

## **UTAH SCHOOLS ACHIEVE MEDALS FOR HEALTHY BEHAVIORS**

*Awards program honors elementary schools for establishing important wellness policies*

### **Public Health Problem**

- One quarter of Utah's school-age children are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.
- Few elementary schools have policies that promote physical activity and good nutrition.
- Students who are physically active and make healthy food choices not only get higher test scores but are also preventing future chronic disease.

### **Program**

- The Gold Medal Schools program works by helping schools develop strong health policies and make changes to the school environment that support good nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco prevention
- The program was developed by the Utah Department of Health using the State Office of Education's core curriculum and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on overweight and obesity. Four years later Intermountain HealthCare began partnering with the Gold Medal Schools program enabling the program to expand to reach more than half of the state's elementary schools, students, faculty, and staff.
- The program's mission is to create opportunities for students to eat healthy, be active and stay tobacco-free.
- Schools can complete five levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum and Platinum Focus. Several levels include monetary incentives that can be used to purchase physical activity, nutrition, or tobacco prevention resources. Examples of the criteria for these monetary incentives include establishing a student walking program, implementing a policy requiring 90-150 minutes of structured physical activity each week, implementing a policy for all teachers and staff requiring that food not be used as a reward or a punishment for students, and establishing faculty and staff wellness programs.

### **Impact**

- Over 5,500 policy and environmental changes have been implemented.
- Almost seventy percent of Title 1 schools have participated.
- Almost seventy percent of all public elementary schools have participated.
- All but one school district has participated.
- GMS Power-Up, a program that extends the Gold Medal Schools program to middle/junior high schools has been developed and implemented with initial participation by ten middle/junior high schools.

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