initiative continued in February with a pair of fundraisers—a variety show and the 1st Annual 5K Family Fun Run/Walk. The February variety show featured a series of student acts and a slide show displaying powerful images and

important facts about water usage around the world. Almost 300 people attended. Revenue from ticket sales went directly to H<sub>2</sub>O for Life.

Next came the 1st Annual 5K Family Fun Run/Walk. This event, held on school property, attracted 176 participants. About 25% were students, 25% were faculty, and 50% were families, friends, or community members. The friendly race raised nearly \$900 for H<sub>2</sub>O for Life.

Along with fundraising, the school made a big splash with its community partnerships. A local business, Volunteers in Education, donated food, beverages, and other services to the scheduled events. Other community partners designed and built a sign advertising the event, set up booths informing students about foot health and proper footwear sizing, and donated coupons and gift cards for goodie bags distributed at the 5K race.

Teamwork between the school and its community was, indeed, impressive. Said the school's principal, "This project epitomizes the strength of effective community-wide partnerships. All facets of the Larkspur community were involved in H<sub>2</sub>O for Life—students, teachers, parents, neighbors, and businesses. When these groups come together to support a cause and/or learning experience, our educational system is greatly enhanced!"



## Health & Wellness with the Buffalo Bills

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*Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence  
Buffalo, New York*

Students at the Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence know how to combat obesity thanks to a Family Sports Night cosponsored by the Buffalo Bills football team, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Rite Aid, and Kaleida Health. “This event reinforced the year-long efforts of the staff to promote healthy eating and lifestyle decisions,” said one member of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). “We heard so many positive comments from our families, volunteers, and the Buffalo Bills.”

When kindergarten through sixth-grade students and their families arrived for the two hour event, they received a schedule indicating when each grade level should report to a specific activity. As they rotated through the stations, families worked together to receive stamps for their Healthy Living Passports.

Three Buffalo Bills players ran a mini training camp in the gym. They explained the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. And, cheered on by Bills mascot Billy Buffalo, they paced children and adults through football drills such as blocking dummies, high stepping, long snapping, and an obstacle course.

Families walked around the school building using pedometers and water bottles donated by Blue Cross Blue Shield. During the walk, they stopped to have their blood pressure checked and body mass index measured. In the cafeteria, volunteers served healthy snacks of fresh fruit, low-fat milk products, orange juice, and spring water, all generously donated by Upstate Farms. Towards the end of the evening, the Buffalo Bills raffled off items for the families that completed their Healthy

Living Passports. Prizes included a signed football, sports jerseys, and 300 tickets to an upcoming game. The Bills’ strength and conditioning coach talked about the important connections between health, fitness, and success in school to close the evening.

To publicize Family Sports Night, the ATP sent home invitations and special reminders to families. They also placed an article in the Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) Report, which goes out to all families in the district and many local businesses and organizations, and contacted local television stations who came to cover the event. Parent volunteers, faculty, Blue Cross Blue Shield volunteers, and players and coaches from the Buffalo Bills helped the evening run smoothly.

Family Sports Night tied together several health-related initiatives in place throughout the year, such as classroom visits from the school nurse and social worker, healthy school lunches served in the cafeteria, and assemblies by Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Buffalo Bills. The Buffalo Bills also created monthly laminated calendars listing school events and healthy eating and exercise tips, which were sent home to students and their families.

Due to the combined efforts of the ATP and the four community partners, 450 students, their families, and community members learned about fitness and healthy choices in a fun-filled setting. Next year, the ATP plans to enlist more volunteers to decrease wait times at individual stations. The Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence is definitely on track to help their students and families develop life-long healthy habits.



## Heart Healthy Lunch

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*Buffalo Public School #53*

*Buffalo, New York*

Buffalo Public School #53 gave a gift from the heart to the heart last Valentine's Day with its Heart Healthy Lunch, an annual event that stresses the importance of good health and encourages parent involvement at school. This year's event drew 50 parents, who joined 70 students for a nutritious meal and an opportunity to participate in health screenings.

Heart Healthy Lunch began two years ago when the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) realized that other schools were holding health screenings to assist the families they served. The school site facilitator for its Closing the Gap initiative said that teachers and parents had commented on the need to inform and educate one another on "the importance of maintaining good health not only for ourselves, but as role models for our students."

The health clinic that works as a community partner in the school had conducted screenings in other schools, so that part was easy. By adding a healthy lunch to the event, the ATP turned a somewhat clinical practice into an enjoyable afternoon.

ATP staff advertised the event through "save the date" cards mailed home so parents could RSVP and arrange their work schedules around a longer lunch. The school published announcements in the school newsletter, sent home fliers, and set up an easel in the main hallway to promote the event.

On Valentine's Day, 120 parents and students gathered during the regular lunch period for a healthy meal together. Once parents had signed in, they were escorted to the VIP (Very Important Parent) lunch line. Lunch included salad, wrap sandwiches, and fresh fruit. After the meal, an ATP member took a picture of each family group before the health screening. Some parents stopped by teachers' offices to discuss their children's progress; others visited the school's Parent Room to check on upcoming events.

Health screenings, set up in the clinic, checked participants' blood pressure and body mass index. Health professionals answered questions and referred parents and students for other services, if needed.

All in all, teachers and staff were happy with the event. The school nurse was especially pleased by the turnout, which was up 65 percent from the year before. "Parents are able to enjoy quality time with their child and see their child engage during lunch with classmates and school staff," said one staff member. "Teachers and parents are able to connect on a social level in a small, casual setting."

And the students? "They are always excited and feel special when their parents come to school," she added.

The event cost \$100, most of it for food. Funds came from the school's Closing the Gap initiative. Administrators at Community School #53 plan to continue this heart-healthy event on future Valentine Days.



# LIFE HAPPENS

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## NORWICH TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL NORWICH, CT

**I**mportant connections occur at unexpected times. In life, the trick is to see the potential and take advantage of the unexpected opportunity. That is what happened at a high school softball game in Norwich, Connecticut.

A Student Service staff member from Norwich Technical High School met a Community Educator nurse from Backus Hospital. Both were watching their daughters' softball game. They began a conversation, learned about each others' work, and decided that they could form a partnership to improve the health of high school students. The result was an educational program called Life Happens—a series of teen-centric health seminars conducted throughout the school year for students, families, and the public.

The Life Happens series began in October with one seminar every month through April. Doctors, nurses, and Ph.D.s presented important information on a wide variety of health issues pertinent to teens, including: Seeing Stars: A Concussion Discussion; Be Aware, on trauma programming; Ask the Dietitian; Everyone's Different—Be Who You Want to Be, a frank discussion about self-esteem and sexuality; Delicious and Nutritious, a discussion on healthy eating, snacking, and sports nutrition; Anxiety Society, with attention to reducing stress in tough times; and Being Mean Won't Go Unseen, a straight talk about bullying.

With each health topic presented, Norwich Tech offered a student program during the day, and Backus Hospital offered a corresponding parent program at night. The daytime programming reached over 300 students. The evening seminars were open to the public. One presenting doctor said, "This is a great collaboration that I am proud to be a part of. It is what being a community hospital is all about."

In order to determine which health topics to teach, a Backus Community Educator designed a needs assessment for teenage students. Norwich Tech disseminated the assessment to students and sent 450 surveys back to the Backus community education office. Based on these data, the school and hospital worked together to create the sessions of the Life Happens series.

Norwich's graphics department conducted a Life Happens poster contest, which captured students' interest and participation. Students took the lead in welcoming the monthly presenters to their school. Parents could attend the day or evening presentations.

The year-long series cost only \$125. State funds for the high school covered the small Norwich Technical High School gifts for the presenters. "We are amazed," said the school social worker, "by the number of opportunities that can be accessed if there is a willingness on the school's part to begin the dialogue." At Norwich Technical High School, a chance conversation created a powerful education alliance that aims to improve the health and safety of students and families.



# Lincoln's Fitness Challenge

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*Lincoln Elementary School  
Wausau, Wisconsin*

Students at Lincoln Elementary School walked, biked, and swam their way toward a healthier lifestyle during Lincoln's Fitness Challenge, actually a year-long series of events designed to teach the importance and the benefits of physical activity.

The practice is a spin-off of a fitness program run by the Wisconsin Governor's Office. Having met the state's challenge two years ago, Lincoln decided to do its own version of the same program. This ties in with one of the district's goals: to promote and support a culture of wellness throughout the school community. It also promoted family time, when children and parents would share activities, such as biking or hiking or a game of tag.

The program includes three six-week challenges: for fall, winter, and spring. The goal is to have children get 60 minutes of activity per day, five days a week. The youngsters can do any kind of physical activity. The adults are encouraged to do 30 minutes of activity, five days a week. Everyone keeps an activity log, which the school provides.

Younger participants colored a chart in their activity log with different colors denoting different activities. Older participants wrote down activities and times. They all handed in their logs weekly to qualify for a prize drawing. Students who met the fitness goal every week of the program were entered into a grand prize drawing. Small prizes were awarded weekly to keep students' motivated and moving.

At the end of each six-week challenge, school administrators hosted an assembly to announce the grand prize winners. The prizes, most of which were donated, included a bicycle, sports equipment, or gift cards. All other participants got a free one-day pass for the entire family to the local YMCA.

Each challenge had a theme, usually tied to a Wisconsin sports team. The spring challenge, for instance, focused on baseball and the Milwaukee Brewers. A special event of the

spring challenge had to do with sausage. The parent partnership coordinator managed to borrow a sausage costume that was eight feet long. School staff, parents and students filled the "sausage" and then raced. "All kinds of teachers wanted to take part as one of the racing sausages," said the coordinator.

There was plenty of enthusiasm for the Fitness Challenge. About 150 students, 30 parents, and more than 20 school staff members participated during the year.

"I feel guilty if I don't get my exercise in on five days each week," one staff member said.

"This got me moving and I love the time I spend with my kids. We make it part of our day, and we look forward to it," a parent reported.

The school spent \$100 to \$300 for prizes for each challenge. These expenses were covered by a county health grant.

School administrators plan to repeat the program in the future. They are looking to develop the next challenge around the Green Bay Packers football team.



## MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY DISCUSSION: STUDENT STRESSORS

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### NAPERVILLE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS

**H**igh school students face many pressures as a normal part of growing up. Students at Naperville North High School felt the typical stressors related to report card grades, graduation requirements, and other aspects of teen angst. The school's partnership team (SFCP) decided to tackle this issue to provide more support to students and help them feel more able to face the stresses in high school.

Based on the results of a survey of its students in the 09-10 school year, the Naperville North partnership team learned that students wanted to reduce school-related anxieties, increase peers' honesty on tests, and feel confident about solving problems they might face in the future. One goal was to help students learn strategies for dealing effectively with school stress and teen pressures.

The partnership team of parents, teachers, and administrators began by discussing incidents, movies, or books that might link to student stress to provide educators, students, and parents with opportunities for rich conversations and teaching moments for their students. The team also considered ways to create effective discussion groups with students.

The decision was to create the Academic Integrity Committee. This group of parents, teachers, administrators, and students held two successful, well-attended forums to discuss students' stress and its effects. The long-term goal is to help participants understand the scope of stress in high school and gain strategies to deal with stress and make good decisions when facing stressful situations.

At one forum, the groups showed a movie about students' cheating, followed by a panel discussion, moderated by the principal. About 400 people from the school and district attended this provoking and lively discussion. At another forum for the high school community only, students discussed related issues and potential

solutions. All of the topics that emerged will be followed again in the next school year, as the school wants to continue to explore and strengthen all students' abilities to minimize stress in high school.

Homework was one topic that was important in the forums and discussions. Students wanted to share their views that the purposes and quantity of homework needed to be clear, or the work becomes a persistent stressor for students. Teachers listened well and aim to review their homework policies and practices. Said one teacher, "I will try to be more purposeful in the homework I assign." This illustrates one of the good results of the forums and discussions. Students were able to bring up topics that troubled them, make them public, and, with adults, call for actions to address issues that might make high school less stressful to students.

A parent commented, "After seeing *The Race to Nowhere* [at one of the forums], I began to evaluate my contribution to my son's high stress level. I will talk with him differently regarding his school work." It's this awareness and willingness to act that leads to change, not just a few useful tips.

The Academic Integrity Committee evaluated a survey of students conducted later in the school year to determine reactions to the forums and to plan new and follow-up discussions for the coming school year. The assessments are helping Naperville North students meet the demands for good decisions and honorable behavior more confidently.



## NOURISH EXPO 2012

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### GREENDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT GREENDALE, WI

**R**ealizing that children learn, grow, and thrive when they are healthy, Greendale Schools decided to make “wellness” a priority in the 2011-12 school year. District leaders took stock of wellness programs in the schools, and planned to strengthen existing practices and/or develop new ones to create a culture of wellness in Greendale. The culminating activity was the Nourish—Mind, Body and Environment Expo 2012, which provided students, staff, parents, and the community in Greendale with many opportunities to learn about and participate in activities that promoted physical, environmental and emotional well-being.

At Greendale High School, exhibitors for the Expo included Greendale’s Health, Police, Parks and Recreation, Library, Interfaith, and Aging Departments, health clubs, hospitals, merchants, practitioners, master gardeners, and, of course, students. Presentations and demonstrations were held on healthy cooking, master gardening, being a patient advocate, and living a long and healthy life.

Middle and high school students’ booths showcased their health-related service-learning projects conducted in science, physical education, health, and business and consumer education classes. Their projects addressed topics such as diabetes and lung cancer awareness, effects of tobacco usage, oral hygiene, dangers of drugs and alcohol, healthy plates, healthy gardens and student-developed fitness logs. Elementary students sponsored activities, such as make your own healthy snack, plant a seed, and a fundraiser for a new community playground. Many exhibits were interactive for students at all grade levels.

A Community Cookbook featured healthy recipes submitted by students, parents, staff, and community members. Some recipes were studied in health class, and some were cooked at the Expo by consumer education students. Attendees engaged in fitness activities coordinat-

ed by physical education teachers, including yoga, self-defense, obstacle courses, family volleyball, Zumba, Wii Fit, and chair exercises. The school’s pool was open for water aerobics and open swim.

During the year, each school’s Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) adopted wellness as one of their partnership goals. One school conducted a Healthy Snack Contest. The winning classroom’s snack was featured at the Expo. In Walk and Talk, students walked a mile and talked with a partner about a book they read—combining attention to wellness and reading.

Teachers featured wellness material in math and science classes to teach, as they taught skills such as graphing hours of student exercise or studying the life lifecycle of plants in their school gardens. Schools’ PTOs and the Health Department organized “Step Up to Better Health” with a Fun Run/Walk fundraiser. There were 771 registrants!

Countless students, parents and community members volunteered to help with the Nourish Expo. Area businesses donated funds for schools’ wellness activities and many sponsored booths at the Expo.

Academically, all students learned a great deal at the Expo. The middle and high school students gained extra skills in their service learning projects, including project management, marketing, teamwork, and problem solving. More than 350 parents and community members attended Expo 2012. Nourish Expo 2012 was a great way for families to enjoy a day together, while engaging in and learning about how to lead healthy and environmentally-friendly lives.



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## TRY IT AT LUNCH

### Good Shepherd School

### Peace River, Alberta, Canada

**G**ood Shepherd School wanted to increase their middle school students' participation in physical fitness activities by 10%. Most students stayed at school during the lunch break, which made them available for lunchtime activities. A traditional intramurals program existed, however it consisted mostly of competitive sports and involved a limited number of students. Teachers invited local fitness instructors to offer sample physical activity classes for students during lunchtime. Students participated in different activities available in the community, especially those students who would typically remain uninvolved in competitive sports and traditional physical activities.

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) Coordinator asked students which fitness activities interested them. The Coordinator approached the instructors to see if they would be willing to teach, on a voluntary basis, 30-minute lunchtime classes. Tai Chi, Tae Kwon Do, and Hip Hop Dance instructors offered sample classes to interested students. Lunchtime classes were better than evening classes, which would have required the many students who live in rural areas to make a special trip back for the event. Besides, a number of the instructors were busy with regular students and classes in the evenings.

Judging by the numbers of students who participated, Try It at Lunch was very suc-

cessful. Each session reached the maximum number of students allowed, and a second session of the Hip Hop Dance course was offered because it was so popular. Try It at Lunch gave students exposure to new fitness activities, and sparked an interest among many in joining the classes regularly. Each session taught participants new physical skills and the importance of warming up and cooling down. In the Tae Kwon Do session, students also learned to count to ten in Korean. Students who would not otherwise have been able to enjoy these programs (because of lack of money, time, and/or transportation) were able to participate. Students asked, "Can we do this every week?" and "How can I sign up for regular classes?" An unexpected benefit of Try It at Lunch was the establishment of a weekly Tai Chi class for staff taught during recess by a volunteer from the community.

Students, teachers, and community members benefited from the opportunity to work together at increasing physical fitness and learning about new forms of physical activity. Try It at Lunch could be expanded to include other areas like arts and music.