

Project Healthy Schools

A Community – University of Michigan Collaboration



What is Project Healthy Schools?

Project Healthy Schools (PHS) is a middle-school based health education program designed to improve the current and future health of Michigan's youth. Participants make significant improvements in health behaviors and health risk factors. This evidence based program encourages healthy habits through education, environmental change, and measurement.

Education

- Hands-on health education lessons
- Family engagement activities with each lesson
- Bulletin board displays promoting wellness
- Learning enhancement through classroom physical activity breaks
- Online lessons and resources
- Professional development for educators

Environment

- School-wide wellness activities before, during and after school
- Promotion of healthier food and beverage options
- Additional opportunities for daily physical activity
- School wellness policy review
- Communication with staff and families
- Farm-to-school and garden programs
- Staff wellness initiatives
- Formation of a school wellness team
- Identification of a school wellness champion
- Improved culture of wellness

Measurement

- School wellness assessments
- Healthy eating assessments
- Pre-/post-program health behavior questionnaires
- Program satisfaction surveys
- Optional pre-/post-program health screenings
- Other quality assessment tools

Project Healthy Schools' five simple goals:

- 1. Eat more fruits and vegetables**
- 2. Choose less sugary foods and beverages**
- 3. Eat less fast and fatty foods**
- 4. Be physically active every day**
- 5. Spend less entertainment time in front of a screen**



Childhood obesity: why we started Project Healthy Schools

Since 1970, childhood obesity rates nearly quadrupled for children two to nineteen years old. Today, about 13.7 million children and adolescents are obese.

Up to 60 percent of obese children have at least one cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factor, such as elevated total cholesterol, triglycerides, insulin, or blood pressure, and 25 percent have two or more CVD risk factors. Obesity also increases the risk for type 2 diabetes, cancer, kidney disease, and many other chronic conditions.



Without intervention, about 90 percent of these youth are on track to become obese adults. In addition to the health risks, obesity is a financial burden to the nation's already compromised resources. Annually, \$219 billion of the United States healthcare costs are attributed to heart disease, \$147 billion to obesity, and \$117 billion to physical inactivity. Childhood obesity alone contributes to \$14 billion in direct medical costs.

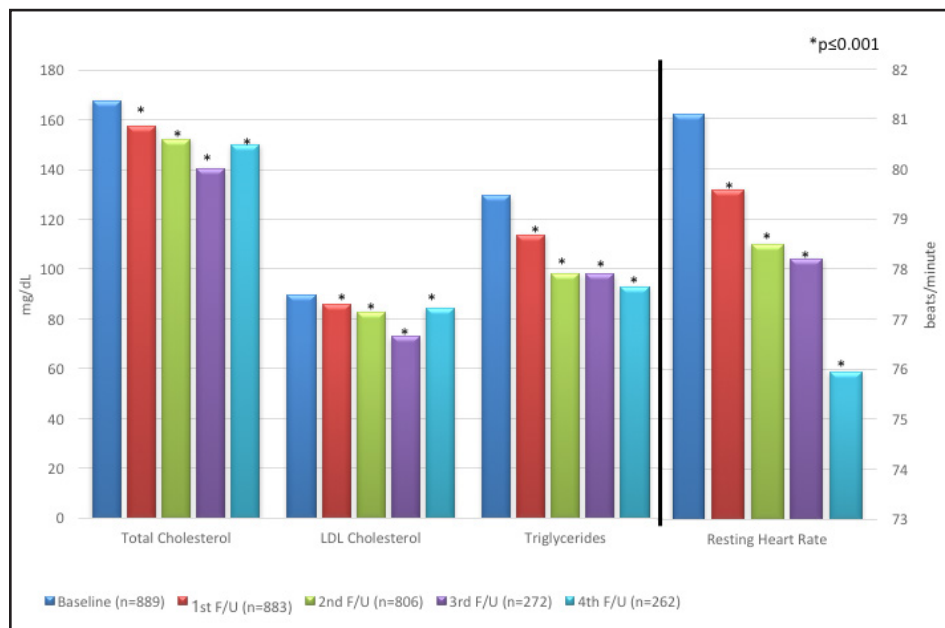
With alarming statistics about the dramatic rise of childhood obesity over the last four decades, experts agree that individuals and the communities in which they live

must work together to end this destructive, yet preventable, disease.

Project Healthy Schools' mission is to bring the rich resources, experience, and expertise of each local community and the University of Michigan together to create a model school-based program that supports healthy children and families. The program targets middle-school students when they are at an age of increasing autonomy. This is the perfect time to give them the information and practice they need to make healthy choices that lead to healthy habits across a lifetime.

Reaping what we sow: measuring our success

Changes in Physiological Measures over Four Years: Sixth-Grade Baseline to Ninth-Grade



The graph above shows that students participating in Project Healthy Schools make lasting health improvements.

Since Project Healthy Schools began in 2004, more than 150 schools in over 50 counties of Michigan have implemented this sustainable program. More than 140,000 sixth-grade students and their teachers have benefited from the program to date, and Project Healthy Schools continues to expand throughout Michigan each year.

We have been tracking data from the beginning to help give us concrete evidence of the medical and behavioral benefits of the program. Project Healthy Schools research published in the December 2015 issue of the American Journal of Public Health shows that students' cardiovascular risk factors improved after participating in the program, compared to when they began the program. These benefits were sustained over four years. Additionally, despite worse baseline measures compared to students from high-income communities, students from low-income communities showed similar and sustained behavioral and physiological improvements after the interventions provided by the PHS program.

Partnering for success

Project Healthy Schools attracts collaborators from across the university, region and state

Building Healthy Communities

Since 2013, Project Healthy Schools has added 8 new schools each school year with support from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan through the Building Healthy Communities partnership. This private-public partnership is designed to improve student and staff wellness through school-based programming, health education, and environmental change.

Social-Emotional Learning

In partnership with the Michigan Model for Health, schools are connected to a social-emotional health curriculum and resources to support social-emotional learning at their school. Topic areas discussed include stress management, emotion awareness and regulation, kindness, and gratitude.

Food and Nutrition Partnerships

Project Healthy Schools partners with school food service vendors and others to provide supplies for the Rainbow of Color Salad lesson and wellness initiatives such as healthy cooking demonstrations, food tastings and cooking classes. For example, the Michigan Apple Committee provides apples for apple tasting events and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan provides resources to enhance and improve the school lunchroom.

Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs

Through school-based and community partnerships, PHS strives to provide before, during, and after-school programs for students to be physically active for 60 minutes per day. Examples of physical activity programs that PHS funding and support can provide include: classroom-based physical activity breaks, structured lunchtime recess zones, before/after school open gyms and bike education programs. Through participation in such programs, students' build healthy bones and muscles, improve muscular strength and endurance, reduce the risk for developing chronic disease risk factors, improve self-esteem, and reduce stress and anxiety.

University Collaborations

Students from the U-M Schools of Nursing, Public Health and other U-M programs get real-world experience by helping with program implementation. Project Healthy Schools partnered with the U-M's Department of Nephrology to develop a kidney education module, U-M's School of Kinesiology to develop a classroom-based physical activity break intervention, and U-M's Medical School to create educational opportunities on Infectious Disease and COVID-19.



Five steps to success

During the first year, a Project Healthy Schools team member trains the school wellness champion to take over support of the program and provides access to the PHS Portal, a password protected website with all the program materials. The PHS Portal also provides wellness champions with a forum for networking with other schools and it walks them through a five-step implementation process. Milestones guide the wellness champions in their efforts to create and sustain a healthy school environment.

Step 1—Build support: Identify a wellness champion and form a school wellness team.

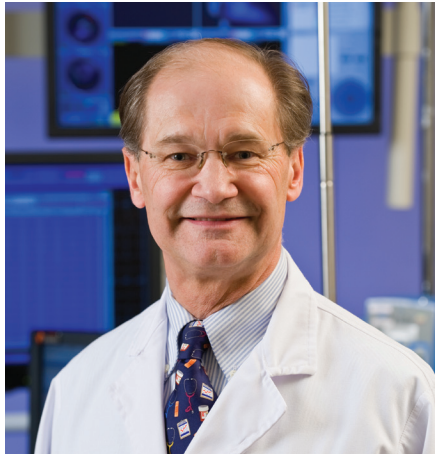
Step 2—Assess school wellness culture: Complete the Healthy Schools Action Tools, and administer the pre-program Health Behavior Questionnaire.

Step 3—Make an action plan: Identify wellness goals based on assessment results, explore resources and create a School Wellness Improvement Plan.

Step 4—Take action: Teach the 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons, hold school-wide wellness initiatives and engage the school community.

Step 5—Measure success: Administer the post-program Health Behavior Questionnaire, complete the post-program surveys, and share both photos and success stories.

A word from our founder



Kim Eagle, M.D., Albion Walter Hewlett Professor of Internal Medicine and director of the Frankel Cardiovascular Center at Michigan Medicine.

We decided early on with Project Healthy Schools that middle school would be the target age group for this program. We spoke with some sociologists and others about when we should target these kids, and we decided that the moment when they break from grade school and move into the middle school, when they're beginning to adopt both adult physicality and adult behaviors would be the right time.

We have been measuring the benefits of Project Healthy Schools from the very beginning through physical data and health behavior questionnaires given to students who receive the PHS lessons.

Through these reports, we have seen consistent, positive modifications in student behaviors. What's exciting for me is that these changes manifest in the measurements that we take of their physiology: reductions in blood pressure; reductions in LDL cholesterol, which is the part of the cholesterol profile that's most dangerous in terms of later heart disease; modest reductions in blood sugar; and, when we measure their step test we've seen improvements in their fitness level. So, what the students are reporting in their health behavior surveys is matching up with what we measure, and that suggests that this program is beneficial and the impact seems to be sustained, which is exciting.

Studies have clearly shown that students who have healthier nutrition and more physical activity perform better in the classroom. They are establishing behaviors now that may last their lifetime. We want to help these kids be the most successful kids they can be, and I'm very proud that the University of Michigan has been such a big force in helping us make this happen.

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Join the project: help fight childhood obesity

Since 2004, Project Healthy Schools has helped students lower their cholesterol and increase healthy behaviors through education and environmental change, both at school and at home.

With your help, Project Healthy Schools can reach even more students, especially in high risk areas where obesity is most prevalent and where programs and resources are scarce. Private support from our donor community helps bring PHS to the communities that have the greatest need.

Your tax-deductible contribution to Project Healthy Schools will help us sustain our current efforts and expand our program into more schools to reach more children. Together, we can improve the health of the next generation.

To donate, go to our website projecthealthyschools.org and click on the "Donate" button, or mail your contribution to **Project Healthy Schools, 3003 S. State St., Wolverine Tower 2060, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1281.**

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