

Quest for Healthy Schools: Alabama Schools Becoming Healthier, Together

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Learning Outcome: Upon completion, the participant will gain insights into how the intermediary model used in Quest for Healthy Schools can be used in their PSE efforts.

School wellness requires expertise, collaboration and support. Intermediary organizations can be vital in providing the technical assistance needed to improve school wellness policies and practices. Through its Quest for Healthy Schools (QHS) initiative, Alabama SNAP-Ed at Auburn University prioritizes the revitalization of federally mandated School Wellness Committees to support healthier schools for its target audience of limited-resource individuals. To accomplish this goal, Alabama SNAP-Ed acts as a local intermediary organization for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation (AHG), a national leader in school wellness. Alabama SNAP-Ed QHS nutrition educators engage school stakeholders and assemble diverse School Wellness Committees of school administrators, teachers, staff, and community members. QHS supports School Wellness Committees in completing and analyzing the AHG Healthy Schools Program School Wellness Assessment. Using assessment findings, School Wellness Committees identify strengths and opportunities to develop and implement a School Wellness Action Plan. Thus far, five schools successfully assembled a School Wellness Committee, completed the AHG Healthy Schools Program School Wellness Assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses in policies and practices related to nutrition and physical activity, and developed action plans to improve wellness policies and practices specific to each school. As a result, partnering schools implemented various wellness initiatives such as breakfast in the classroom, physical activity breaks throughout the day, establishing school gardens and increasing access to physical activity through bicycle training events and safe routes. Intermediary relationships are a key component in recruiting and supporting school stakeholders to influence schools' policy, systems and environmental changes.

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YES! We Can PLAY! A Physical Activity and Nutrition After-School Program for 6th Graders

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Learning Outcome: Upon completion participants will be able to describe the role a registered dietitian can have impacting the development of an after-school program.

Moderate to vigorous physical activity provides a myriad of health benefits for youth, and combining physical activity with healthy eating components during the after-school time can be effective in increasing physical activity and fruit and vegetable intake. However, physical activity and sports participation decrease during the transition to middle school. In Alabama, this decrease is exacerbated since 6th graders are ineligible to participate in school sports teams, and children from disadvantaged neighborhoods may have limited access to community-based sports teams, particularly for girls. To address this gap, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and Birmingham City School (BCS), which is a public school system serving primarily low-income black children, have collaborated to provide an after-school program for 6th graders aimed at improving health behaviors and increasing sports readiness. 'YES! We Can PLAY!' is administered by coaches and offers a menu of sports programming combined with nutrition education, social-emotional learning, habit reinforcement, and parent engagement. Nutrition education lessons were developed by UAB registered dietitians, with an emphasis on USDA My Plate and habit reinforcement. In Year 1, baseline data for 161 participants across 6 BCS schools indicated that 56% were female and 30% were considered overweight or obese. A survey based on the YBRSS, indicated that 66% did not meet fruit intake recommendations, and 68% did not meet vegetable intake recommendations. Baseline and 6 month measurements will be taken, and sports participation will be tracked through high school.

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The Development of Find Your Happy Plate: A Social Marketing Campaign to Encourage Intake of Nutrient Dense Foods by College Students

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Learning Outcome: Upon completion, participant will be able to list differences in food-related barriers between students with and without meal plans and describe how social marketing campaign messages may reduce these barriers.

The first year of college provides an optimal setting for nutrition promotion as students adjust to independent living, however food-related barriers may be significantly different between students with and without campus meal plans (MPs). The purpose of this research was to develop and test campaign messaging tailored to MP status to promote intake of nutrient dense foods (NDFs) by students. Six focus groups were conducted in Summer 2018 to identify social norms, intentions, motivators, and barriers around eating NDFs. Results were used to develop sixteen distinct messages that included a NDF fact and a call to action related to a food-related motivator or barrier. Campaign messages and logos were then tested for acceptability by the target population, college students. In the focus groups, 32 participants had MPs and 27 did not. Price was the most common barrier and was more common among non-MP holders (93%, n=25 non-MP; 63%, n=20 MP; p=0.003). Time was also more common among non-MP holders (67%, n=18 non-MP; 25%, n=8 MP; p<0.001). Lack of access (63%, n=20 non-MP; 44%, n=27 MP; p=0.09) and convenience (52%, n=14 non-MP; 38%, n=12 MP; p=0.14) of NDFs were equally recognized by both groups. During testing of the sixteen campaign messages, 86% (n=44) of participants stated they would likely try the strategies portrayed in the messages, and 14% (n=7) were not likely to try the strategies. Campaign messages developed were well accepted and understood by participants. Assessment of the campaign's impact on nutrition-related behaviors and perceived barriers over time is warranted.

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