



**WISE
SNAC**

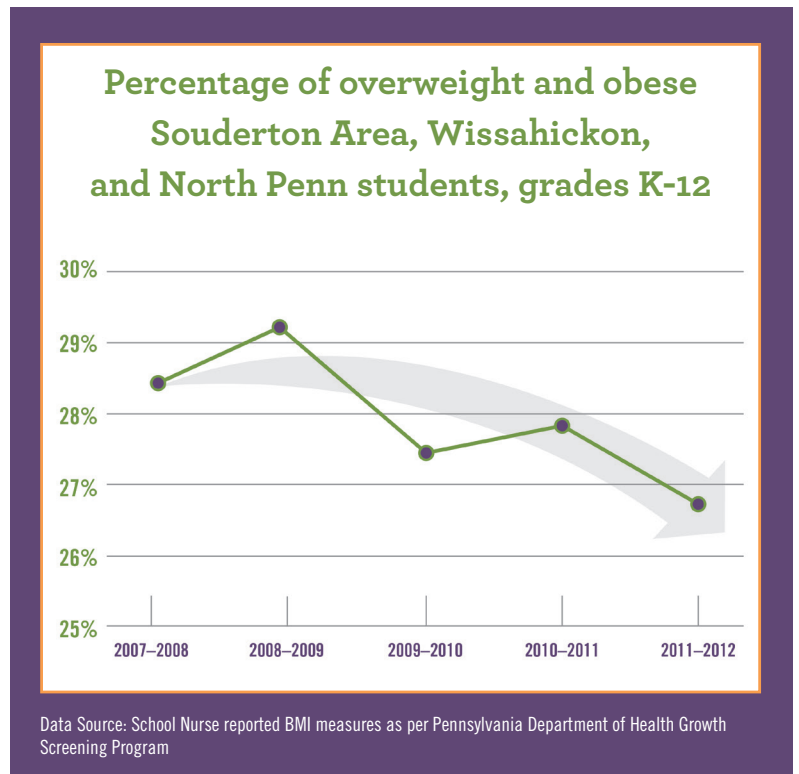
Building Healthy Schools & Communities[®]

2013 Milestone Report

WISE SNAC[®] at a Glance

Timeline

- 2005** ■ WISE SNAC launches in North Penn Region
 HPC conducts needs assessment in Souderton and Wissahickon School Districts
 Districts form wellness committees to lead district-wide wellness efforts
- 2006** ■ HPC conducts needs assessment in North Penn School District
- 2007** ■ HPC offers Tips, Tricks, and Tools for a Healthy Classroom workshops for classroom teachers
- 2008** ■ Districts incorporate a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables into school meals, offer healthy vending options and implement Youth Menu Committees
- 2009** ■ HPC, MCHA, and North Penn Collaborative host Protecting Our Children's Future: Uniting Our Community to Reduce Childhood Obesity summit to engage community and school partners
- 2010** ■ Districts integrate a variety of physical activity programs before, during, and after school
- 2011** ■ HPC reassesses the school environment across three school districts
- 2012** ■ Districts identify leadership teams and develop wellness action plans to sustain WISE SNAC efforts into the future



73%

of students eat breakfast 5 or more days a week in 2012

55%

of students participate in physical activity for 30 minutes or more at least 5 days a week

37%

of school staff increased healthy eating and physical activity in their work with students

\$289,379

leveraged to support school and community wellness

Dear Neighbors,

Imagine that one out of every three school-aged child, or 7,400 students, in the North Penn region of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, is overweight or obese. This was the reality for our community in 2005, a time when we, along with many other communities across the nation, began to understand that the prevalence of childhood obesity was placing our youth at serious risk for future chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers.

The North Penn Community Health Foundation and Health Promotion Council are committed to promoting health, preventing chronic diseases, and creating strategies for long-term improvements that will enhance the health, welfare, and quality of life for the community. Beginning in 2005 the foundation proudly committed \$1 million over the next several years to reduce obesity rates in children. The foundation selected Health Promotion Council as its partner to launch the *Wellness Initiative for the School Environment: Smart Nutrition and Activity Collaborative* (WISE SNAC) in the North Penn region.

Modeled on the design of the nationally recognized, evidence-based Coordinated School Health Program developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISE SNAC worked with North Penn, Souderton Area, and Wissahickon school districts to craft policies, and change systems and practices, to support healthy eating and physical activity within all public schools in the three districts. WISE SNAC extended beyond school walls, providing training and technical assistance to community-based organizations such as YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and municipal programs including parks and recreation.

Eight years later, we have not only seen a reduction in the prevalence of childhood obesity in the North Penn region, but we have also seen a transformation in our schools and communities resulting in greater access to healthy eating and physical activity for children, their families, and school staff.

This report provides just a brief snapshot of the WISE SNAC process, successes, impact, and lessons learned on our journey to build healthier schools and communities. We invite you to read further and learn how our school and community partners transformed their environments to support healthy lifestyle choices.

Lastly, the WISE SNAC initiative could not have achieved such impact without the time, support, and hard work of each and every one of our school and community partners. We thank them for the commitment and passion they have given to making our schools and community a healthier place for children to live, learn, and play.

Sincerely,



Russell Johnson
President & CEO
North Penn Community
Health Foundation



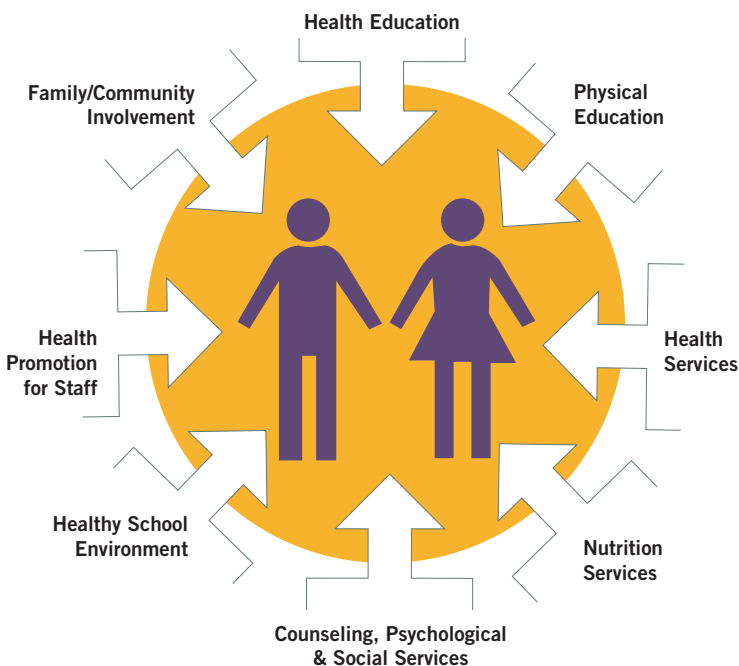
Vanessa Briggs, MBA, RD, LDN
Executive Director
Health Promotion Council

Addressing Childhood Obesity in the Greater North Penn Region

Childhood obesity is a critical health concern. In 2005, nearly 30% of elementary school children in the greater North Penn region of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, were overweight or obese.¹ Childhood obesity threatens the health of youth, putting them at greater risk for other chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, asthma, heart disease, and other costly, debilitating chronic diseases that once affected primarily adults.

The North Penn Community Health Foundation (NPCHF) has long recognized that establishing healthy eating and physical activity habits among youth has the power to counteract the increasing prevalence of obesity and associated chronic conditions. In 2005, NPCHF committed \$1 million over several years towards childhood obesity prevention efforts in the North Penn, Souderton Area, and Wissahickon school districts, reaching 35 public schools. At the time, NPCHF identified Health Promotion Council (HPC), with its long-term strategic goal to prevent and reduce the negative impact of childhood obesity through community-based programs, as an ideal partner.

Fig.1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coordinated School Health Program Model



In 2005, with sole funding from NPCHF, HPC launched the *Wellness Initiative for the School Environment: Smart Nutrition and Activity Collaborative* (WISE SNAC). With a primary focus on elementary schools, WISE SNAC aims to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity by fostering collaboration among school and community partners, providing training and capacity-building opportunities, and supporting the development of policies, practices, and environments that encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

Guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Coordinated School Health Program model (CSHP), WISE SNAC addresses healthy eating and physical activity by engaging stakeholders from eight key areas within the school environment (See Fig. 1). CSHP also points to the importance of extending wellness efforts beyond the schools' doors to include families and community-based organizations in the wellness journey. As schools, community organizations, and parents adopt healthier habits, children become increasingly exposed to healthy eating and physical activity in all areas of their lives—where they live, learn, and play.

Today, NPCHF is seeing the positive impact its investment is having on the region through a decrease in the prevalence of overweight and obesity among school-aged children and adolescents. Twenty-eight percent of school-aged children in the region are overweight or obese—a 2% decrease since the launch of the WISE SNAC initiative eight years ago.¹

Percentage of overweight and obese school-aged children and adolescents by region, 2009–2010

United States ¹	32.6%
Pennsylvania ²	32.4%
Montgomery County ²	28%
Greater North Penn region ³	27.5%

1. NHANES data, children 6-11 yrs., 2009–2010

2. PDOH Growth Screening Data K-6, 2009–2010

3. School nurse reported elementary schools BMI data, 2009–2010

1. Elementary school Body Mass Index data reported by school nurses as per Pennsylvania Department of Health Growth Screening Program, 2005–2006 and 2011–2012.

Beginning in 2005, HPC worked with administrators from each of the three school districts to conduct comprehensive baseline assessments to examine eating and activity behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes among students, parents, and school staff. Findings from the baseline assessments guided each of the districts in identifying priority areas and establishing goals within the CSHP framework, and developing strategies and action plans to guide their work towards achieving those goals. Through WISE SNAC, HPC provided training, technical assistance, and resources to address each district's priority areas and build internal capacity to promote healthy eating and physical activity. More specifically, HPC supported school district achievement of health and wellness goals through the following:

- ▶ Training staff and parents through workshops;
- ▶ Developing and implementing Wellness Policies and Administrative Guidelines that meet federal mandates;
- ▶ Identifying and disseminating best practices for school wellness to staff and administrators;
- ▶ Creating and fostering partnerships among school and community partners to identify and disseminate consistent health messages; and
- ▶ Convening cross-district meetings to cultivate communication among school districts.

In the 2011–2012 school year, HPC worked with the districts again to conduct a comprehensive reassessment measuring changes in eating and activity behaviors, knowledge and attitudes since 2005. HPC also conducted an environmental scan to identify school district policy and practice changes implemented since WISE SNAC's inception. Lastly, HPC analyzed aggregate Body Mass Index (BMI) data, measured and reported by school nurses as part of the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Growth Screening Program, to track changes in the prevalence of overweight and obesity among NPSD, SASD, and WSD students taking place between 2007–2008 and 2011–2012. The reassessment and environmental scan showed significant gains in adoption of healthy habits, as well as adoption and implementation of new policies and practices that have resulted in a healthier school environment.

This report provides just a snapshot of the work accomplished through the WISE SNAC initiative, and highlights just a few policies and practices that school districts in the greater North Penn region of Montgomery County, PA, have implemented in order to create a healthier environment. These include:

- ▶ Improved the school food environment;
- ▶ Increased opportunities for physical activity before, during, and after school;
- ▶ Increased access to resources and professional development opportunities for school staff to integrate healthy eating and physical activity into the school day; and
- ▶ Enhanced partnerships, leveraged resources, and disseminated consistent messaging among community organizations.

As a result of this and complementary efforts, an increasing percentage of students, caregivers and school staff are adopting healthier habits like eating a good breakfast every day; consuming more fruits and vegetables, and less soda and sugary beverages; and engaging in more physical activity. Most notably, however, is the decline in prevalence of overweight and obesity among students, supporting the notion that environmental support for healthy habits can help to turn the tide in the fight against childhood obesity.



Souderton Area School District Serves Up Healthy Meals

10

Schools

6,553

Students

659

Staff

Through the baseline WISE SNAC assessment, Souderton Area School District (SASD) identified students' daily eating habits as a priority area for its health and wellness efforts. Understanding that at least a third of a child's daily food intake is consumed at school, SASD embarked upon the task of overhauling its school food environment to support healthier dietary choices.

First, in 2005, the district adapted the school meal program to make breakfast available to every student. "We recognized the importance of breakfast and the positive impact it has on student health and academic performance" recalls Jane Natali, Food Service Director. "But there were challenges getting students to school early enough to participate in a traditional breakfast program. We needed to adapt to that reality." Natali worked with HPC and the Montgomery County Health Department to pilot a Grab N' Go Breakfast program, which allowed students to pick up breakfast and eat it when and where they wanted, within school guidelines, making it easier for them to eat breakfast on school days. The pilot was a great success, and led SASD to expand the program. Today, all ten SASD schools offer a school breakfast program, allowing all 6,500 SASD students the opportunity to start the school day off with a nutritious breakfast.

SASD also invested in additional training through the WISE SNAC culinary boot camp, through which 14 food service leaders increased skills in preparing healthier meals in order to incorporate healthier recipes in the district's menus. SASD has also improved the school food environment through the following:

- ▶ Offering a greater variety of fresh fruit and vegetable options;
- ▶ Adding healthier snack foods and beverages to all vending machines to align with the Pennsylvania School Nutrition Incentive standards;



- ▶ Convening student menu committees to obtain input from students; and
- ▶ Providing healthy food options for classroom parties and class field trips.

Changes to the school food environment have contributed to positive changes in students' food choices:

- ▶ Only 11% of students now report not eating breakfast daily—down from 21% at baseline;
- ▶ Only 8% now report drinking soda three or more days per week—a sharp decline from 59% at baseline; and
- ▶ Finally, 92% of students now report eating fruit and vegetables three or more days a week—up from just 71% at baseline.

"As a district, we are proud of the positive changes our schools have made to support healthy lifestyles," says Frank Gallagher, Assistant Superintendent of Schools. "Seeing the impact that changes to school food have had on our students' health has made all of the time and effort worth it."



Wissahickon School District Promotes Nutrition Education In and Out of the Classroom

Schools are a critical part of the social environment that shapes young persons' eating behaviors, and can therefore play a significant role in helping improve their diet.¹ In the 2007-2008 school year, Wissahickon School District (WSD) began the process of developing a comprehensive health education approach with an eye to supporting healthy habits among students inside and outside of the classroom.

As a result, WSD invested in an evidence-based health curriculum for grades K-5 and, more dramatically, revised the school schedule to include an additional 675 minutes, over 11 hours, per year of health and physical education. WSD also engaged parents and community partners in reinforcing messages about healthy eating and physical activity by sharing nutrition education in the cafeteria, on the district's website, and distributing monthly WISE SNAC newsletters.

Additionally, WSD partnered with Whole Foods Market to bring hands-on, experiential nutrition education to students through Wissahickon Gardens, a district-wide school gardening project. Initiated through WISE SNAC, the partnership allows the school community to learn sustainable gardening skills, grow and taste healthy foods, and build cooking skills. Many schools have integrated school gardens into classroom curricula and school meals, and others have engaged students and their families to harvest produce for donation to a local food cupboard. Whole Foods Market also supports Wissahickon Cooks, a monthly cooking show featuring WSD students and staff preparing garden-fresh recipes. Wissahickon Gardens and Wissahickon Cooks have received national recognition through Rachael Ray's YUM-O organization.



7
Schools

4,502
Students

736
Staff

Nutrition education and other efforts have had a positive impact. In the 2011-2012 school year, 75% of WSD students reported an increase in knowledge about healthy eating and physical activity. As a result, students are making healthier food choices:

- ▶ 86% eat breakfast daily—up from 79% at baseline;
- ▶ 16% drink soda three or more days a week—down from 39% at baseline; and
- ▶ 92% eat fruits and vegetables at least three days per week—up from 72% at baseline.

The positive trends in WSD students' knowledge and behaviors are a result of a comprehensive plan to promote nutrition education both inside and outside of the classroom. These accomplishments were made possible thanks to the collaborative efforts among WISE SNAC partners and parents.



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00042446.htm> Accessed 12/13/2012.

North Penn School District Supports Healthy Role Models

18

Schools

12,690

Students

1,933

Staff

Baseline assessment findings revealed that students look to their teachers as role models for healthy eating and physical activity. These findings led North Penn School District (NPSD) to transform their staff into advocates and role models for healthy eating and physical activity. “The WISE SNAC findings helped our Wellness Committee understand that getting staff to take an interest in their own wellness would be a win-win for the district,” notes Toni Butz, Director of Curriculum and co-chair of the NPSD Wellness Committee. “A healthier staff would become role models for healthier students.”

Through the WISE SNAC initiative, NPSD offered staff resources that addressed both personal health and wellness, and strategies for integrating healthy messages into the classroom. Specific resources include:

- ▶ HPC’s *Tips, Tricks and Tools for a Healthier Classroom*, an interactive workshop for school staff where HPC provides strategies and resources for integrating healthy eating and physical activity in the school environment;
- ▶ Wellness messaging disseminated through the district’s wellness website and internal newsletter, “Inside Information;” and
- ▶ *Healthy Opportunities for All*, an employee wellness event, including health screenings, coaching sessions, and PE staff-led physical activity sessions.

In addition, the district challenged elementary classroom teachers to integrate at least 10 minutes of physical activity into their classroom, and provided resources related to transitional activities that promote physical activity in the classroom. By 2011, more than one-fifth of classroom teachers reported integrating at least ten minutes of physical activity into the classroom *every day*. That translates to an additional 30 hours of physical activity for students each year!

As a result of these and other efforts, North Penn faculty are incorporating healthy habits into their personal and professional lives. During the 2011–2012 school year:

- ▶ 60% of staff report increasing their incorporation of healthy eating and physical activity habits into their personal lives; and
- ▶ 34% of staff report increasing their integration of healthy eating and physical activity into their work with students and families.

“It’s exciting to see the enthusiasm and interest that our staff have for promoting health and wellness,” says Butz. This enthusiasm is having an impact on students. One in four students now report hearing messages about healthy eating and physical activity at least once a month directly from their classroom teacher. Through the WISE SNAC initiative, NPSD has proven successful at creating a culture of staff wellness, and is committed to creating and supporting an army of advocates and healthy role models for NPSD students.



Health Education Mini-Grants Support Healthy Schools



Beginning in 2003, North Penn Community Health Foundation (NPCHF) launched its Health Education Mini-Grant Program to support school-based health and wellness programs. Program guidelines subsequently evolved to align with the goals of the WISE SNAC initiative and further supported healthy eating and physical activity efforts in the classroom and beyond. Between 2003 and 2012, NPCHF awarded close to \$90,000 to more than 45 schools in support of great projects like these:

- ▶ Wissahickon High School's "Healthy Foods Banquet," an annual dinner co-hosted by the Health Careers & Awareness Club and Chartwells Dining Services to highlight healthy and delicious foods;
- ▶ Salford Hills Elementary School C.R.O.P.S program, a school garden project that connects home, school, and cafeteria by integrating garden harvests with after-school cooking clubs for students and their families;
- ▶ North Penn School District IRONKnights Triathlon, a district-wide after-school physical activity triathlon training program led by physical education instructors that engaged 548 elementary students in completing the IRONKnights Triathlon;
- ▶ Lower Gwynedd Morning Mile Club program, which links physical activity to the classroom by tracking students' mileage and incorporating mileage data into the math curriculum;
- ▶ North Wales School Health Council, a collaborative group of parent and school staff, that organizes and conducts multiple health programs throughout school year, including Family Fitness Nights, nrgBalance Zone events, and a Whale Walk following PSSA testing; and
- ▶ Physical activity incentive programs and enhanced playground equipment and walking trails at numerous elementary schools, including Lower Salford, Vernfield, Franconia, E. Merton Crouthamel, Hatfield, Kulp, Mattison Avenue, Stony Creek and Blue Bell.



With support from NPCHF's mini-grant program and technical assistance from HPC's WISE SNAC initiative, schools have successfully increased opportunities to engage students, staff, and families in learning about healthy eating and physical activity and adopting healthy habits that will last for years to come.

Creating Healthy Environments beyond the School Walls

WISE SNAC community partners ensure that opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity are available not only where children learn, but also where they play. In 2009, HPC, in partnership with the Greater North Penn Collaborative for Health and Human Services and Montgomery County Health Alliance (MCHA), hosted *Protecting Our Children's Future: Uniting Our Community to Reduce Childhood Obesity*, a community summit aimed at increasing the momentum of childhood obesity prevention efforts in the greater North Penn region of Montgomery County.

Nearly 200 community representatives from multiple sectors, including business, faith-based and non-profit organizations, attended the summit. The interest and energy generated through the summit led the MCHA to create Montgomery County Obesity Action Team (OAT), a task force comprised of representatives from 11 community-based organizations dedicated to obesity prevention and reduction efforts.

HPC partnered with the OAT to leverage support and resources available from community organizations in the greater North Penn region in order to expand WISE SNAC's reach beyond schools and into the community. Through the OAT partnership, WISE SNAC promoted 5-2-1-0 healthy lifestyle messaging in both school and community sites, thereby encouraging the following daily healthy habits:

- ▶ Consuming 5 fruits and vegetables;
- ▶ Having 2 hours or less of non-homework screen time;
- ▶ Getting at least 1 hour physical activity; and
- ▶ Consuming 0 sugar-sweetened beverages.

School districts and community partners communicated the 5-2-1-0 message throughout the community in grocery stores, pediatrician offices, and after-school sites like the Boys & Girls Clubs and North Penn YMCA, ensuring children were exposed to the message at school and in the community.

Community partners played an important role in creating environments that promote healthy eating and physical activity beyond the school walls. Other notable community partnerships include:



Photo by Mark Psoras, courtesy of *The Reporter*

- ▶ Generations, Boys & Girls Clubs, WISE SNAC, and The Food Trust developed an afterschool healthy snack cart at the Indian Valley and North Penn Clubs;
- ▶ Hatfield Parks & Recreation Department integrated a family walk and healthy snacks into its Summer Movie Series; and
- ▶ Landis Supermarkets hosted healthy cooking demonstrations and distributed WISE SNAC healthy recipes in its grocery stores.

Since the inception of the WISE SNAC initiative, HPC's success in fostering relationships and connecting community partners to resources has leveraged more than \$289,379 in additional support for the health and wellbeing of children and adults, ensuring access to healthy choices throughout the North Penn community.

Keys to Success

Initiatives like WISE SNAC can be successfully replicated in other communities and school districts.

Some keys to WISE SNAC's success and lessons learned through the initiative include:

- ▶ **Apply a comprehensive approach that reaches multiple stakeholders throughout the school environment.** Engage multiple stakeholders such as school board members and administrators, health/PE faculty and classroom teachers, food service, health professionals and parents/caregivers. Support from each new stakeholder or group builds momentum and garners support from other stakeholders, and ensures a consistent message across the school environment.
- ▶ **Customize wellness programs to meet the needs and priorities of schools.** Not all school districts are created equal; therefore, school wellness programs must be flexible and able to adapt to each district's unique circumstances. Similarly, policies created at the district level must allow for flexibility in implementation at the school level. Wellness policies and programs that align with distinctive needs, opportunities, and available resources at the district and individual school levels have greater potential for successful implementation and sustainability.
- ▶ **Foster connections with other school districts to communicate successes and challenges.** Administrators responsible for school wellness benefit from periodic meetings with neighboring school districts. Cross-district meetings offer opportunities to share successes, lessons learned, and resources, and provide external support from peers in the education sector.
- ▶ **Engage parents in school wellness activities.** Parents play an important role in school wellness efforts by serving as advocates and role models for their children. Engage parents to serve as volunteers and participants in school wellness programming, such as School Health Councils, Family Fitness Nights, and before and after-school wellness programs. Parents and caregivers can bring school wellness efforts home.
- ▶ **Provide consistent communication and resources to support wellness policy implementation.** Local wellness policies are an important tool for school districts in promoting student wellness and preventing childhood obesity, but wellness policies alone are not enough. School districts must regularly communicate the content and outcomes of their policy to staff and parents, and provide resources to assist schools with the implementation of the wellness policy.
- ▶ **Engage external public health partners.** Planning, implementing, and evaluating school wellness policies and programs require significant staff time and knowledge in public health. Seeking consultation with public health experts can help schools stay in tune with current public health trends, identify and implement best practices in school wellness, and measure school health outcomes to guide future wellness programs.
- ▶ **Connect Community Partners to School Wellness Efforts.** Engage community partners such as local Parks & Recreation departments, community sports teams, and activity clubs such as the YMCA and Boys & Girls Club. Share the lessons taught in the schools and seek continuity in messaging from these after school activity leaders.



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