

STUDENTS EAT HEALTHY AND MOVE MORE WITH NEW WELLNESS POLICY

District policy alters parent, student and staff ideas about the health of the school environment

Public Health Problem

- The rate of obesity among New York children is increasing.
- Even children are susceptible to the harmful effects of obesity, such as increased rates of diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Improving the school food environment is a key strategy to help children adopt better eating habits and become more physically active in order to prevent obesity and chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

Program

- The Heart Links Project of Suffolk and Nassau Counties, funded by the New York State Health Department's Healthy Heart Program, teamed up with twenty-seven school districts encompassing 137 schools.
- One of these districts, Valley Stream District 13, promoted awareness, education and policy change for healthy eating and physical activity.
- A district-wide wellness committee formed, conducted staff and parent education and recommended a comprehensive wellness policy increasing access to healthy food throughout the school day and encouraging physical activity.
- The Board of Education adopted the wellness policy for this district.

Impact

- The wellness policy adopted by the Board of Education created these meaningful changes in the school environment for over two thousand students:
 - Snack and beverage choices offered for sale in the cafeteria are more healthful (low-fat plain milk, water and 100% fruit juice in reasonable portion sizes, more emphasis on fresh fruit and vegetables) and must adhere to set nutrition standards
 - Food may not be used as a reward and physical activity may not be withheld as a punishment.
 - Classroom celebrations may incorporate physical activity and are non-food related.
 - Fundraisers taking place during the school day omit food.
- District Superintendent Dr. Elizabeth Lison says, "From exercise to diet and nutrition, the relationship between the district and Heart Links has changed the way our parents, students and professional community think about health."
- The message children now receive at school is that having fun doesn't depend on unhealthy food and that healthy snacks are tasty - lessons that leave a lasting impact.

Contact

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