The Alliance for a Healthier Generation

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation, founded by the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, was formed in 2005 as a response to the dramatic increase in prevalence of childhood obesity across the nation. Currently, as many as 1 in 3 students in most states meet the criteria for overweight or obese.

The goal of the Alliance is to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015 by fostering an environment that helps all kids pursue healthy and active lifestyles. To that end the Alliance is working to positively affect the health of children by forging voluntary agreements with the healthcare and food service industries and by working with kids and schools across the nation.

The Alliance believes that helping schools is one of the most efficient and effective ways to shape the lifelong health and well-being of children and adolescents. That is why the Alliance has created the Healthy Schools Program, which aims to improve schools in the areas of nutrition, physical activity and staff wellness. The Alliance launched the Healthy Schools Program in February of 2006 with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Major Accomplishments

By engaging and activating the leaders who can transform the environments and communities that nurture our children, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation:

♦ Supports more than **14,000 schools in all 50 states** in transforming their environments into places where students have better access to physical activity and healthier foods before, during and after school.

♦ Works with **out-of-school time programs** in creating healthier environments and empowering all kids to make healthy choices and become advocates for physical activity and healthy eating.

♦ Brokered voluntary agreements with the beverage, snack and dairy industries that has contributed to an **88 percent decrease in total beverage calories** shipped to U.S. schools between 2004 and 2009.

♦ Negotiated agreements with 13 of the leading school meals manufacturers, group purchasing organizations and technology companies to **develop, market and competitively price** healthier school meal options.

♦ Convened national medical associations, leading insurers and employers that agreed to **offer comprehensive health benefits** to children and families for the prevention and treatment of childhood obesity.

A Quick Look at Childhood Obesity in Minnesota

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>MN</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of children ages 10-17</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who are overweight or obese¹</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State rank for overweight or obese</td>
<td>Rank in</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children (1 is best)²</td>
<td>2003:</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated adult obesity-attributable medical expenditures, 1998-2000 (in 2003 dollars)²</td>
<td>$1,307 M</td>
<td>$75 Billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Healthy Schools Program

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The Healthy Schools Program provides technical support to schools across the country in their efforts to engage the entire school community (including administrators, parents and school vendors) in increasing access to physical activity and healthier foods for students and staff. In addition to providing schools with best practice resources and support, the Healthy Schools Program recognizes successful schools through a national award program.

The work of the Healthy Schools Program is based on the Healthy Schools Program Framework, a set of best practice guidelines developed by a national panel of experts that serves as a “roadmap” for creating a healthier school environment. These guidelines form the basis of the National Recognition Program which awards schools at the Bronze, Silver or Gold levels based on the policy and programmatic changes made in seven separate areas:

- School Meals
- Competitive Foods and Beverages
- Health Education
- Physical Education
- Policy and Systems
- Employee Wellness
- Student Wellness

Every school has support from a Healthy Schools Program staff member who works one-on-one with the school to meet its wellness goals. Schools also have access to a team of staff with expertise in each content area. These content experts are available to support schools through phone or email consultations, online trainings and professional development opportunities.

Schools are able to access a wide variety of information and resources on the Healthy Schools Program website at healthiergeneration.org. Schools will find hundreds of success stories from schools around the country, toolkits that provide step-by-step information for meeting the best practice criteria, a wealth of local, state and national resources and funding opportunities to help them make meaningful and lasting changes to their school health environment.

Who can join the Healthy Schools Program? Everyone. And there is no cost to join. www.HealthierGeneration.org

The Healthy Schools Program outlines the course of action for making sustainable changes in its Six Step Process:

Step 1: Convene a school wellness council to plan and lead implementation of the Healthy Schools Program in the school.

Step 2: Complete the Inventory in the Healthy Schools Builder to identify areas for improvement.

Step 3: Develop an Action Plan based on what is important and achievable in the school community.

Step 4: Identify resources that can facilitate implementation of the Action Plan.

Step 5: Take Action! Follow the Action Plan to create a healthier school environment.

Step 6: Celebrate Success! The Healthy Schools Program works with schools to celebrate small victories and big successes along the way.
State Specifics: Minnesota

Table 1: Initial Year Participating Schools Students Enrolled
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2006–07 | 9 | 4,242
2007–08 | 13 | 5,924
2008–09 | 28 | 14,768
2009–10 | 9 | 7,121
2011–12 | 3 | 1,276
Total | 62 | 33,331

Table 2. Characteristics of Participating Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Healthy Schools Participants (n = 62)</th>
<th>All Schools in State (n = 1,752)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/missing</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free or Reduced-Price Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-49%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-74%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-100%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Locale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural or small town</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minnesota Teacher Honored as Healthy Schools Program Champion

Nancy Duwenhoegger is a physical education (PE) teacher at Loring School in Minneapolis. She is responsible for a number of creative initiatives that make her school a healthy environment. Currently, the Loring School places great importance on PE and ensures that each PE class is 60 minutes and that recess precedes lunch. Duwenhoegger also remodeled the academic health program to reflect a greater focus on teaching topics relevant to fitness and nutrition, reduced the amount of unhealthy foods served at school holiday events, removed staff vending machines from school grounds and introduced physical activity breaks into classrooms.

Her work with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation helped her access the resources necessary to affect widespread healthy change at Loring. The Bronze National Recognition Award the school received from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation is in large part due to her effort.
The Healthy Schools Inventory is an interactive online tool designed to help guide schools through the process of conducting a needs assessment, prioritizing action steps and developing a customized action plan for school health and wellness. All schools are encouraged to complete the Inventory soon after they begin participating in the program and at least once each year thereafter.

The Healthy Schools Inventory is based on the Healthy Schools Program Framework and requires responses in seven content areas (i.e., Policy/Systems, School Meals, Competitive Foods and Beverages, Health Education, Physical Education, Student Wellness and Employee Wellness). The scoring rubric designates three levels of recognition for achievement: Bronze, Silver and Gold. The evaluation team uses the Healthy Schools Inventory to assess change in school policies and

![Figure 1. Percent of schools showing an improvement of at least one item in each content area of the Healthy Schools Inventory for Minnesota (n = 38 schools) and for all states (n = 2,917 schools).]
SUCCESS STORIES:
Engaging High School Students in School Garden Activities
HIGHLAND PARK SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL | ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

It has been almost ten years since the staff at Highland Park started their community garden. They started with an area that was 1,000 square feet and later received more grant funds to expand into a 30,000 "outdoor learning center." The purpose of the garden, according to teacher Kari Rise, is to “inspire people to be active in their community, teach about health/food/ecology and provide an urban natural space.”

Over the years the garden has inspired a diverse array of projects. One group used the space to host a movement and performance piece about the Vietnam War. They started an “Art in the Garden,” program which brought together students of art, history and psychology with special education students. One year they placed a Raku kiln in the garden and students could experiment with creating this unique form of Japanese pottery, dating back to the 16th century, in a traditional, outdoor setting.

According to Rise, it is not difficult to convince the older students to help with the garden. “They love it! They beg to go out to the garden on beautiful days. Sure, there are always a few that say, ’I don’t want to get dirty,’ but overall they want time to work, explore, play and chill in the garden. It inevitably brings up stories about their families and the gardens they grew up in.” Students help in the spring getting the soil prepared and doing some planting and they help with harvesting in the fall and “putting the garden to bed” for the winter. Then they rely on other groups to help in the summer.

A community partner, Farm in the City, has provided the school with a garden manager each summer. They have had different groups come to help maintain the garden over the summer months, from graduate students studying urban agriculture and a group of local organic chefs, to a group of deaf Hmong farmers that started a small farmer’s market. The space has been farmed by a PhD student researching hazelnuts and a local recovery group. Teachers have used the space to teach science, art, math, literature and staff and students have used the space to meet with each other, eat lunch or meditate. All produce and flowers grown are used for a CSA (community supported agriculture) program or given to local food banks.

Being Active Outside Despite the Cold
SAWTOOTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | GRAND MARAIS, MINNESOTA

Last spring, while students across the country started enjoying warmer temperatures, students at Sawtooth Elementary in Northern Minnesota were making the most of the coldest days of winter on snowshoes! The Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation granted the Grand Marais Campus PTA money to purchase snowshoes for the school.

Teachers have taken their students outside to introduce them to snowshoeing. While some students found themselves fatigued by the exercise, they also found themselves exhilarated. Students enjoyed exploring the great outdoors in the crisp winter air and could be heard saying, "I want to get my own snowshoes!"

The snowshoes have even helped to increase parent participation in their children's classroom, providing intergenerational education and interaction. Parents and children learned about a beneficial form of physical activity that encourages everyone to spend more time outdoors during the long Minnesota winters. Introducing the students, teachers and parents to a life-long exercise they can do during the winter months will benefit the individuals and the whole community for years to come.
Families Take Advantage of Physical Activity Opportunities
BRYN MAWR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

The Bryn Mawr School in Minneapolis, a member of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Schools Program, is showing its commitment to health education and physical activity through a variety of school-based programs that engage students and families in exciting and innovative ways to help them prioritize eating better and moving more.

Every Tuesday the school hosts family open gym night. The two school gyms are open for families to use, the smaller gym for younger children and the bigger gym for older children and teens. Parents run floor hockey, basketball, soccer and other games. Physical education teacher Anita Chavez, in partnership with the Parent Teachers Association, requested a permit from the district for use of the facility. Chavez said she didn’t have a problem getting the permit for this use. “Our families and our kids come first,” she said, and when speaking about activities connected to the wellness action plan, “my principal fully supports everything we do.”

In addition to gym night, for the past seven years Chavez has partnered with the City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation’s Executive Director John Munger to coordinate an eight-week cross country skiing unit for third through fifth graders. All skis, poles, boots and gloves are donated to students for use in the program. Nutrition and physiology are taught as part of the program—students learn about the importance of calcium and iron as well as lessons on the functioning of the muscles, heart and lungs. “Even when the wind chill puts temperatures below zero the students go outside,” Chavez said.

At the end of the unit, the foundation sponsors a banquet of healthy food for students and families. Chavez says the program is not only engaging for students while they participate but stressed that the excitement about the sport carries on after the unit is over. “After the unit is done, parents and students are still skiing.” Chavez lends out skiing equipment to parents for family use. Like the Tuesday gym nights, the skiing program engages both students and their parents, raising awareness about healthy living and creating community wellness events that generate excitement.

As the physical activity pieces get whole families moving, students at Bryn Mawr are receiving health education to teach them about healthy living. “The district doesn’t have funding for health education,” said Chavez, so she solicited a donation of a K-5 health curriculum from a contact at publisher Houghton Mifflin. Teachers share donated materials which include overheads and books. First and third graders also get health lessons from educators from the University of Minnesota Extension program.

The community involvement and awareness of healthy living is paying off with students. Third grader Zach Carlson informed his family that they could only eat half of a dessert they were eating because there was too much sugar. He also talked about dumping out dressing the family had because it wasn’t healthy. “We never told him to do that,” Chavez said as she joked with Zach’s father about the comment. Chavez has a student-choice focused approach to change. “Our program is about making kids more aware. I can tell you and show you and give you all the information [about healthy living] but it’s your body.”