

## Generation With Promise Update (11/1/10)

**Overview.** Generation With Promise (GWP) completed its third year of implementation. Evaluation results indicate that it is achieving its goal to empower middle school students in underserved communities with racial and ethnic health disparities to drive policy, environmental and youth behavior change related to healthy eating, physical activity, and a tobacco-free lifestyle. Seventeen schools<sup>1</sup> with a total of 4,637 middle-school students in five Cities of Promise<sup>2</sup> participated in this project with grants awarded from the Office of the Surgeon General - Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) to plan and implement changes to create a healthier school environment and involve youth in a leadership role to accomplish that. The project is directed by Dr.



Kimberlydawn Wisdom, Michigan's Surgeon General, who is supported by an evaluation team led by Dr. Annie Murphy with members from Wayne State University, University of Michigan and the Henry Ford Health System and a leadership team including MDCH staff from the tobacco and cardiovascular health, nutrition/physical activity sections and from Michigan Department of Education's Coordinated School Health Program Unit. This summary captures highlights of the activities and outcomes achieved by the 17 schools in five districts (Benton Harbor, Detroit, Hamtramck, Highland Park and Pontiac) that participated in this project (2007-2011) supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

**A Team Approach.** Project activities and accomplishments were driven by **Coordinated School Health Teams (CSHTs)** that included the principal, a GWP coordinator, health and PE teachers, students, parents, members of the community and representatives of health organizations such as local health departments. CSHTs initially assessed their school environment using MDCH's Healthy School Action Tool (HSAT) and conducted a follow-up assessment using that same tool. HSAT results drove planning for schools to increase opportunities for students to move more, eat better and not smoke.

**Youth Leadership is Key.** Student Action Teams (SATs) were formed to help youth learn and apply leadership skills and to involve them in positive change at their school. SATs held monthly meetings and attended regional workshops yearly to work closely with University of Michigan faculty to learn about advocacy and to develop presentations and practice effective communication. Youth met with policy makers in Lansing to share their concerns about health issues. Teams at various schools organized and held health fairs, met with their food service director to share ideas for improving school meals, cleaned up their playground so students could use it for physical activities, hosted Family Fitness Nights and carried out anti-tobacco messaging campaign. Most students reported that they strengthened their group work skills over the course of the project and now see themselves as change agents in their school.



**Cultural Competence.** A goal of GWP is to ensure that educational materials and assessments are culturally relevant for the diverse student population served. GWP cultural competence evaluation, under the leadership of Dr. Nate McCaughtry of Wayne State University, included numerous observations and interviews to determine whether the two primary assessments, the HSAT and the Middle School Health Survey, were culturally appropriate. GWP staff used strategies to facilitate cultural competence e.g., encouraging schools to form teams that represented their diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural competence assessment also focused on project trainings and resources (*Michigan Model for Health<sup>®</sup> Tobacco and Nutrition/Physical Activity modules* and the *Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum Personal (EPEC) Conditioning Module*).

<sup>1</sup>Barber School of the Gifted and Talented (Highland Park), Kosciuszko Middle School (Hamtramck), Pontiac Middle School (Pontiac), Fair Plain Renaissance Middle and Hull Middle Schools (Benton Harbor) and these Detroit Public Schools: Taft Middle, Robert Burns Elementary/Middle (E/M), Hutchins/McMichael E/M, JF Nichols E/M, Trix E/M, Greenfield Union E/M, Mark Twain @ Boyton E/M, Murphy Middle, Peter Vetal E/M, Phoenix Multicultural Academy, Hamilton E/M and Clark E/M  
<sup>2</sup>Benton Harbor, Detroit, Flint, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Muskegon Heights, Pontiac and Saginaw



**Training/Professional Development.** GWP health teachers were trained to use the new Michigan Model for Health<sup>®</sup> Tobacco and Nutrition/Physical Activity modules. Support and mentoring were available to assist PE teachers successfully implement EPEC. At least one person from each school attended the state-level Eat Healthy + Play Hard = Smart Students conferences in April 2008 and 2010. 23 of the GWP schools received the Michigan Surgeon General Healthy School Environment Recognition Program (HSERP) award. Throughout the project, extensive technical assistance was given schools from their GWP project coordinator who attended project meetings, conducted site visits and assisted with development of their action plans, budgets and progress reports.



**Summit Involves Youth.** In May 2008, 125 students from 10 GWP schools gathered at Focus: HOPE in Detroit to share and learn. In March 2009, a second youth summit was held in Dearborn that 250 youth attended from 16 GWP schools. Students identified and problem-solved issues at their schools related to health. They shared strategies with others and wrote a letter to Dr. Wisdom sharing suggestions for policy change in Michigan schools. The students wrote their ideas on post-it notes and created an “action wall” of over 300 ideas. Examples included: talk to the principal; make presentations to classmates; talk to the school board; hold a school assembly; talk to the city council; and get the school involved in hands-on activities. The third annual GWP Youth Summit occurred in March of 2010; it offered youth that were on GWP Student Action Teams the opportunity to share successes from their school and continue to learn how to advocate for health change at their school and in their community. Held at Wayne State University, over 300 youth attended along with their team adult leader and teachers from the 17 participating schools.



**Evaluations Assess Indicators of Change.** Evaluations were completed at the beginning of the project (January 2008) and data has continued to be collected in the fall and spring of each of the last two years at all 17 GWP schools. The purpose of the evaluation was to track change in students’ eating and physical activity behaviors and fitness levels.<sup>3</sup> A four-page health survey, adapted from the MDCH Student Health Survey was completed. The majority of the students completing the survey were black/African American (61%); 10% were white/Caucasian, 9% were multiples races, 8% were Hispanic and 7% were Asian American.

Results indicated a slight increase in the percentage of students eating dairy foods, fruits, or vegetables daily. Fewer students were playing computer games or watching TV for more than five hours per day, and the percentage that were exercising, working out or playing a sport at least five days per week increased. The number of students who reported they learned about physical activity, nutrition and why smoking is not good for their health increased. And behavior change followed with students indicating that they were drinking more water and/or milk, getting more physical activity and eating more whole grains. An increase in students indicated they had “more chances to be healthy” and reported that “principals and teachers listen to ideas from students about how to make the school healthier” which is an important indicator that student voices were being heard and that school environments were becoming healthier.

**Fitness Testing** was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Jeff Martin of Wayne State University using two tests: the Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run (PACER) to assess cardiovascular endurance and pushups to evaluate muscular strength. *Baseline scores for females and males, on both tests, fell below the low end of the healthy fitness zone range.* Year two showed increases on both the PACER and pushup scores for males and females (n=219); female scores entered the low end of the PACER standard range and males reached the low end of the norms for push-ups.

<sup>3</sup>Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from Wayne State University and the Michigan Department of Community Health. Evaluation packets were provided to superintendents and principals. Approval from school districts to collect information from students was obtained. Detroit Public School requirements were followed: obtain signed consent from parents for their children to participate in the evaluation component, send a project information letter to all parents, and hold meetings at each school to explain the project and offer an opportunity for parents to review evaluation tools.

**Change in School Environments.** Overall scores on the HSAT increased across the three years of the project (from 52.2% to 64.8% to 69.4%). Greater change was seen for schools that participated three years (21.9%) compared to those that were involved for two years (13.4%). Changes were also greater for schools that completed the more intensive intervention (13.4%) compared to the schools that received mini-grants (7.0%).

**Examples of success.** Each school created a plan with actions and steps for improvements in three areas: healthy eating, physical education/physical activity and a tobacco-free lifestyle. A partial list of positive changes that occurred follows:

#### *Healthy Eating:*

- ✚ A middle school in Benton Harbor created a communication link between students and the foodservice department. Breakfast is now being served in classrooms and the foodservice director welcomes input about menu items.
- ✚ Students at another GWP middle school created a survey for their peers to complete to share with foodservice staff to provide their suggestions to improve school lunches. As a result of student suggestions, a salad bar is now offered daily and a la carte sales were eliminated resulting in healthier choices at lunch for students.
- ✚ The concessions menu at a GWP middle school was revamped to include healthier items.
- ✚ Pop was removed from a vending machine in one school, and a healthy vending machine was purchased by another.
- ✚ A Pontiac middle school started serving a healthy breakfast during homeroom to increase the number of students that started their day with a morning meal.

#### *Physical Education/Activity*

- ✚ A Detroit school involved students to lead before-school exercises (Morning Fitness Program).
- ✚ Attendance at the after-school program in a Benton Harbor middle school increased when physical activity was added.
- ✚ Every class participates in five minutes of physical activity before instruction at a GWP school in Detroit.
- ✚ Extra PE class was offered as a reward for classes that completed assignments and demonstrated good behavior at a Hamtramck middle school.
- ✚ Walking tracks were developed at several schools to facilitate increased physical activity in students, staff and community.

#### *Tobacco-free Lifestyle:*

- ✚ One school district adopted a district-wide, 24/7 smoking policy based on actions of the students attending a GWP-funded middle school in that district. This same school created a workout room from a previously unused area; it is accessible not only to students but also to staff and the community.
- ✚ Tobacco-free zone signs were created and posted by students at three participating schools.

**Policy Change and Enforcement.** Some schools reported that new policies were developed or existing policies started to be enforced. Examples of policies related to healthy eating include: items that could and could not be sold in vending machines were identified; no fundraising that sells food; teachers were prohibited from rewarding students with candy; and no candy sales were permitted in the building. Policies related to physical activity include: mandated recess; increased time in PE required for students; participation in PE or recess could not be withheld as a punishment; and all students must take PE. Most schools already had a 24/7, campus-wide smoking policy so efforts related to enforcing it occurred. For example, one school assigned a staff member to be in charge of enforcing the policy and another involved students in making announcements at school-wide events.

**Progress Reports Identify Progress.** School accomplishments varied. Staff reported heightened interest, enthusiasm and awareness of health among students, staff and families. Several indicators of a healthier environment were shared: healthier food was offered at staff meetings and school-wide events (fruit instead of doughnuts!); discussions about healthy eating and tobacco education occurred among staff; a salad bar stocked daily with fresh and healthy foods was part of the lunch program; and classroom doors were decorated with health messages. Health fairs and field days opened school campuses to the community. Students are now able to speak to teachers about their ideas and goals. A morning exercise program helped a committed group of students start the day in a healthy way. Students at one school walked through the halls and documented their laps/miles. Fresh fruit and vegetables were served daily and students enjoyed healthy foods that tasted good. Water fountains were sanitized every night. Campaigns shared the *don't smoke* message to students through speakers, skits and posters.

*Staff benefitted.* At one school a small group of teachers rode their bikes to school, at another they danced with students once a week after school and at a third school a student/staff walking club is in place. Teachers who supervised a before-school exercise program noticed improved cardiovascular fitness and some teachers lost weight. Professional development helped teachers learn more about how to improve their school environment and how to involve students in that effort.

### **GWP expands to reach more students and their families.**

- **Mini-grants.** Eleven schools in Cities of Promise with a total of 4,428 students were selected to receive \$5,000 mini-grants during 2008-09 and 2009-10. They formed teams, completed the HSAT, developed action plans and implemented changes to increase student opportunities to move more, eat better and not smoke. This brings the number of students in GWP to 8,938 in 27 schools.
- **Family Enhancement Project.** Five-lesson nutrition/cooking classes were offered after school at 17 schools in 2009-10 reaching 286 middle school students and their parents/caregivers. This was possible with funding from the Michigan Nutrition Network at the Michigan Fitness Foundation and a partnership with Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeast Michigan. Funding also provided all 27 GWP schools with a designated display board and items to post that promote healthy eating and physical activity as well as resources for school-wide family events and nutrition materials for classroom use. Evaluation results showed positive change on all 18 target behaviors. The greatest changes were for: thinking about healthy foods when deciding what to feed your family, using food labels to make food choices while shopping, planning and preparing family meals together, eating 2 ½ cups of vegetables daily and making meals that include at least three food groups. More than half (57%) of the adult participants were eating more fruit at the end of the program compared to when instruction started, 70% were eating more whole-grain foods and 52% were having more fat-free or low-fat dairy foods. Feedback from graduates was positive; 98% recommended the class to others. Youth were also involved in the evaluation: 99% enjoyed the class, 99% learned something new about healthy eating, 99% enjoyed coming to class and 95% enjoyed cooking with parents/caregivers.
- **Nutrition Education for Students.** Student Action Team members received four nutrition lessons in which they set behavior change goals and tracked progress. After completing the lessons, 90% had made progress toward achieving their physical activity and fast food improvement goals; 86% did so on their goal related to portion size. Additionally, 2,814 students made pledges to be active for 60 minutes per day, to eat the recommend amounts of fruit and vegetables and/or to stay tobacco-free. The majority of students were successful; 91% increased activity, 59% were having more fruit, 48% drank more water and less soda pop and 33% consumed less fried food.



**Conclusion.** GWP reached students and school health teams using multiple strategies and resources over a three-year period to produce change in policies, school environments and student behaviors.

This project is funded by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan to the Michigan Department of Community Health under the direction of Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom, Michigan's Surgeon General. For more information, please contact [generationwithpromise@michigan.gov](mailto:generationwithpromise@michigan.gov) or 517-335-8011.