Youth Task Force 2009

There's Always After School ...

Harvard
Prevention Research Center
on Nutrition and Physical Activity

INTRODUCTION

YTF Overview

❖The YTF has studied the eating and physical activity habits of youth, primarily in the Boston area. We hope that the information we have gathered over the years has helped to inform the work of the Harvard Prevention Research Center (HPRC) and its community partners.

❖The YTF is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U48-DP000064).

❖We meet bi-weekly from October until May, to work on our project.

Who We Are

- 6 high school students from Boston, who attend the following schools:
  - Madison Park Technical Vocational High School
  - Boston Latin School
  - Health Careers Academy

Past Projects

- **2002-2003:** Teaching Planet Health lessons to middle school students
- **2003-2004:** "Where and Why are Youth Eating Fast Foods?"
- **2004-2005:** "Hey, How Do You Feel about Physical Education?"
- **2005-2006:** Livin' Fit Campaign
- **2006-2007:** Canteen Truck and Corner Store Healthy Beverage Initiative Projects
- **2007-2008:** What You Do Starts in The Middle

2009 PROJECT

Project Description

Our project this year was in alignment with the HPRC core project to gather information on health in after school or out-of school time programs.

- We used the Food and Fun (F&F) observation and interview tools to learn more about physical space, physical activity, food, and nutrition and staff at after school programs.
  - We did not use all of the questions from the F&F tools but we picked the ones we were interested in as a group and adapted them for our use.

The After School Programs

- AmericaSCORES in East Boston
- AmericaSCORES in Dorchester
- Boys & Girls Club-Colonel Daniel Marr in Dorchester
- Boys & Girls Club-Paul McLaughlin in Dorchester
- 12th Baptist Church in Roxbury
- Greenwood Shalom After School Program in Dorchester

Methods

- YTF Coordinators contacted programs that would allow us to conduct observations
- Each of us took a training on human subjects on Harvard's website
- Two students went to each site
- There were two observation days per site. One of those days included an interview with a staff member.

RESULTS

General Trends

- All sites offer at least 30 minutes physical activity.
  - Some offer free play, others provide structured activities.
  - All sites have capacity for a range of activities.
- All have or have access to nearby outdoor facilities for exercise, with indoors options in case of poor weather.
- All sites have a water fountain, most serve water or low fat milk with snack.
- However, juice, Gatorade or soda is also available in all sites.

Nutrition Trends

- Sites limit junk food, offer healthier snack options but do not consistently offer fresh produce
  - 4 out of 6 sites limited junk food (school-based and faith-based sites), no data on 2 sites
  - Half the sites in each category offer balanced snacks
  - Healthier snack options include graham crackers, cheese, processed fruit or vegetable products like juice or apple sauce
  - Most common fresh produce is carrot sticks

Physical Space Trends

- Corner Stores and Fast Food Restaurants
  - 2 sites (school-based) had no nearby corner stores, 2 sites had corner stores nearby,
  - 5 out of 6 sites had fast food restaurants nearby
- Program space
  - All sites had space for outdoor, indoor, active and quiet activities

The Interviews

- **14) Do you think anything in this program needs to change as far as nutrition and physical activity?**
  - 3 out of 6 programs said they thought things were fine
  - Greenwood Shalom: More physical activity needed; (girls go to offsite gym, boys do martial arts once a week)
  - Boys& Girls Clubs:
    - Offer consistent snacks, improve vending machines, more programming on health and fitness, get more active in Kid's Cafe
    - Students get plenty of water and physical activity but need to incorporate more nutrition and change vending machine choices

The Interviews

- **15) If you could make one nutrition or physical activity CHANGE in your program, what would it be and why?**
- Greenwood Shalom: More physical activity needed! Maybe 3days/week instead of just a day for both boys and girls (Boys do martial arts once a week for about 1 hour)
- 12th Baptist Church: More organized sports and games and do away with the carrots or get fresher carrots
- Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester, P. McLaughlin: Change vending machines, would add only healthy snack/ kids still have choice of having bad snacks.
- Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester: Stand alone girls fitness program and involve more girls
- AmericaSCORES in East Boston: Soccer program wants to do more structured exercise like strength training.
- AmericaSCORES in Dorchester: Change the physical exercise because they do mostly running and playing; more variety needed

The Interviews

- **18) Has your program done anything to engage parents in lifestyle change related to health?**
- AmericaSCORES in Dorchester : Parents and kids come out to a healthy festival
- AmericaSCORES in East Boston: Not much with parents but girls make food books about healthy eating for younger kids, boys work on cleaning up the environment
- Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester, Marr: No but trying to get parents more involved
- Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester, P. McLaughlin: Yes parents always welcome to come munch & mingle, healthy foods are served but parents are often working and can't make it
- 12th Baptist Church: Parent knows that this is a safe environment also parents serve healthy snacks/food to kids
- Greenwood Shalom: Not really

The Interviews

Questions (9&11)	worsen	stay the same	improve somewhat	improve significantly
A. If we serve healthful snack foods and drinks in our programs every day, I expect that children's food choices outside of our program would…	**0**	**0**	**5**	**1**
B. If each child was involved in a daily physical activity in our program, I expect that children's participation in sports and active play outside the program would...	**0**	**0**	**2**	**4**

The Interviews

Think back to the past 7 days…	none	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days	Blank
A. How many days did you eat at McDonalds, Burger King, Pizza Place, or other fast food restaurants	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
B. Have a serving of a non-diet soda, a sports drink, or a non-diet fruit drink like Snapple or Fruitopia	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
C. Exercise or participate in activities that made you sweat and breathe hard (heavy lifting, aerobics, fast bicycling)	2	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
D. Exercise or participate in activities that take moderate physical effort and makes you breathe somewhat harder than normal (like carrying light loads, bicycling at a regular pace, or jogging) for at least 30 minutes at a time? (Do not include walking)	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1

Challenges and Limitations

Our Challenges

- We started later than planned because of Human Subjects Committee approval
- Transportation to programs
- Communication between group members and after school programs
- Locating the after school programs
- Some of the items on observational tool were confusing

Limitations

- Renovations going on at one of the programs
- Not enough time to observe more programs
- School vacation week
- Bad weather prevents participation in outdoor activities

Recommendations

YTF Recommendations

- Explore more ways to engage parents-programs would really find this helpful
- Staff should eat and participate in physical activities with students more often
- Schools should offer water bottles to all students, this would encourage drinking water outside of the school environment
- Healthier snack options in vending machines and at snack time

Are We Up For Round Two?

YES!

YTF Students

- We are getting involved with our community.
- We are developing better research skills.
- We are learning how to be healthier and we want to help our peers become healthier too.

Harvard PRC

- Our research will help you expand your data regarding the health of students.
- We have a better understanding of students.

Thank You!

- **Afterschool programs who allowed us to visit their programs:** AmericaSCORES in East Boston, AmericaSCORES in Dorchester, Boys & Girls Club-Colonel Daniel Marr in Dorchester, Boys & Girls Club-Paul McLaughlin in Dorchester, 12th Baptist Church in Roxbury, Greenwood Shalom After School program in Dorchester
- Harvard PRC staff (Special thanks to Food and Fun project team for use of tools and their guidance)
- Jessica Yen-our YTF coordinator
- Vivien Morris, Community Committee member