

# **Bridges and Barriers to Working in K-8 Low-Income Schools**

## **School Needs Assessment: Focused on Nutrition and Physical Activity**

2007

### **Executive Summary**

The School Needs Assessment (SNA) project was developed to determine the barriers and bridges to working in low-income schools and methods to make these efforts more successful and sustainable in educating students and their parents/guardians resulting in healthy eating and physically active lifestyles. Strategies were broken into four categories: nutrition education, physical education, school nutrition environment, and physical activity. An online survey was conducted with representatives from low-income K-8 schools around Michigan, and four focus groups were conducted with school administrators, Michigan Model Coordinators, and Michigan State University Extension staff members. The findings from this initial study support current collaborative efforts from the Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Education, and Michigan State University Extension including a high school needs assessment which will be completed in the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

- ❖ **3 out of 4** respondents feel their schools have too little nutrition education, too little physical education, and too little physical activity.
- ❖ **1 in 3** respondents want to see nutrition education in after school programs, **1 in 2** respondents want to see physical education in after school programs, and **1 in 2** respondents want to see more physical activity in after school programs.
  - Many 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center programs have created innovative and successful ways of integrating nutrition education, physical education, and physical activity into after school programs. Read more about what works in these programs at: [outreach.msu.edu/cerc/21cclc.asp](http://outreach.msu.edu/cerc/21cclc.asp) .
- ❖ **1 out of 7** schools offer family nutrition education programs yet **3 out of 4** respondents feel family programs would work best for nutrition education.
  - MSU Extension offers family programs and family bookbags: [web1.msue.msu.edu/msue/cyf/family](http://web1.msue.msu.edu/msue/cyf/family) .
- ❖ **3%** of schools have a connection with a farm for fruits and vegetables yet **45%** of respondents feel this is an important way to improve the nutrition environment.
  - Traverse City West High School in Traverse City, Michigan introduced new products from local farmers such as an apple/chicken/walnut salad and cherry smoothies. It's been a huge hit! Read the full story at: [mihealthtools.org/schoolsuccess/default.asp?tab=readstories&storyid=136](http://mihealthtools.org/schoolsuccess/default.asp?tab=readstories&storyid=136) .

- ❖ Respondents worry that physical education and nutrition education will never be a priority in schools unless it is tested on the required MEAP.
  - There are health grade level content expectations that were approved by the Michigan Board of Education on February 13, 2007.  
[www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753\\_38684\\_29233---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753_38684_29233---,00.html)
  - There are physical education and nutrition education programs that directly correlate to the new health and physical education grade level content expectations.  
*Michigan Mode for Health:* [www.emc.cmich.edu/mm/default.htm](http://www.emc.cmich.edu/mm/default.htm)  
*Michigan Team Nutrition:* [www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu](http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu)  
*EPEC* ®: [www.michiganfitness.org](http://www.michiganfitness.org)
  - The Michigan Department of Community Health and Michigan Department of Education are working together to explore a new health component to the optional MEAP in 2007-08.
  
- ❖ **1 in 2** respondents feel that lack of funding precludes a better nutrition environment. For example, it is cheaper for food services to purchase prepackaged foods with limited nutritional values than to buy fresh fruits, low fat options, etc.
  - Longfellow Middle School in Flint, Michigan moved to no fries and no pizza one day/week. The sales from children purchasing chicken sandwiches, yogurt, and salads is increasing, proving to the food service director that she made more money on no fries/pizza days. Read the full story at:  
[mihealthtools.org/schoolsuccess/default.asp?tab=readstories&storyid=7](http://mihealthtools.org/schoolsuccess/default.asp?tab=readstories&storyid=7)

*This report can be accessed at:*

[www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/resources.html](http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/resources.html)  
[www.michigan.gov/CSHSP](http://www.michigan.gov/CSHSP)  
[www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2940\\_2955\\_2959\\_3208-148848--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2940_2955_2959_3208-148848--,00.html)



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