

## **PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM SURVEY- Other PH Prevention**

### **Contact Information**

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**Short Title:** “Energy Balance” Registered Dietitian Coaches in school PE class.

**Program Location:** Kansas City, Missouri

### **Objectives and Goals:**

Teaching youth about the importance of Energy Balance—that what they eat and what they do should be in balance to maintain a healthy weight—is essential to preventing childhood overweight/obesity and its associated chronic diseases and conditions.

The goal of the Healthy Schools Partnership program is to improve student nutrition knowledge, attitude, and consumption of nutrient dense foods, specifically fruits and vegetables. The program targets students in grades 4-8 in urban, low-income, high-minority schools.

A unique component of this energy balance program is that it utilizes nutrition experts, Registered Dietitians (RDs), as Nutrition Coaches to layer nutrition education and messaging into PE class while kids are being physically active, and in other non-traditional areas of the school environment, such as the school cafeteria.

### **Methods:**

The RD Nutrition Coaches deliver an 8-week energy balance program in the Fall and a 6-week program in the Spring. The Nutrition Coaches give a brief, weekly, interactive presentation in the classroom, followed by a weekly group physical activity game played in PE class and one-on-one individual nutrition coaching with students in PE while they are being physically active. The RD Coaches also promote healthy choices in the cafeteria. A culture of wellness is created in the school environment with posters in the hallways, daily healthy announcements, wellness articles in school newsletters, and a Family Fun Night.

### **Program Length:**

Fourteen weeks of progressive lessons, matched to state and national health standards are created for grades 4-8.

**Number of target population reached by effort:**

In the first two years of the pilot program, approximately 1,800 students were reached

**Demographic Info:**

Eighty percent or more of students qualify for free and reduced-price school lunches. The majority of students are African American, and live in the urban core of Kansas City, Missouri. The program will be expanding into additional locations in the United States, reaching additional diversities in vulnerable populations and locations.

**Overall Cost:**

N.A

**Funding Sources:**

100 % Other: Current funding is provided by foundation support percentages are NOT estimates

**Outcomes:**

During the first two years of pilot testing, significant improvement (up to 30%) in nutrition knowledge was achieved in every grade and school where the HSP programming was implemented. Ninety percent of students responded True to the statement, 'I learned new things about nutrition from the dietitian.' Eighty-one percent of students stated True to the statement, 'I have made some better food choices because of what I learned from the dietitian.'

Rigorous program evaluation was conducted during the 2008-2009 school year by researchers from UC-Berkeley. Results of the evaluation will be available in the Fall of 2009.

**Did you make any estimates regarding costs deferred, outbreaks averted or deaths prevented?**

No

**Additional Information:**

The HSP program is the only school-based program of its kind that provides to students actual nutrition experts to deliver the program, and doesn't rely on the classroom teacher to learn one more content area, and find time during a busy school day to implement it. The layering of the nutrition education primarily in PE class is the ideal place to learn and understand energy balance. The one-on-one time RDs spend with students allows them to apply the key program concepts to each students' own eating styles. Creating a culture of wellness in the school provides a strong and lasting influence on students' eating and activity choices and likely positively influencing life-long health. .

**Future Plans:**

Program expansion and evaluation over the next three years is planned for additional schools in Kansas City, as well as starting the program in two additional communities, Des Moines, Iowa and Washington, D.C.