Project Healthy Schools Goals

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Make better beverage choices
- Include at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week
- Eat less fast and fatty food
- Spend less time in front of the TV and computer

Did you know?

- 70 students and 10 teachers from Tyrone Elementary School in Harper Woods avoided drinking soda for the whole month of February!
- A Wellness Champion Toolkit that provides checklists, resources and guidance for all aspects of the PHS program is now available.
- To support the growing number of PHS schools, this past year PHS added three new staff members:
  - Melanie Adams, wellness specialist
  - Cortney Boes, health educator
  - Miriam Dineen, administrative assistant

AstraZeneca Healthcare Foundation funds PHS in low-income schools

Students in low-income, underserved middle schools in the Ypsilanti area and in Detroit, Michigan are getting healthier lunches and more physical activity thanks to Project Healthy Schools (PHS) and grants from AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation’s (AZHCF) Connections for Cardiovascular Health℠ program.

Willow Run Intermediate Learning Center started PHS in 2011 and was one of three Ypsilanti area schools funded by AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation’s first grant of $253,000 in 2010. The other schools include Lincoln Middle School and Ypsilanti Middle School. The grant has brought the program to over 2700 students, and the program continues in these schools thanks to the dedication of school wellness champions appointed and trained by PHS at each location.

“It’s part of our school culture now. I think that it just becomes a habit that the students form. They feel that they are empowered and that they are making good choices for their body,” says Krista Jarvey, a teacher and wellness champion at Willow Run Intermediate Learning Center.

In Michigan, 30.6 percent of youth ages 10 to 17 are overweight or obese. Statistics for Detroit youth are even higher than the national and state measures, with 40% of youth overweight and 20.8% of these youth considered obese.

With PHS’ proven success, and with the concerning statistics in the Detroit community, AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation provided a second grant of $173,000 in 2011 to bring the program to schools in Detroit. Because the need is so great in Detroit, in addition to implementing the usual program curriculum, PHS uses some of the money to enhance the environmental part of the program to meet the needs of the community. For example, PHS added farm to school programs, school gardens, family fun days, cooking demonstrations and tastings of local Michigan produce.

(See AZHCF on back page)
School wellness champions play a vital role in the success of every PHS program. But what exactly do they do? To find out, we spoke with Ellen Hopkins. She teaches math at Clague Middle School in Ann Arbor and serves as the school’s wellness champion.

“I am responsible for making sure that our activities happen,” says Hopkins. “I organize the meetings, gather the volunteers for the events and help maintain communication. I make sure our building principal approves of things when she’s unable to be at meetings.” Hopkins is also the contact person for the PHS coordinator and the health ambassadors that come to teach PHS lessons and she maintains the school’s wellness bulletin board.

In addition to the end of year 5K and the beach volleyball tournament held at Clague for the past five or six years, Hopkins says this year they added a new event, a Relay for Life. It combined walking with field events and information tables. Hopkins says, “The students really felt like they learned things. They felt like they were giving back to their community and so that was a fun and really positive experience for our kids.”

When asked why she volunteered to be the wellness champion for her school, Hopkins said, “I really want our students to have their school experience teach them more than just what they learn in their classroom, and I think that in the wellness champion role I have that opportunity.” She adds, “In my classroom I teach mathematics. I can incorporate related ideas in my classroom, but to be able to teach kids things that are going to be important to their whole life and their personal health is really important to me.”

Hopkins continues, “The kids like the PHS lessons. They love them. They talk about them. They remember them. I hear kids talking about eating healthy and making healthy choices, not wanting to eat at places like McDonalds.”

According to Hopkins, “Middle school is a great time to get kids to learn things that are important life-long lessons and really kind of open their eyes to things that they might not be thinking about themselves or wouldn’t have thought of otherwise.”

Hopkins says being a wellness champion can be both challenging and rewarding. “One of the hardest pieces is trying to get everybody’s excitement turned into action,” says Hopkins. Then she adds, “It’s also one of the most exciting things about it. When we had the Relay for Life, I had so many people coming up to me telling me how wonderful it was. It was just a great day and the kids were all saying that they had a great time, and the parents that volunteered were telling me. So there’s that positive boost you get back too,” enthuses Hopkins.

Virtual storybook teaches PHS goals

Jacoby is an overweight sixth grade boy who dreams of making the middle school baseball team. He is also the main character in a web-based, interactive storybook that teaches kids how making healthy choices can transform their lives. Project Healthy Schools teamed up with U-M’s School of Education and School of Information to create the virtual storybook which was piloted this winter at Ann Arbor’s Tappan Middle School and Willow Run Intermediate Learning Center.

As the middle-school students turn the pages of their virtual storybook they are prompted with questions from Jacoby that call upon their skills as observers and critical thinkers. Their responses to the questions are answered by University of Michigan student mentors in the voices of the characters. The goal is to teach middle-school students about making healthy choices while getting them to consider some interesting topics, use their creative imaginations, and practice their writing with a supportive audience. The U-M mentors are charged with engaging the kids in conversation, offering encouragement, and probing their thinking.

The module, called “Making a Change” is one of several developed around a variety of curriculums under a program called, “Imagination Matters.” The program is the brainchild of Jeff Stanzler, Lecturer II in Education, Educational Studies, U-M School of Education and Maurita Holland, Associate Professor Emerita of Information, U-M School of Information.
Detroit Links brings PHS to DIA using peer educators

Sixth grade students at Detroit International Academy for Young Women (DIA), the only public all girls Kindergarten through Grade 12 program in Michigan, are learning from their high school peers how to make healthier choices. The unique peer-to-peer mentoring program is led by University of Michigan Semester in Detroit student Jeterra Davis-Griggs. It was developed through a partnership between DIA administrators; the Detroit Chapter of Links, Inc., a national public service organization for African American women and Project Healthy Schools (PHS).

A Links member who learned about PHS at a Junior League event approached PHS about bringing the program to DIA. In an effort to engage high school students, PHS suggested a peer-to-peer model. A grant from AstraZeneca Healthcare Foundation funds the PHS program at DIA.

Twelve members from the high school 4-H club were selected to teach the PHS lessons. The peer educators completed six hours of training in January before being assigned in pairs to teach in two sixth-grade class rooms. In February they started teaching in rotating pairs on Thursdays and will teach through the end of the school year.

Every Tuesday, Davis-Griggs and Susan Aaronson, a PHS health educator, meet with the peer educators to review the material for the week’s lesson, assess the previous week’s teaching and pose critical questions and scenarios. They also supervise the classroom PHS lessons. The Links members attend and assist with the PHS lessons and mentor both the high school students and the sixth grade students.

The peer-to-peer model is working so well that PHS is investigating using it at other Detroit schools where the PHS program is offered, especially those with affiliated high schools.
Detroit Leadership Academy (DLA), a YMCA charter school was the first school funded with the second grant. The middle school has no gym or physical education curriculum, so PHS partnered with a local personal trainer to provide in-school fitness classes as well as after school Zumba and Yoga classes.

When DLA students found the new government-mandated cafeteria menu unfamiliar, PHS worked with teacher and wellness champion Joshua Vance to improve children’s lunchroom eating habits through education and encouragement.

“The partnership between Detroit Leadership Academy and Project Healthy Schools has been very exciting and successful. Through our healthy lunches initiative, ‘Eat Your Lunch,’ we are bringing awareness to students who are eating healthier and making better choices when it comes to eating lunch and snacks. Every day I see students trying new healthy foods and eating more of their lunch,” said Vance.

While PHS was already in several Detroit charter schools, a long-term goal of the program team was to bring PHS to the Detroit Public Schools (DPS). A partnership with Racquet Up Detroit!, an organization that provides after school tutoring, mentoring and squash instruction at two Detroit Public Schools, provided PHS with an introduction to administrators at International Prep Academy (IPA) at MacDowell (a DPS Authorized Charter School) and Schulze Academy (a DPS school).

Connie Loh, program coordinator for Racquet Up Detroit! said, “This partnership is definitely invaluable to us. Project Healthy Schools' workshops are fun, engaging, interactive, educational...and delicious! We did a survey of the kids’ nutrition knowledge and awareness recently and the data we obtained confirmed that as we’ve seen, the kids are gaining a greater awareness and appreciation of nutrition and learning how important it is to feed their bodies the necessary nutrients to do well academically and physically.”

Detroit International Academy (DIA), an all girls’ K-12 school, recently became PHS' third Detroit Public School location.

“We are so grateful for the funding from AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation that has allowed us to bring our program first to local schools in Ypsilanti which were in need of health and wellness resources and now to five Detroit schools. With continued community partnerships and support, we hope to expand to more Detroit Public Schools in the coming year.” said Du-Russel-Weston.

**“Think Your Drink” teaches healthy beverage options**

During the month of March, Chartwells Food Service and PHS teamed up to bring “Think Your Drink” beverage demos to students at all five Ann Arbor middle schools. Students picked up recipes and sampled orange and cucumber mint infused water while learning how much sugar was in some of their favorite beverages. For example, a 20-ounce Coke has 65 grams of sugar; Mountain Dew has 77 grams; and Vitamin Water, which is marketed as a health beverage, has 32.5 grams. Just one bottle of any of these drinks is over the 25 to 40 grams of added sugar recommended by the American Heart Association!

“By giving kids this kind of information at a time when they are starting to make their own decisions, we encourage them to make healthier choices,” says Project Healthy Schools Wellness Coordinator Carole Durgy.

The “Think Your Drink” campaign helped students see how much sugar is in their favorite beverages and try some healthier alternatives such as orange and cucumber mint infused water.

**Thank You PHS Supporters!**

Thank you for your on-going support:

AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation  
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Thompson Foundation  
University of Michigan Health System

We are also grateful to the many corporations, foundations and individual donors who have supported PHS over the years.

*Information on how to donate is available at [www.projecthealthyschools.org](http://www.projecthealthyschools.org)*