

## Success Stories

Following are some school success stories in counties throughout Michigan that have made a commitment to make the school environment healthier. The road to change for some schools has been challenging but the rewards are plenty. Michigan Team Nutrition hopes that these success stories will inspire other schools to achieve a healthy school environment. To read more success stories and post your school's success story, please visit <http://www.mihealthtools.org/schoolsuccess/>

### Classroom Nutrition Education

**Wenona Center, Bay City, Bay County**  
**Enrollment: 300**

Our "School Health Team" held a meeting early in the school year to brainstorm ideas to incorporate into our curriculum. Ms. Ann Jay, Director of the Central Michigan University (CMU) Dietetic Internship Program, attended our meeting and offered to contact CMU students in her program to find out if they would be interested in providing "nutrition" lessons to our students.

What a wonderful idea that turned out to be! For five months, every first Friday, three or four CMU students would drive all the way to Bay City to present nutrition topics ranging from "cooking for one" to "healthy snacks." These students, who are not training to be teachers, did a terrific job of holding the attention of our alternative/at-risk students. Our Wenona students gladly met the CMU students in a classroom for the nutrition lesson, which always included a game as well as, often homemade, healthy snacks provided by the CMU students.

I cannot say enough about the terrific job the Central Michigan University students did, and the valuable advice, information and role-modeling they provided our Wenona students.

## Healthier A la Carte

**Saugatuck Middle & High School, Saugatuck, Allegan County**  
Enrollment: 170

Spurred by the implementation of the school wellness policy, Saugatuck Middle/High School students brought about positive changes in the foods offered in the cafeteria and vending machines.

The process began when the school updated its Healthy School Action Tool (HSAT) and began to implement its wellness policy. Four high school students were asked by the Coordinated School Health Team (CSHT) to provide suggestions for food choices they would like to see offered.

Food focus groups were held with seven middle school students and four high school students. The students tasted various healthy food options, such as pizza with whole wheat crust and were asked to make suggestions for new food choices. The high school students conducted a taste-test for vending items and surveyed their peers. These student activities were scheduled during study hall time.

Following the food taste tests, students suggested healthier vending machine options such as power and protein bars, peanuts, trail mix and Chex mix. A mini-grant was received through the high school's Student Wellness Implementation Program to provide the vending machine.

## Healthier Vending

**West Middle School, Holland, Ottawa County**  
Enrollment: 750

Our Food Service Director was able to obtain a renewal for a fresh fruits and veggies grant from the United Dairy Council and Michigan Action for Healthy Kids to purchase a healthy foods vending machine. A decision was made to combine the grants and offer fresh fruits and vegetables in the refrigerated vending machine for free during lunch time and after school.

A survey was given to the students to see what kinds of foods they'd like to have in the machine. Consequently, since we have a great diversity of students we are trying fruits and vegetables from all over the world. It would be difficult to measure success of this venture with numerical data. More significant are the changes being seen and heard in attitudes and actions: One student shared that she had never had fresh pineapple before, and it was really good, so she asked her mom to buy some. An observation made during lunchtime was that the variety of foods have become bridge-builders between cultures as some students explain to others how their family prepares/eats certain fruits and vegetables, and where they come from and how they grow.

The most amazing phenomenon is after-school student choices. Previously, there would be a crowd in front of the soda machines that are turned on after school. However, when there are fresh veggies available students go there first. When fruit is available it means that the crowd is in the cafeteria in front of the new vending machine which has small fruit parfaits or smoothies. You have to stand in line for a healthy snack!!!

## Healthy Fundraising

Keith Elementary School, West Bloomfield, Oakland County  
Enrollment: 630

Two years ago, Suzanne Cowles, Principal of Keith Elementary School, Bloomfield, MI, part of the Walled Lake Consolidated Schools shared her vision of a healthy school environment with the PTA Executive Board. Principal Cowles went to each classroom on curriculum night and had an open, honest dialogue to give parents facts about the health of students. The parents were informed of the changes that would take place in the school as endorsed by the PTA Executive Board.

School policies were developed that support only fruits and vegetables for snacks, no soda is permitted at lunch, no eatable birthday treats and absolutely no food as reward. Only nutritious, low-fat foods are served at staff meetings, PTA meetings and at the Principal's Breakfast. The school said good-bye to pizza parties, donuts and bake sales and hello to "Fresh Fruit Friday."

The school has gym three times a week; teachers used pedometers to participate in Count Your Step, a county fitness initiative. After 15 years of trying to raise enough money to build a running track, this year the PTA showed its support by foregoing the usual food fundraiser and sponsored a staff volleyball game for a fundraiser. Over 80 percent of the Keith Elementary Staff wholeheartedly supported the idea and signed on to play. So many tickets were sold (\$5) that the event had to be moved to a larger facility. Excitement filled the air as hundreds of fans poured in to cheer for their favorite staff member's team. As an added attraction, students purchased tickets to shoot hoops at half-time to win prizes. Items such as a plasma TV and an event in a sports arena suite were also up for raffle. By the time the healthy, fun event concluded, the PTA profit was over \$10,000 and a lap-running event brought in \$25,000. The school opened a new track on Tuesday, September 4th, 2007, at a community picnic to welcome students back for the beginning of the new school year.

To better inform parents of the need for good nutrition in the home, Principal Cowles and the Healthy School Action Team (HSAT), started the Family Bookbag program for second-grade students. "I had one mother tell me her daughter finally understands there is no nutritional value in a doughnut," Cowles said. "It is getting through." "We decided to become part of the solution instead of part of the problem," Cowles said.

## School Stores/Concessions

**Clague Middle School, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County**  
Enrollment: 750

The after-school crowd at Clague Middle School is now enjoying healthy snacks purchased at their school store; the Cougar Den. Students munch on fruit snacks, oat bars, sugar-free gum, low-fat ice cream and water instead of the candy, snack cakes and pop.

Since profits from the Cougar Den directly benefit the Special Ed program, teachers operating the store were reluctant to change to healthier foods in the store fearing revenue loss would adversely affect their program. Project Healthy Schools (PHS) team members worked directly with teachers who operate the store to transform it from a candy/junk den to a store filled with healthier choices. The principal was fully supportive and garnered financial backing from the PTSO to cover losses the store might initially incur when it changed to healthier foods.

For nutrition guidelines in making change, the PHS team used the Michigan Action for Healthy Kids snack criteria and the University of Michigan "M Fit" guidelines. The PHS team also sought student input through a sign posted near the store asking for student suggestions on healthier snacks. Some taste-testing was also conducted in the cafeteria. When the healthier foods were first introduced at Clague, students mildly protested the changes but they quickly adapted to the new foods. Initially profits decreased but profits have been rebounding and are almost back to original levels.

Clague is now in its third year of PHS and a key to their ongoing success is principal, Michael Hecker, who actively supports healthy lifestyles. Keys to Clague's healthy school store financial success is marketing, merchandising and listening to the customer. Healthy foods need to be visible and displayed so students have easy access. While fresh fruit and yogurt were requested by students, they did not sell when hidden in a refrigerator. Future plans call for another student survey so the store will continue to meet student demand, aggressive marketing to athletes, and new food items such as cheese, low-fat yogurt smoothies, lower calorie power bars and some better looking and better displayed fruit. Sometimes getting kids to make healthier choices is all about the presentation!

Special Ed programs are still fully funded at Clague and students have healthier options in their school store.

## Farm to School Initiative

**Traverse City West High School, Traverse City, Grand Traverse County**  
Enrollment: 1500

Traverse City Area Public Schools offered opportunities for all their schools to celebrate National School Lunch Week with menus highlighting apples purchased from local farms. Traverse City West, led by food service guru Theresa Benedick, in partnership with the Michigan Land Use Institute, arranged to have Mark Dougherty, a local fruit farmer, come in and offer the students a variety of apples at all lunches.

Sliced apple samples were available to all the students and Mark entertained them while educating them. He then went into the physical education/health classes and talked about farming and our sources of food. Student response was fantastic. In addition to this, an apple/chicken/walnut salad and wrap was offered for lunch. One of the nutrition and food classes here at West manned another station, highlighting cherry smoothies, using frozen local cherries and yogurt. Another huge hit! The cost of the apples and cherries was absorbed by food service, which is already purchasing local fruit for the schools. The Every Step Counts grant pays a small stipend to the farmers for every presentation they do in the schools.

Several of the elementary schools have taken advantage of this and are following West's example by having farmers come in and talk to the students about the benefits of fresh, local produce. Nutrition and education about growing food and how it happens is being woven into the curriculum in a very hands-on, visual way. The partnership with the Michigan Land Use Institute continues to be very rewarding.

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### **Family/Community Involvement**

**Buchanan School, Grand Rapids, Kent County**  
**Enrollment: 510**

How many times have you heard that breakfast is the most important meal? I bet not as many times as our students at Buchanan Elementary. Every tummy ache that finds its way to the school health office is asked "Did you eat breakfast today?" I wish I had a dollar for every student who says, "I didn't have time." Just because they hear frequent reminders about the importance of a healthy breakfast, doesn't mean our students are going to make a better effort to eat it. Many people, including parents, think it takes up too much time in an already hectic morning. So, instead of "telling" them one more time, our school nurse decided to "show" them a way to have breakfast that is tasty, quick and easy.

Traditionally, our school has a very good parent turnout for parent/teacher conferences, so this seemed to be a good time and place to set up a food demonstration table. On these two nights, the nurse processed breakfast smoothies right before the families' eyes. Students, parents and staff alike, watched in amazement, as the nurse and parent volunteers worked their "magic," adding yogurt, apple cider, fresh bananas, strawberries and ice to the blender. Even the nurse was surprised at how fast she could whip up a pitcher! Everyone was convinced this breakfast treat was easy, but was it tasty? The taste-testing that followed, brought on big smiles, nods of approval and loud requests for more.

Take-home recipes were available in both English and Spanish, much to the delight of our mainly Hispanic families. In addition, a blender was given to one family as a door prize each night. Meijer, Inc., our major corporate school sponsor, gladly donated them for this healthy promotion. This is a small example of how schools, parents and the business community can work together to encourage and promote healthy lifestyles in our children.

## Physical Activity: Before/After School Programs

**Sugarbush Elementary School, New Baltimore, Macomb County**  
Enrollment: 425

Extra physical education offerings encourage students at Sugarbush Elementary to live healthy, active lifestyles. Sugarbush's physical education teacher, Matt Pollock, is an active member of the school's Coordinated School Health Team. During his tenure at Sugarbush, Matt has exemplified his commitment to helping his students achieve healthy lifestyles. Matt recognized a need to increase student opportunities to exercise and extended the school day experience to include after-school intramurals for students in fourth and fifth grades. The intramural sports have had a focus on floor hockey and volleyball and have been expanded to include students with both mental and physical challenges. The program is offered multiple times throughout the school year.

The program itself has been an overwhelming success! Parents and students often ask when the intramural sports program will be offered. Last year, Sugarbush had 120 students eligible to participate. Eighty-four of the 120 students participated in the program. Matt, with the help of two special education teachers, developed a Special Olympics Team for those students at Sugarbush that were not able to participate in the after-school intramural program. Sugarbush's Special Olympic Team participated in the Macomb County Special Olympics.

The after-school intramural program and Special Olympics Team have numerous benefits for the student population. Participation in the program helps build school spirit and self-esteem. Students from the various classes are able to learn, play and compete together. Students truly want to be in the program, so the intensity level of the competition and sense of teamwork is high. The program insures yet another opportunity for students to build cardiovascular and endurance levels. Matt is dedicated to expanding and improving a program that he believes provides his students with the foundation for a healthy future.

## Physical Activity Breaks in the Classroom

**West Bendle Elementary School, Burton, Genesee County**  
Enrollment: 280

Being Physically Fit: Body and Mind, is a goal at West Bendle Elementary School. Like many other schools, students at West Bendle do not have physical education classes every day. As part of its comprehensive health program, classroom teachers at this upper elementary school (grades 3-5) were introduced to the TAKE 10! curriculum. Take 10! is a classroom-based physical activity program for students in grades K-5. As the name implies, Take 10! provides teachers with age-appropriate physical activities that can be safely implemented in the classroom.

We particularly liked Take 10! because it is a very simple program that integrates academic learning objectives with movement. The program is relatively low-cost (\$79 per classroom) and teachers can implement it without any additional training.

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The students love the short breaks during the school day and return to their studies more alert and ready to work.

When we first implemented Take 10! the curricula was purchased for all classroom teachers. When special education teachers learned about the program from their students and from the general education teachers, they requested copies of the program to use in their classrooms.

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## Recess Before Lunch

**St. Gerard Catholic School, Lansing, Eaton County**  
**Enrollment: 507**

Our Coordinated School Health Team reviewed the research that indicated that recess before lunch was more beneficial for students and made the decision to make that transition in August 2006.

There were concerns over students coming in with winter clothing on and tracking snow into the cafeteria. We also needed a new procedure for separating hot lunch and cold lunch students. It was a process that took some time and attention (for example, we needed to purchase some extra-long matting to take care of the snow that was brought in with the students) but the transition has been successfully accomplished. It is our feeling that students are both taking the time to eat as well as eating more of their lunches now that they don't worry about running outside. Additionally, the teachers report that students are more settled when coming back to the classroom than they used to be when returning from the playground.

There was some initial opposition to this plan, and executing it was more challenging than we had originally anticipated, but thanks to the collaboration between both the teaching and cafeteria staff, we were able to overcome it. Change is usually difficult, especially when "that's the way we've always done it" is the prevailing mentality. Because of the willingness to meet this as a challenge rather than see it as a change to be resisted, we were able to introduce something to our school that appreciably changed the lives of our students for the better in academics as well as physical education.

## Family/Community Involvement in Support of PA/PE

**Fern Persons Elementary School, Olivet, Eaton County**  
Enrollment: 455

At Fern Persons Elementary School teachers recognize that general coordination skills have a direct impact on student academic achievement. We offer two 25-minute physical education classes weekly. We have one full-time physical education instructor for 22 classrooms serving a total of 455 students and one gym for instruction. This just isn't enough activity for 5 year-old students. Therefore, our kindergarten staff developed a program called "Brainercise."

Brainercise is a combination of ideas from three programs; Dr. Thom Johnson's Project 1st Step, Dr. Robert Sornson's Motor Development and the Brain Gym program. The kindergarten teachers wrote a successful proposal to purchase physical education equipment to be used for Brainercise and \$3,000 was spent on exercise equipment, shelving units, storage bins and boxes.

The teachers designed a physical education storage room and organized all of the equipment and the skill objective/lesson plans to go with each piece of equipment. The teachers recruited community members and parents as trainers in the Brainercise activities. Each day of the week one to two trained volunteers work with kindergarten students on various balance and coordination activities. Brainercise volunteers pull two to three students from the five kindergarten classrooms for 10-12 minutes and supervise them as they work through the various stations which are set up in the hallway. Now during a school week the kindergarten student will participate in regular physical education class two times a week and Brainercise two to three times a week.

Kindergarten teachers and students are reaping the rewards of increased physical activity during the school day. Students think they are playing but the teachers know that a great deal of learning is taking place and the benefits spill over into the classroom with an improvement in following oral directions, improved fine motor skills and an improvement in overall coordination. It's a total mind and body workout!

## Opportunities for Staff for Physical Activity

**Traverse City West High School, Traverse City, Grand Traverse County**  
Enrollment: 1500

After completing the HSAT, one area that Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS) truly needed to improve upon was the concept of staff wellness. While many strides have been made offering multiple opportunities for students to increase physical activity before, during and after school, not much has been done to offer the same opportunities to staff.

Bonnie Gotshall, Traverse City West's physical education specialist, offered educational sessions and some activities last year, but one of the requests of staff had been for small group sessions with a personal trainer. TCAPS and Every Step Counts (our PEP grant program) was able to form a partnership with The Fitness Center, a health

and fitness club in Traverse City. The managers of the center have children in the Traverse City schools and wanted to reach out to greater numbers of adults as well as children. One of the obstacles with staff wellness is that activities were not being offered onsite, thus, staff felt the time crunch and the difficulty of getting to another site.

The Fitness Center agreed to come to West Senior High School and offer small group training sessions and a Fit Ball session twice a week for interested staff. They offer this for an extremely reasonable fee and provide the instructor and equipment, if necessary.

This allows staff, not only to be healthier, but to be strong role models and advocates of healthy lifestyle choices.

### **Creative Ways to Involve Families to be Physically Active**

**Galesburg-Augusta Intermediate School, Augusta, Kalamazoo County  
Enrollment: 1200**

In order to improve the physical condition and health of the students in the 4th and 5th grades, the school offered students the opportunity to participate in an At-Home Physical Fitness Program. A parent letter and verification form was sent home with each student.

Each week the students returned their exercise-at-home form to receive credit. Students that participated in exercise three to four times a week would qualify for the Maroon Fitness Club and students that participated five to seven days qualified for the Gold Fitness Club. In order to qualify for a day of exercise the student had to:

1. Exercise outside the normal school day
2. Exercise for 20 continuous minutes
3. Perform an exercise that raised the heart rate

Activities varied greatly, depending on the child's interests. Some activities that students were encouraged to do included:

1) walking, 2) bike riding, 3) organized team participation, 4) yard work, 5) sit-ups/push-ups and 6) jump rope

As an extra incentive to staying healthy, students who participated in three to four days of exercise received a certificate/ribbon. Students that participated in five to seven days of exercise received bonus awards that included:

- Week 1: One-day pass to Sherman Lake YMCA
- Week 2: Free Kalamazoo Kingdom Soccer ticket
- Week 3: Family Pass to Kalamazoo Kings Baseball game
- Week 4: Free round of miniature golf at Putters

The honor system was employed; it was agreed that students should only be rewarded for actual days of exercise, therefore students and parents were asked to be honest when filling out their verification forms.