Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools

Program description and application

Eight schools will be selected to begin this healthy school transformation program in the 2013-2014 school year, valued at over $100,000

Applications due May 6, 2013
Introduction

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the University of Michigan are partnering to improve the current and future health of middle school students through school-based education and environmental initiatives. Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools is an opportunity for eight middle schools to participate in the program for three school years. The program goals are:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Make better beverage choices
- Be active
- Eat less fast and fatty foods
- Spend less time in front of a screen

Focusing primarily on the transition grade (fifth or sixth grade students) into middle school, but incorporating activities that engage the entire school, Project Healthy Schools aims to:

- Teach youth healthy habits
- Develop healthy school environments
- Create an infrastructure that supports program sustainability and replication

For partner schools, Project Healthy Schools will provide:

- A hands-on coordinator to get the program established in years one and two that will also work closely with your school to ensure that the program can be sustained over time
- All program materials, such as equipment to support the Project Healthy Schools educational lessons and physical activity events, (which are kept by the school) and training
- Financial resources and expertise to implement healthy eating and physical activity goals set by your school wellness team
- An invitation for your school to participate in our network of other Project Healthy Schools partner schools, where ideas for school wellness are shared

This program is valued at over $100,000 (over three years) at no cost to the school.
Background

Healthy youth who continue to practice healthy lifestyles will grow into healthy adults with fewer risk factors for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic illness. Nearly one in three children in Michigan, ages 10-17, are overweight or obese. Project Healthy Schools is one of the few school-based programs that have demonstrated significant improvements in both health behavior and cardiovascular risk factors.

18,200 middle school students from 33 schools in Michigan have participated in the Project Healthy Schools program, which started in 2004. Of these students, 4,200 have been part of our research. Research results demonstrate that this program has improved the health of the students it has reached.

- Students indicate by standardized questionnaire that they are changing their health behaviors in a favorable way.
- Health screenings show improvements in measures such as serum cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, triglyceride levels, blood sugar, and measures of fitness.
- Children from low/middle income communities’ are at higher risk based on obesity rates and physiologic measures, but appear to get even more benefit from the program.
- Among all schools, children at highest risk based on risk factors such as blood pressure and cholesterol seem to get the most benefit.
- Benefits appear to be sustained, not just after the five-month intervention, but also at the end of years one, two and three following Project Healthy Schools.

Benefit to schools

Evidence is mounting that kids who eat well and are active are better equipped to do well in school, including improved test scores and attention. The health and academic success of Michigan’s children is vital to the future of our state.

In addition to supporting academic goals, Project Healthy Schools will help your school navigate the changing rules regarding foods and beverages offered, served and sold in school. Project Healthy Schools has been working with schools for nine years to encourage healthier options in all aspects of the school environment and has accumulated vast experience, knowledge and resources that will help your school adapt to these changes.

To learn more about Project Healthy Schools and how to implement this exciting, educational and influential program at your school, continue reading!

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Eligibility

- Public, charter or private nonprofit schools in Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, Washtenaw or Wayne Counties may apply.
- Schools must be a middle school or junior high with fifth or sixth grade as the first grade in the school.
- Schools cannot already have the Project Healthy Schools program in their school.

School expectations

To be considered for the Project Healthy Schools program, schools must commit to:

- Partner with Project Healthy Schools to implement all components of the program: education, environmental changes and measurement (see program description for details).
- Identify key personnel to support and sustain the program.
- Commit to a three-year partnership with Project Healthy Schools:
  - Year one: The Project Healthy Schools coordinator provides program materials, training and consultation to implement the program in your school and begins training the wellness champion (an identified school staff member) in their role.
  - Year two: The Project Healthy Schools coordinator continues to provide program materials, training and consultation to transition the program to the wellness champion.
  - Year three: The wellness champion will be fully responsible for program implementation. The Project Healthy Schools coordinator will provide materials and be available as a resource.

The wellness champion will be compensated for his or her involvement. Please see the “The wellness champion role” on page 8 for more details on this role.

- Send the principal and wellness champion to a half-day Project Healthy Schools training where they will receive materials, an orientation to the program, and the opportunity to network with other schools participating in Project Healthy Schools. The training is tentatively scheduled for August 28 but participant availability will be considered before the date is finalized.

How to apply

Turn in the completed application starting on page 9 of this packet by 5 p.m. on May 6, 2013. For questions, please contact Jean DuRussel-Weston at 1-734-764-0290 or jduratione@umich.edu. Please also visit www.projecthealthyschools.org for more information about Project Healthy Schools.
Program description

The Project Healthy Schools program has three main components: education, environment and measurement.
Project Healthy Schools strives to develop curriculum that not only emphasizes the five program goals, but also aligns to standards adopted by the State of Michigan. The education component of Project Healthy Schools will be delivered to fifth or sixth grade students. This includes:

1. **A Project Healthy Schools kickoff activity, event or promotion** – Schools will assist with the organization of a PHS kickoff to get kids excited about the program. Project Healthy Schools coordinators have several ideas for this including an assembly and/or skits. The kickoff will be adapted to fit school needs and preferences.

2. **10 educational lessons** – Schools will identify:
   - A class in the school day (minimum 25-minute period) for 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons to fit
   - Teacher(s) to teach the lessons to fifth or sixth grade students
   - Time for the teacher(s) to be trained
   - Space to store the lesson props and materials that Project Healthy Schools will provide

The lessons have been organized so that they are easy to teach. Step-by-step instructions, goals, and additional enrichment activities are all included in the written lessons. There is also a PowerPoint option that will walk teachers and students through the material.

Scheduling of the 10 lessons will be based on what works best for the school (once per week for 10 weeks, twice per week for five weeks, etc.). All materials including reusable props such as fat and muscle models and beverage containers, as well as disposable items such as food and drinks for tastings that go with the lessons, will be provided to the schools by Project Healthy Schools in years one, two and three.

3. **A Healthy Habits Challenge** – Schools will support this fun competition between classes to encourage achievement of healthy goals. It can be done as a one-week or three-week challenge. All materials for the challenge will be provided to the school.

4. **An end of year physical activity event** – Schools will assist in the planning of an end-of-year activity that can be similar to a field day, 5K run or other event to encourage physical activity. If an active end-of-year event already exists, the Project Healthy Schools coordinator will work with school staff to see how they can provide assistance and resources. This event can be for just for fifth or sixth grade students or open to all grades, depending on school preference.
Environmental interventions are an important part of the Project Healthy Schools program. Environmental changes are tailored to the specific school’s needs and can impact students of all grades, as well as benefit staff and families. The basic environmental components include:

5. **Food service partnership** – Schools will facilitate a collaboration between Project Healthy Schools and the food service director regarding promotion of healthy food and beverage options, and, where possible, incorporate local produce/farm-to-school initiatives and student feedback on school meals.

6. **Bulletin board displays** – Schools will identify a bulletin board for Project Healthy Schools health promotion displays. Displays will rotate throughout the year.

7. **Communication with staff and families** – Schools will identify their preferred method for the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to contribute information to staff and families regarding Project Healthy Schools and general health promotion (newsletters, email blasts, announcements, etc.).

8. **Formation of a school wellness team** – The school will be responsible for identifying school wellness team members before Project Healthy Schools begins and for arranging the first meeting. A school wellness team is a group of people with the common interest of creating a healthier school environment.

Teams may include:
- Administrators
- Health teacher
- PE teacher
- Counselor
- Food service staff member
- Parents
- Students
- Interested community members

The Project Healthy Schools coordinator will initially lead the school wellness team by having the committee assess the school’s strengths, identify opportunities to enhance the healthy school environment, and create an action plan. Each school wellness team will craft a plan that works for their school, but examples of team goals may include initiatives such as:

- A school wide physical activity event
- A school wide physical activity incentive program
- A contest to promote healthy eating
- Fundraisers for school wellness initiatives
- A campaign to promote both staff and student wellness

Environment
Every school wellness team will be responsible for raising funds for the disposable items that are used in Project Healthy Schools lessons (including items such as food, tasting cups, forks, plates, etc.) after three years of program implementation. The Project Healthy Schools coordinator will work closely with the school wellness team starting in year one to develop a fundraising plan for program sustainability.

9. **Identification of a wellness champion for program sustainability** – Principals will identify a Project Healthy Schools wellness champion before the program begins. Once identified, the wellness champion will work closely with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to learn the details of how to implement the program. They will take on some Project Healthy Schools duties in year one, more in year two and will be fully responsible for the program in year three, with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator as a resource.

### Measurement

The measurement component for Project Healthy Schools includes:

**10. Pre/post program health behavior questionnaire** - Schools will assist and support the Project Healthy Schools coordinator with administering (get class lists, inform teachers, hand out and collect) the questionnaire to students that receive the Project Healthy Schools educational lessons. The questionnaire asks students about:

- The types of food they eat
- How much screen time (time in front of television or computer screens) and physical activity they get
- Other behaviors that may be affecting their health

Students are encouraged to answer all questions, but participation is not required. All questionnaires are collected and entered into the Project Healthy Schools data registry. The data is coded by numbers. At this point, no individual student may be identified.

**11. Quality assessment tools** – Schools will support the administration of other quality assessment tools to provide program results for the school, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the University of Michigan. These quality assessment tools include surveys for teachers and students regarding their satisfaction and feedback of the Project Healthy Schools lessons.
The wellness champion role

The effort of a Project Healthy Schools wellness champion to teach middle school students about physical activity and healthy eating, as well as to create healthier school environments, makes such an important contribution to improving the health of children! For this important work, the wellness champion will receive a stipend.

The role of the wellness champion is to assist the Project Healthy Schools coordinator in year one, transition to more responsibility in year two and be fully responsible for the program in year three (with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator as a resource) for the following:

- Organizing the Project Healthy Schools kickoff activity, event or promotion
- Scheduling the lessons, teacher training, and other logistics as needed. The wellness champion will also help maintain and organize Project Healthy Schools props and eventually be responsible for shopping for and preparing lesson disposables (food items, forks, etc.)
- Scheduling and promoting the Healthy Habits Challenge
- Communicating Project Healthy Schools and wellness messages to students, staff and families
- Sharing program updates with the Project Healthy Schools network of wellness champions
- Participating on the school wellness team and taking a leadership role as needed; also ensuring that the team establishes methods to raise funds for Project Healthy Schools lesson disposable items after year three.
- Organizing the physically active year-end event (can be a wellness team initiative)
- Rotating Project Healthy Schools bulletin board displays
- Encouraging a healthy school environment

The wellness champion will participate in a self-assessment twice per year and review it with the PHS coordinator to make sure that both parties are satisfied with the partnership.

The principal will identify the wellness champion before the program starts. Some traits to look for when identifying a wellness champion are:

- Organized
- Motivated
- Responsive and follows through
- A leader
- Open to communicating with all staff about Project Healthy Schools (email/meetings)
- Connected to fifth or sixth grade and/or will be teaching the Project Healthy Schools lessons (highly encouraged)
- An advocate for health and wellness!

If preferred, two wellness champions may be selected to split the role and stipend.
Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools

Applications due by 5 p.m. on May 6, 2013

2013-2014 Application

Before completing this application, please be sure to read through the program description in its entirety. Please complete all fields on application.

Project Healthy Schools targets students in transition years: middle school students in 6th grade for 6-7-8 buildings or 5th grade in 5-6 buildings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>County:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of school:</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Public noncharter □ Public charter □ Private</td>
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<td>Grade levels served:</td>
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<td>Total enrollment (2012-2013):</td>
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<td>If a change in enrollment is expected in 2013-2014, please explain here:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<td>Phone number:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Instructors (teachers)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Where and when will Project Healthy Schools lessons be taught? (Example: two-week unit in 5th grade science class, once per week in 6th grade advisory or homeroom, twice per week in 6th grade health class)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Name(s) of teacher(s) who will be teaching lessons</th>
<th>Teacher email(s)</th>
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Each school must designate one or two people to serve as wellness champion who will assist in the successful implementation and sustainability of the Project Healthy Schools program (see “The wellness champion role” description on page 8). A stipend will be provided to reimburse this school leader for his or her time. It is strongly encouraged that this person is a staff member who will be teaching the Project Healthy Schools curriculum (either fifth or sixth grade, depending on the school).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness champion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name(s):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position(s):</td>
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</table>

**Does your school currently have a school health or wellness team?**

- □ Yes
- □ No

If yes, who is currently on your school wellness team? If no, who will be on your wellness team? **Please list members below.** See “Formation of a school wellness team” on page 6 of the program description for more information.

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<tr>
<th>School wellness team</th>
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<th>School cafeteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>Food service director name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are meals prepared:</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ on site</td>
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<td>□ off-site by district and transported to school</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ off-site by vendor and transported to school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone number:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is your school food service managed by:</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Your district</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ A food service company (company name: ___________________________________)</td>
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Please have each team member review the program description, and sign in the appropriate box below. We understand that staffing can change, and adjustments can be made at a later date. Please fill in each line with the person most likely to fill each position. By signing below, each key personnel agree to fulfill all responsibilities as outlined in the program description.

### Team members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name(s) and Signature(s)</th>
<th>□ I have reviewed the program description □ I understand that I will need to attend training in August</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ I have reviewed the program description □ I understand that I will need to attend training in August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellness champion(s)</td>
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<td>□ I have reviewed the program description □ I understand that I will need to attend training in August</td>
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<td>Instructional teacher(s)</td>
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<td>□ I have reviewed the program description □ I have reviewed the program description □ I have reviewed the program description □ I have reviewed the program description □ I have reviewed the program description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food service director</td>
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<td>□ I have reviewed the program description</td>
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### Submitting your application

Turn in the completed application by 5 p.m. on May 6, 2013. You can submit the application by:
- Scanning and emailing to Jean DuRussel-Weston (jdurusse@umich.edu)
- Mail to:
  University of Michigan - Project Healthy Schools
  Jean DuRussel-Weston
  2060 Wolverine Tower
  3003 South State Street
  Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

For questions, contact Jean DuRussel-Weston at (734) 764-0290 or jdurusse@umich.edu

**Schools will be notified of award status by May 31, 2013**
The Building Healthy Communities partners:

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, University of Michigan’s Project Healthy Schools, Wayne State University Center for School Health in the College of Education, the Michigan Fitness Foundation and United Dairy Industry of Michigan have formed the Building Healthy Communities partnership to reach elementary and middle schools across the state. Our mission is to address childhood obesity in Michigan and improve the health of young people, their families and the communities by implementing a comprehensive, school-wide network of physical activity and healthy eating opportunities and education.

Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools is the sister program to Building Healthy Communities: Engaging elementary schools through partnership. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and University of Michigan’s Project Healthy Schools are excited to launch this opportunity for Michigan middle schools.

As a nonprofit health insurance company, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has a unique social mission to promote access to high-quality, affordable health care coverage and improve the health of Michigan residents. Since 2009, Blue Cross has led the Building Healthy Communities program, helping elementary schools and community partners implement nutrition and physical education programs and activities. To date, Blue Cross has awarded more than $2.7 million to the Building Healthy Communities Program in 83 schools and more than 35,000 students. Blues funding, at more than $800,000 per year, anchors the Building Healthy Communities program.

Since 2004, Project Healthy Schools (PHS) a Community-University of Michigan collaborative has provided middle school-based programming to reduce childhood obesity and long-term cardiovascular risk. Over 18,200 students in 33 schools have participated. Outcome measures reveal significant improvement in cardiovascular risk factors and healthy behaviors post-intervention and at 4 year follow up. PHS uses an ecological framework to implement education and promote change in school environment/policies and to engage community support. Interventions are based on five goals: Eat more fruits/vegetables; Make better beverage choices; Exercise at least 150 min/week; Eat less fast/fatty foods; Spend less TV/computer time.