DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM MCDOWELL CHOICES

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The purpose of this presentation is to share lessons learned regarding a school-community-university partnership through McDowell CHOICES (Children’s Health Opportunities Involving Coordinated Efforts in Schools). This three-year collaboration was supported by corporate foundation and federal sources and used whole-of-school approaches to physical activity promotion across an entire district in rural Appalachia. Lessons learned include the strategies for effective relationship building, needs- and assets-based assessment, and navigating contextual constraints.
MOUNTAINEERS
GO FIRST.
THE CORONARY ARTERY RISK DETECTION IN APPALACHAIN COMMUNITIES (CARDIAC) PROJECT

- School-based chronic disease risk factor surveillance, intervention, and research initiative aimed at combating the unacceptably high prevalence of heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses in West Virginia
- Began in 1998 in 3 counties to identify dyslipidemic children and their parents
- WV being at the forefront of the obesity epidemic, CARDIAC began to focus on providing comprehensive health reports to parents and PCPs
- Used the WV Rural Health Education Partnership infrastructure to conduct school-based screenings until 2010; hired 6 Area Coordinators
- Sustained in all WV counties (n=55) from 1998-2017
THE CARDIAC PROJECT AIMS

• To reduce heart disease mortality to the national average through identification of individuals at high-risk and referral for treatment

• To reduce childhood obesity through educational interventions targeting children and their families

• To reduce childhood obesity through partnerships with educational agencies, state government, local communities, and the private sector
CARDIAC COMPREHENSIVE SCREENING RESULTS 5th GRADE (1998-2017)

• 98,970 students screened
• 47.1% BMI > 85 percentile (overweight or obese)
• 23.2% hypertensive (BP > 95 percentile)
• 25% abnormal blood cholesterol (LDL > 130, HDL <40, TG>150)
• 5% Acanthosis Nigricans positive markers, 60.9% HOMA>3
COMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH
BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATION

Fosters a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources within the context of partnership and reciprocity:

- Enrich scholarship while helping to engage and educate
- Strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility
- Address issues important to society
- Contribute to the overall public good

Provide theoretically-grounded research that will provide a better understanding of the problem and drive the solutions:

• Become knowledgeable on cultural traits, underlying stereotypes and bias
• Help the local community better understand research findings
• Create bi-directional pathways where knowledge is exchanged and valued by researchers and community members
• Provide best practices for policy, practice, and program decisions
• Teach university students community-based research methods
To develop a common vision for local reform to improve the health of West Virginians:

- Better informed population, starting with children and families
- More physically active and healthful eating culture
- Access to community health promotion at local and state levels
- Firmer foundation for community commitment and engagement
COORDINATED HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES INVOLVING COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENTS AND SCHOOLS
TEN POOREST U.S. COUNTIES
Ranking based on median annual household income

INTERVENTION FOCUS

Comprehensive school physical activity model
- Quality PE
- Before & After School
- During School
- Family & Community
- Staff Involvement

FUNDING SUPPORT

Over $3 million in external funding awarded for support
- Highmark Foundation
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
PROGRAM SIGNATURE FEATURES

**School-based Initiatives**
- $5000 equipment purchases for all 11 schools to enhance CSPAP efforts
- 3 funded after-school physical activity programs in each school for two years
- Active Academics for movement in K-5 classrooms ([www.activeacademics.org](http://www.activeacademics.org))
- BOKS before-school programs in selected schools
- Continuing professional development for teachers

**Community-based Initiatives**
- Physical activity leader training (e.g., Zumba and Archery certification)
- Community partnerships to offer other physical activity opportunities
- Enhanced communication to families and communities at large
- Fit Family Challenge – a family-based 6-week online activity challenge
SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

Environmental and Policy Modification
• All components of CSPAP in place for all 11 schools
• Shared-use agreements in at least 50% of schools

Student Health-related Behaviors
• Increased by almost 8% the proportion of 5th graders active for 60 minutes or more at least 5 days/week
• Increased by almost 6% the proportion of participants active for at least 60 minutes/day from grades 5 to 7
• Decreased by 8.4% the proportion of 5th graders who spent 3 hours/day or more on average watching television
• Decreased by 13.3% the proportion of 5th graders who spent 3 hours/day or more playing electronic games

Community Interaction
• 379 subscribers to eNewsletter, 250 “likes” on Facebook page, and 204 active followers on Twitter
LESSONS LEARNED
TALK LESS, LISTEN MORE
LESSONS LEARNED
GET TO KNOW THE PLACE
LESSONS LEARNED
BUILD TRUST (OR ELSE)
LESSONS LEARNED
BOOTS ON THE GROUND
LESSONS LEARNED
COMMUNITY-SCHOOLS
LESSONS LEARNED
KEEP EYES ON THE PRIZE
LESSONS LEARNED
CELEBRATE WINS


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