

Conferences

The Food & Fitness Program is sponsoring two conferences over the next several months. Both conferences are designed to gather input from a full range of stakeholders—people directly involved in implementing this project as well as others in the wider community who are interested and working on childhood obesity prevention programs and research.

The first of these conferences “Conversation & Breakfast at the Capital” will take place on January 14, 2009 in the Private Dining Room of the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, CT. The second conference will be held on June 4, 2009 as a feature of the annual Weitzman Symposium, which the Community Health Center, Inc. is sponsoring at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT.

The Consultation Center at Yale is working collaboratively with school personnel, curriculum developers, and Community Health Center, Inc. staff on a participatory and collaborative evaluation process. Together we are gathering data that will inform judgments about the overall effectiveness of the Food & Fitness Program, the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four curricula, lessons learned and recommendations for future implementations.

Since it is important to assess the effects of the program at multiple levels, a variety of data are being collected. Principals completed a school needs assessment, student physical activity levels at recess and in physical education classes has been observed, teachers who will be implementing the curricula rated how comfortable they were with teaching nutrition and physical activity classes, and children in all grades completed a survey of their everyday eating and physical activity habits. This data will be recollected at the conclusion of the implementation and examined for changes.

SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday, June 4, 2009
WEITZMAN SYMPOSIUM
Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

Community Health Center, Inc. is a private, non-profit agency providing primary health care and social services. Its quality health care services are available to all, and particularly to those who cannot gain access to such services elsewhere. Community Health Center, Inc. takes leadership in promoting interagency cooperation. It is based on consumer control and is committed to ensuring human rights and respecting human dignity; as such, it strives to be a voice and vehicle for social change.



Food & Fitness

Nutrition & Physical Activity Program WINTER 2009 Newsletter

Food & Fitness Program off to a Great Start!

Program Rolls Out in Schools

It is well documented that obesity rates are on the rise and there are major health concerns regarding children's diets and activity levels. In order to address these concerns in Connecticut, the Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) applied for and was awarded a Nutrition and Physical Activity grant from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut Cancer Partnership.

The Food & Fitness Program rolled out the classroom implementation phase of its project in January 2009. This happened after several months of recruiting schools to the project, ordering curricula materials and supplies, holding teacher training workshops and gathering pre-assessment data through surveys and classroom observations in the 64 intervention and control classrooms that are participating in the pilot.

The overall purpose of this project is to: (a) test specific curricula designed to support healthier eating and physical activity in Connecticut primary schools, and (b) make recommendations as to the promotion and implementation of each curricula to and in other Connecticut schools, state-wide. CHC will implement, test, and evaluate four curricula this academic year: **Food is Elementary**; **Family Cook Productions**; **Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK)**; and **Recess Rocks™**. These programs are being implemented in one classroom per grade K-3 per school, in both rural and urban environments.

CHC is a statewide, multi-site agency offering comprehensive health services in ten cities and serves 70,000 patients annually. In addition, CHC provides behavioral, medical, and oral health services to the children of Connecticut through School Based Health Centers (CBHC) in over 100 schools across 15 school districts (urban and rural areas).



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Food & Fitness

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
**Nutrition & Physical
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Cooking in the Classroom

The Food & Fitness Study was intentionally designed to be implemented in a variety of settings to provide practical data on the realities of using and adapting the 4 curricula in a range of environments. An example of this variety is that the Middletown Public School System opted to use their discretionary funds to hire a Food and Fitness Educator, **Julie Cranick**, who has been traveling to the four urban schools in Middletown, CT rolling out the Nutrition Programs and investigating the reality of how these programs look at each school.

Special thanks to **Pat Girard**, the Principal of Farm Hill in Middletown, CT who was able to provide a spacious room for implementation that had previously been used for Girl Scout meetings and storage. The Food is Elementary (FIE) classroom provides an optimal learning environment. The teacher is able to set up and break down the cooking equipment without disrupting the classroom teacher's lesson. The materials used for the classes are stored in the same room as well. Students are brought down to the room as if they were attending any other special. Long tables and portable units also allow the children to work together as a team. Good hygiene and safety is emphasized and having a sink in the room is a bonus as it makes hand washing and clean-up more convenient. In addition, having a sink in the classroom reinforces the student's responsibility to clean the pots, pans and other cooking materials they dirtied.



The other three intervention schools in Middletown, CT implement the program in their regular classroom setting. Some of the cooking supplies are stored in the classroom; while other materials that take up more space are locked in storage rooms. The FIE teacher in these schools finds it easiest to use a cart to transport the materials down to the classroom to set up. When the classes are over the teacher loads up the cart and finishes cleaning up in the teachers lounge.

Mathematical curricula tie-ins for the nutrition program have been implemented by classroom teacher **Bonnie Gaboury** of Lawrence School. Students were encouraged to keep a record of the foods they ate during the week. At the end of the week, Mrs. Gaboury's third graders created a chart and calculated the foods they ate in each category.

This project would not be possible without the wonderful help and support we've received from our participating schools in the project. Our programs will be conducted in K-3 classrooms in 5 rural/suburban schools and 5 urban schools. The participating schools are as follows:

RURAL/SUBURBAN INTERVENTION

St. Bridget School
171 Main Street
Cheshire, CT 06410
Phone: (203) 272-5860
Marge Whalen, Principal

St. Mary School
62 Cedar Street
Branford, CT 06405
Phone: (203) 488-8386
Donna Binkoski, Principal

Lewin Joel Elementary School
137A Glenwood Road
Clinton, CT 06413
Phone: (860) 644-6501
Claudia Norman, Co-Principal
Jack Gedney, Co-Principal

Kathleen E. Goodwin School
80 Old Boston Post Road
Old Saybrook, CT 06475
Phone: (860) 395-3165
Sheila Brown, Principal

Control School:
Our Lady of Mercy School
149 Neck Road
Madison, CT 06443
Phone: (203) 245-4393
Dr. John Alfone

URBAN INTERVENTION

Farm Hill Elementary School
390 Ridge Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 346-1225
Patricia Girard, Principal

Lawrence School
Kaplan Drive
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 632-2158
Enza Macri, Principal

Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth Street
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 347-2579
James Gaudreau, Principal

Bertrand E. Spencer Elementary School
207 Westfield Street
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 344-0711
Amy Clarke, Principal

Control School:
Wesley School
10 Wesleyan Hills
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860) 344-5653
Joseph Cassella, Principal

A special thanks goes to the Kathleen E. Goodwin School, the Old Saybrook Volunteer Fire Department, the Lewin Joel Elementary School, and Vinnie's Jump and Jive for helping us host our trainings!

SOFIT (System for Observing Fitness Instruction Time)

SOFIT is an observation tool that was developed by **Thomas L. McKenzie, Ph.D.** and his team at the Department of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences at San Diego State University. It is an objective tool for assessing the quality of physical education instruction. The system provides a measure of student activity levels, lesson context, and teacher behavior during class time. SOFIT involves the direct observation of lessons by trained observers and has been used to assess physical education in over 1,000 schools throughout the United States.

SOFIT training was provided to grant staff from the Community Health Center, Inc., Yale University Consultation Center Staff and Joel School at Lewin Joel Elementary School in Clinton, CT on November 3, 2008. SOFIT is being used to evaluate the two physical activity curricula—SPARK and Recess Rocks™. Thank you to **Jack Gedney**, **Derek Karcich** and **John Dobby** of Lewin Joel Elementary School and **Christine Kelley** of Kathleen E. Goodwin School for their assistance in evaluating and helping to select the SOFIT tool for the project.

Pre-intervention SOFIT observations were conducted over the months of November and December in the implementation schools and will be taking place in January in the control schools. Observations will take place in the spring when post intervention data will be collected.



Recess Rocks™ Teacher Workshop

The Recess Rocks™ Workshop was held at Jump and Jive Dance Studio in Middletown, CT on November 21, 2008. **Kim Thibodeau** (Recess Rocks™ Curriculum Consultant) and **Julie Deak** (Recess Rocks™ Trainer) were the presenters.

Recess Rocks™ demonstrated how teachers can seamlessly blend a variety of unique movements into their curriculum and keep students moving throughout the day. The philosophy and exercise techniques associated with Tai Chi, Yoga, Modern and African dance were elaborated on extensively. Attendees also had the opportunity to partake in a Recess Rocks™ movement class.

SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids) Teacher Workshop

The SPARK Workshops were held at Lewin Joel Elementary School in Clinton, CT on November 17 and 18, 2008. Elite trainer, **John Hitchwa**, was the presenter.

The first day of training focused on classroom techniques and equipment for grades K-2. Personal best is the philosophy SPARK emphasized. Attendees were motivated to embrace new ideas and apply these ideas to their instructional methodology. Throughout the workshop educators were encouraged to actively participate in low key, non-competitive games. These hands-on activities provided instructional and visual cues in regards to creating and implementing lessons that will enable students to move at moderate to vigorous rate throughout an entire class. The materials presented ultimately gave educators the tools to make students more confident movers, which will in turn provide them with lifelong wellness.

Day two focused on the grades 3-4 curricula. Educators learned organizational, management and instructional techniques designed to increase levels of physical activity in their lessons. Teachers participated in hands-on activities throughout the day and observed a third grade SPARK class led by John Hitchwa.

Follow-up SPARK workshops are scheduled to take place on January 22 and 23, 2009. Once again, we will be fortunate to have the trainings take place in the impressive gym at Lewin Joel School. We are grateful to Co-Principals **Claudia Norman** and **Jack Gedney**, for graciously hosting the SPARK trainings.

Food Is Elementary Teachers Workshop

The Food is Elementary Workshops took place on December 1 and 2, 2008 at Clark Memorial Field/Fireman's Field in Old Saybrook. We are grateful to the **Old Saybrook Volunteer Fire Department** for allowing us to use their community hall for both of the nutrition programs. We are also grateful to Principal **Sheila Brown** of Kathleen E. Goodwin School for making the arrangements for the use of the facility, which proved to be the perfect location with the large commercial kitchen and training rooms.

Consultant and founder of Food is Elementary (FIE) and The Food Studies Institute, **Dr. Antonia Demas**, led the two day workshop, which introduced the teachers to the 10 lesson FIE curriculum. Teachers learned about USDA commodity foods. Proper knife safety skills were addressed to ensure that teachers were comfortable and able to demonstrate these techniques to their students to ensure safety. Teachers also had the opportunity to work with other FIE teachers and prepare the recipes that they will be presenting and cooking with their students throughout the school year. In addition, teachers were put into small groups and role-played how they would teach the lesson and what resources they might include in the lesson. The workshop concluded with a sit down lunch which allowed the teachers to sample the delicious recipes they made and will bring back to the classroom.

Family Cook Teacher Workshop

Family Cook Productions (FCP) held its teacher training workshops over December 3-5, 2008 at Fireman's Field in Old Saybrook. FCP Consultant and founder, **Lynn Fredericks**, presented a curriculum overview to participating K-3 teachers on the first day of the training. Day two focused on the K-2 curricula and day three was dedicated to the second and third grade curriculum.

The three-day workshop went over the curriculum content that will be implemented into the 8 urban/rural schools throughout CT. Teachers were able to practice the cooking lessons that applied to their grade. In addition, Lynn went over the logistics for Family Night which will launch the Family Cook program. Lynn highlighted specific resources she would like the teachers to use during classroom implementation lessons. Lastly, Lynn went over the logistics for the Celebration. At the end of the Family Cook program students, teachers, parents, siblings, and other family members will be invited to attend the last Family Cook Celebration. The Celebration will give the students who participated in the program an opportunity to apply what they learned and share their favorite foods with their friends and family.