

The Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES) Wellness Alliance was awarded the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grant in November, 2011. The grant will conclude on September 30, 2014. NKCES is very grateful and appreciative of the award that has helped to develop five healthier schools over the past three years. The NKCES Wellness Alliance PEP Grant was named the "FIT 4 Life Program" and the grant activities were implemented in five schools across three school districts: Southgate School, Grandview Elementary, Bellevue High School, Lincoln Elementary, and Dayton High School. Children in grades kindergarten through 12th grade participated in the grant during the three years of implementation. Over the three years of the grant, the FIT 4 Life program increased by 8% the number of students who are active 60 minutes a day, a 15% increase in the number of students who reached age-appropriate cardiovascular levels, and an 8% increase in consuming two or more fruits and three or more vegetables. In reviewing the quantitative and qualitative data of the FIT 4 Life grant's three year period the team recognized several important reasons that led to the increase in each measurement. We labeled those reasons the 4 C's: collaboration, communication, consistency, and constructive feedback. Over the three years the team collaborated with many people and agencies in the schools and community. The list includes the school district administrators, faculty, and staff; parents of students; and members of community agencies and businesses.

When collaborating with the groups the Fit 4 Life PEP team ensured they met the needs of the students as well as the needs of the groups. Communication was the key to successful collaboration and included monthly updates, regular attendance at meetings, a quarterly newsletter, and professional development activities for personnel involved in the grant. Consistency was very important to ensure correct and accurate data collection and included developing a detailed testing schedule, ensuring all schools received the same opportunities, and most importantly, implementing and completing the activities and other events that were promised. The final key to success for the grant was constructive feedback, from the NKCES staff to the school personnel and vice versa. A survey was completed by the school personnel at the end of each year that gave feedback to the FIT 4 Life staff. The feedback in turn was used to improve the processes and grant activities during the next school year. In addition, the FIT 4 Life staff provided feedback to the school personnel by sharing the results of the WELLSAT, PECAT, and HECAT evaluations as well as other observations of the FIT 4 Life team. By using collaboration, communication, consistency, and constructive feedback throughout the three years of the PEP Grant award the FIT 4 Life team was able to facilitate an increase in each of the tested areas: sixty minutes of daily physical activity, age-appropriate cardiovascular levels, and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

In reviewing the data, including the reflections of various personnel involved in the FIT 4 Life grant, several activities were identified as being most influential in achieving the grant's positive outcomes. Several processes and activities were identified as helping to increase the number of students participating in sixty minutes or more of daily physical activity. The collaboration with teachers and administrators, after school programming, family nights, and family fun bags were acknowledged as the most important influences on increasing daily physical activity. Collaboration with school personnel ensured that testing processes and schedules were a priority. After school programming included such activities as swimming, Zumba, gymnastics, martial arts, and soccer. Family Fun nights brought entire

families to the school in the evening to participate as a family group in various physical activities. In addition, family fun bags that included such items as Frisbees, jump ropes, beanbags, and exercise bands, were sent home with students to encourage physical activity at home. Perhaps most important to achieving this goal was the purchase of several commercial curricula, SPARK, Take Ten, and FitBits, as well as the professional development that was provided.

To increase cardiovascular levels of children the data indicated that consistency of the PACER testing made a difference for students. They knew and understood the PACER test and used their previous scores as motivation to improve. The Wellness Centers also helped to increase children's cardiovascular fitness through using the elliptical, stationary bikes, and treadmill machines. In addition, the Boys and Girls Club was a community partner that helped to reinforce cardiovascular health through their after school and weekend programming.

Increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables was the most challenging goal of the grant. The data indicated that several activities helped the Fit 4 Life team achieve success in this goal. The WELLSAT was used to review the wellness policies of each school and as a consequence the policies were changed to emphasize healthy nutritional options, such as limited pre-packaged bagged snacks, fresh fruits and vegetables, and an emphasis on healthy rewards and snacks for celebrations. Another important component to this goal was focusing on the cafeteria staff through providing them with professional development and opportunities to travel to other school districts to observe and discuss how they prepare healthier and tastier food choices for students. Each school also provided taste tests where the cafeteria staff tested new recipes on the students and used their feedback to make changes. All of these activities resulted in healthier menus at each school. In addition, the Garden Heroes Curriculum was infused into each classroom.

In summary, the NKCES Wellness Alliance FIT 4 Life team has established a strong foundation of healthier behavior at each school which should sustain and continue to increase the number of healthier students, as measured by the amount of physical activity, cardiovascular fitness, and daily consumption of fruits and vegetables. The NKCES Wellness Alliance FIT 4 Life team developed a foundation for understanding the importance of developing healthier children and the positive effects that has on students' academic success and school community. In the final follow up survey of school personnel, 79% of the respondents stated the students in the school were healthier than when the grant began three years ago and 60% of respondents stated they believe the positive changes made by the FIT 4 Life grant will be sustained. The data indicates the students in the schools and communities of Southgate, Bellevue, and Dayton, Kentucky are healthier today than when the grant began. The NKCES Wellness Alliance Fit 4 Life team is proud of the progress made and is appreciative of the opportunity given by the grant to focus on increasing and sustaining healthy behaviors of students attending schools in several of the communities of northern Kentucky.