HEALTH CHAMPIONS:
PROMISING PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL-BASED OBESITY PREVENTION PROGRAMS

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This Talk

Goals:

• Outline Health Champions history and development

• Provided an overview of the work of Health Champions

• Highlight project practices

• Explore areas of promise
Why focus on childhood obesity prevention?

- Children may receive immediate benefits (such as improved nutrient intake or fitness).
- Modifying chronic disease risk in childhood may result in lower rates and risk of chronic disease in adulthood.
- Health promoting behaviors adopted during childhood may persist into adulthood.
Why focus on childhood obesity prevention?

In recent years, the problem of childhood obesity has been firmly established as one of the greatest health threats of our time generating a great deal of debate about how to best address.
Why Target Schools?

According to the Center for Disease Control, schools have a critical role to play in promoting the health and safety of young people and helping them establish lifelong healthy behavior patterns because:

• Each school day is an opportunity for the nation’s 55 million students to learn about health and practice the skills that promote healthy behaviors.

• The nation’s 121,000 schools provide many opportunities for students to practice healthy behaviors such as eating health foods and participating in physical activity.
A Look Back

• Our Start
  – Private-Public relationship formed
  – Proposal for project submitted
  – Receive funding
  – Yeah! But now what?
  – Launch of project - March 1999
  – Determine needs of school sites
  – Develop goals and objects
  – Begin working with schools
A Look Back

• Our Implementation
  – Students, their families, and school staff

• Our Lessons Learned
  – Challenges
  – Opportunities
Guiding Principles

• Keep focus and message simple
  – Children and their families have difficulty incorporating numerous lifestyle changes all at once.

• Take a wellness approach to health
  – Health Champions stresses the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating for ALL children, staff, and families.
Guiding Principles

• Tailor programming to the school community
  – Given the diversity of San Francisco, assessing school needs in terms of language, teaching style, culture and health status is critical.

• Target Teachers and Parents
  – Children and adolescents often model their behavior on the example of important adults in their lives.
Guiding Principles

• Build Relationships
  – Gaining the support and trust of the students, staff and families is key to how well interventions are received in a school community.

• Tap Community Resources
  – Professionals in the community can be a wonderful source of new perspectives and inspiration to students and teachers.
Guiding Principals

• Opportunities to Participate
  – Make learning creative and provide students, families, and school staff with a variety of ways to participate.

• Program Evaluation
  – Determine intended outcomes and establish ways of collecting data that matches the program.
Our Conceptual Model

School-based healthy eating and physical activity promotion
Current Practice

The Health Champions Project is a school-based health promotion program that is transforming the way our partner schools approach healthy eating and physical activity.
Current Practice

The objective of Health Champions extends beyond the bonds of disease education. We strive to actually change schools themselves, integrating healthy practices into the school environment. So that students experience health as well as learn about it.
Our School Partners

De Marillac Middle School
De Marillac Middle School is an independent Catholic school in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood.

- 60 students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades
- Racial and ethnic makeup: 70% Latino, 16% Asian, 7% African American, 7% multi-racial
- 27% of students receive reduced-price lunch, 57% receive free lunch

McKinley Elementary
McKinley Elementary is a public school located in the heart of San Francisco

- 250 students in grades K-8
- Racial and ethnic makeup: 35% African American, 33% Latino, 12% Asian, 12% White, 8% multi-racial
- 8% of students receive reduced-price lunch, 52% receive free lunch
Student Practice

**Nutrition**
- Classroom Cooking
- Nutrition Presentations
- Fruit & Vegetable Tastings
- Salad Bars
- Field Trips to Local Farmers’ Markets
- School Garden

**Physical Activity**
- Expanded PE Options like Yoga and Hip-Hop
- School-wide events such as walking clubs and jump-roping
- Active Fieldtrips that include mountain biking and rock climbing

School-based healthy eating and physical activity promotion
Teacher & Parent Practice

**Teachers**
- Teacher stipends to support personal health goals and classroom activities
- Professional development in SPARK PE curriculum
- Staff salad bars and other healthy eating queues

**Parents**
- After school talks on nutrition and diabetes prevention
- Family Fitness Nights
- Health Champions Newsletters
- Health Screenings

School-based healthy eating and physical activity promotion
School Environment Practice

• Policy development in school-wide nutrition and physical activity guidelines
• Increasing space and time for physical activity
• Improvement in nutritional quality of food served at school
Evaluation Practice

- Written surveys (fifth and eighth grade students, teachers and parents)
- Focus groups (students, teachers)
- Nutrition and physical activity logs (students)
- SOFIT evaluation of PE intensity
- School observations of policy compliance
Program Evaluation & Baseline Data

2005-2006 School Year

- Evaluation Instruments Finalized
  - Baseline Established
  - Assumptions Confirmed

School-based healthy eating and physical activity promotion
Evaluation Practice

Impacts

• “La reunión de nutrición es muy buena para nostoros que hay veces no comemos adecuadamente. Esto estuvo muy bueno para mi familia.”
  (The nutrition sessions are great for those of us who sometimes don’t eat so well. This was great for my family.)
  – De Marillac Parent

• “Guess what I have today? Grapes and a peach. I’m going to be healthy today!”
  - McKinley Student

• “Cal Pacific is a huge part of the neighborhood and to have CPMC at this neighborhood school develops links that makes a community stronger.”
  - McKinley Parent and CPMC Employee

• “To have Cal Pacific here, guiding and mentoring us, is helping us to do something we would never be able to accomplish on our own.”
  – De Marillac Principal

School-based healthy eating and physical activity promotion
Evaluation Practice

Impacts

• Families are engaging in more health-related activities together.

• Students are sharing what they learn.

• Teachers are incorporating physical activity and health eating into the school day.

• Students are eating more fresh produce at school.

• Schools are prioritizing PE.

• Schools are improving the quality of food that they serve.
Community Practice

City Partners

Mayor Gavin Newsom’s SHAPE UP San Francisco
San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium’s HealthCorps

National Partners

The Association for Community Health Improvements, Health Research, and Education Trust (HRET)
Youth Obesity Learning Collaborative

“Health Champions offers an excellent example to other cities’ organizations that want to contribute to a healthier San Francisco through private-public partnerships.”

-Christina Goette Carpenter, MPH
Department of Public Health

School-based healthy eating and physical activity promotion
Community Practice

Internal Partners
- CPMC Board of Directors
- CPMC Foundation
- Community Health Programs
- Dr. Nadine Burke
- Community Health Resource Center

CPMC CEO and President Dr. Martin Brotman provides opening remarks for McKinley Elementary’s school-wide jump rope event.

School-based healthy eating and physical activity promotion
Our Role as Providers

A nurse leads children’s exercises on the roof of what is now the CAL campus, circa 1925.
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