

SYRACUSE SCHOOLS DELIVER HEALTH TO STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY

Assessment of school environments leads district schools to take steps toward wellness

Public Health Problem

- Onondaga County is the site of the Syracuse City School District which is the largest district in central New York. About two thirds of county residents are overweight or obese.
- Like other parts of the country, many students here have poor eating and activity habits contributing to the risk of becoming obese and developing chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.
- Good eating and activity habits supported by a healthy school environment help students stay healthy now and in the future and prepare them to reach their academic potential.

Program

- A district-wide Wellness Advisory Committee met to plan improvements in the schools of the Syracuse City School District which has a population of over 22,000 students.
- This committee of school leaders, administrators, teachers, students, parents and community representatives planned an assessment of district school environments using the School Health Index developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and recommended policy changes.
- An outside consultant compiled a district-side analysis of the assessment results.

Impact

- This initiative leveraged \$100,000 in additional funding from The Buffalo Community Health Foundation to support a wellness facilitator position to coordinate implementation of comprehensive school district wellness policies, to provide individual assistance to schools and to buy Fitnessgram software and a server for district-wide availability of student fitness tracking.
- Almost all district schools completed the School Health Assessment and have taken steps toward wellness, including:
 - Implementation of the Take 10! classroom-based physical activity program, bringing movement into the academic setting as a part of language arts, math, social studies, science, and health classes
 - Formation of individual school wellness committees in all schools
 - Display of nutrition information in school cafeterias and other areas of district schools
 - Development and district-wide distribution of a Wellness Toolkit and guidelines for healthy classroom snacks
 - Development of a wellness newsletter highlighting individual school accomplishments

Contact

Jackie Shostack
Onondaga County Health Department
315-435-3280
hljshos@ongov.net