Nebraska Team Nutrition Supports Sustaining Healthy Nebraska Schools
Through the Coordinated School Health Initiative

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Introduction

Coordinated School Health (CSH) is an evidence-based strategy and systems-building process by which schools, school districts, and communities develop capacity and create an infrastructure that supports continuous improvement in health-promoting environments for students and staff. It is a vehicle for school improvement—improving students’ academic performance and overall physical well-being by promoting health in a systematic way. The structure outlines ten components needed to address a student’s holistic health needs: health education, physical education and physical activity, health services, nutrition environment and services, counseling and psychological services, social-emotional learning, physical environment, employee wellness, family engagement, and community involvement. The process integrates the efforts and resources of education and the health community to provide a full set of programs and policies without duplication or fragmentation by emphasizing needs assessment, planning based on data and sound science, analysis of gaps and redundancies and implementation of best practices.

Program Description

In NE, with the passing of the CSH Policy by the NE Board of Education in 2010, CSH Institutes were implemented (a series of in-depth trainings focusing on both the structure and process of CSH). Since 2011, NE Team Nutrition was able to provide CSH institutes to 47 schools, districts & community partners across the state. CSH institute consists of a series of 4 trainings spaced throughout the school year. Technical assistance and school visits are usually scheduled in between the trainings.

Partnerships

[Image of partnerships]

Infrastructure Achievements

• Revised/updated School Wellness Policies
• Created a functioning School Health Advisory/School Health Team
• Conducted a school health assessment
• Created action plans based on the school health assessment
• Revised/updated School Wellness Policy, Tobacco Policy, Bullying Policy
• Conducted Wellness Days for elementary and middle schools
• Created staff wellness programs; Educator’s Health Alliance
• Created additional health education classes to expand health education
• Engaged community partners on the local, state and national levels
• Engaged parents and students in wellness efforts
• Initiated adult mentors for students
• Accessed grants to sustain program and policy efforts
• Received recognition on the local, state, and national levels
• Created Community Gardens; Farm to School Programs
• Provided Healthy Report Cards

Nutritional Achievements

• Created policy prohibiting the use of food as a reward
• Infused healthy snacks/celebrations/school concessions and fund-raising into policy
• Started and/or expanded school breakfast programs and infused breakfast programs into policy
• Implemented healthy vending policies
• Infused nutrition education and promotion into policy
• Implemented various breakfast programs
• Introduced nutrition education into afterschool programs
• Improved food offerings by revising and upgrading lunch menus
• Provided salad bar with more fruit and vegetable options
• Applied and received HealthierUS School Challenge-Smarter Lunchroom Awards
• Created policies to limit advertising messages that promote foods of minimal nutritional value

Physical Activity Achievements

• Created policy prohibiting the use of physical activity for punishment
• Created policy prohibiting withholding physical education/physical activity as punishment
• Infused physical activity in the classroom into policy
• Integrated daily recess for a minimum of 20 minutes into policy
• Initiated daily physical education into policy for K-5
• Started before-school walking programs
• Integrated physical activity throughout the school day
• Started after-school exercise group for staff and all interested students
• Implemented Recess Before Lunch
• Created policies to provide professional development for staff on physical activity/physical education

Nutritional Achievements

• Increased Dibble scores
• Reduction in food waste
• Decreased student absenteeism
• Decreased visits to the school nurse
• Reduction in staff turnover
• Hired school wellness coordinator
• Infused health and wellness into school improvement plans
• Increased attendance
• Improved classroom behaviors, time on task, and concentration levels
• Improved social behaviors
• Increased staff morale
• Increased federal funds

School Success

Conclusions and Implications

By utilizing the CSH Institute process, key policy and environmental changes were seen within a year. Participating in the Institute series enabled the school teams to acquire new skills and knowledge to help get buy-in from essential stakeholders, form partnerships and pursue environmental changes within their specific settings. In addition, participation in the CSH Institutes helped schools secure additional funds to support healthy eating and active living changes through applications for various awards and grants including HealthierUS School Challenge-Smarter Lunchroom, FUTP60, Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Programs and Action for Healthy Kids.