

Kentucky

Students Taking Charge to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Problem Overview

In Kentucky, only 14% of high school students eat fruits and vegetables five times daily, 33% are obese or overweight, and 79% do not get the recommended amount of daily physical activity.

Program/Activity Description

A joint effort by Kentucky's Coordinated School Health program and Kentucky Action for Healthy Kids spurred creation of Students Taking Charge projects in 19 high schools. This initiative trains high school students to

- Assess their school's nutritional and physical activity environment.
- Develop an action plan to improve it.
- Implement their plan using mini-grants.
- Learn how to advocate for healthier school environments and policies.

The participating high schools

- Adapted the Students Taking Charge assessments to support and expand on the steps taken to improve the school wellness environment (e.g., establishing policies to improve nutrition, promoting physical activity opportunities, promoting family and community involvement).
- Completed required assessments, including a modified version of CDC's School Health Index.
- Developed an action plan and received a \$500 mini-grant from Kentucky's Coordinated School Health program, supported by the CDC, to carry out the plan.

The Kentucky Action for Healthy Kids/Kelloggs' Team Grant and the Kentucky River District Health Department provided additional funding to support the projects.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Successful local school efforts to improve students' physical activity and access to healthier foods include the following:

- Wayne County High School student efforts resulted in the Jammin' Minutes initiative—a 5-minute break during classes for standing, stretching, and moving in simple exercises—helping students maintain their focus and motivation for learning.
- In Mercer County, students worked with the district food service director, school principals, the district athletic staff, and agriculture faculty to create a healthy food options plan for their high school, provide a twice-weekly salad bar, feature more locally grown foods, and provide nutritional analysis of menu items. Their accomplishments, media coverage of their success, and production of a video on the project for the national Students Taking Charge project reinforced the students' commitment to change.