

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Engaging Middle Schools through
Project Healthy Schools



Building Healthy Communities

2020 – 2021 Request for Applications

Applications due: April 17, 2020

Apply at projecthealthyschools.org/BHC.
More information can be found
at bcbsm.com/buildhealth.

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Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools

Introduction

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the University of Michigan invite Michigan middle schools to apply for the 2020-2021 Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools program.

The program targets students when they are at an age of increasing autonomy. This is the perfect time to give them information and practice to make healthy choices that lead to healthy habits across a lifetime.

Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools helps establish a healthy school environment that supports higher levels of academic achievement by:

- Selecting one or more school wellness champions and building or energizing a school wellness team
- Assessing the school health environment and making a plan for improvement
- Educating students and empowering them to make healthy food and physical activity choices
- Creating a healthy school environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice, engaging the staff in wellness and giving students practice in making healthy choices
- Evaluating, sustaining and sharing success stories

Join our mission

Schools can help improve the health and academic potential of students, as well as the health of students' families by creating a culture of wellness through physical activity, healthy eating opportunities and education. Research shows a connection exists between positive health behaviors and academic performance. That's why Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools partners with schools to foster cultures and environments where healthy choices are supported, encouraged and expected. Healthy habits start young, and this program helps establish the knowledge and behaviors needed for a healthy lifestyle that lasts a lifetime.

"We are very pleased with the way in which Project Healthy Schools has begun to transform the way our staff and students view their diet and lifestyles."

— Robert Witherspoon, administrator,
Johnson Upper Elementary School, Livonia



A student participates in a Michigan apple-tasting event as part of Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools.

Eligibility

- Public, charter or private nonprofit schools in Michigan are eligible.
- Building Healthy Communities is available to all Michigan schools regardless of their:
 - Free and reduced-price school meals percentage
 - Geographic location
- Schools that are taking part in other healthy eating, nutrition education, physical activity or physical education programs are eligible.
- Schools that applied in prior years but were not selected are encouraged to apply again.
- Middle schools must serve students in the fifth, sixth or seventh grade to be eligible.
- Schools that already have Project Healthy Schools aren't eligible for this program.
- Schools that previously received a Building Healthy Communities program aren't eligible.



Students work in the school garden.

Criteria for school selection

Participating schools are selected based on:

- Commitment to implementing all components of the program (assessment, education, environment and measurement) in collaboration with the Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator. They're also selected based on their commitment to sustaining all components in subsequent school years.
- Active administrative engagement takes place throughout the application and implementation process.
- Identification of one or two staff members to act as wellness champions who possess a willingness and commitment to lead the students, staff and community in creating a healthy school environment.
- Identification of a class during the school day (minimum of a 45-minute period) where the 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons will be taught to all fifth-, sixth- or seventh-grade students. In addition, each school must select one or more teachers who will be trained to deliver the lessons. It's strongly encouraged that the lessons are taught during health, physical education or a core academic class.
- Student access to internet-based technology to support completion of online questionnaires and surveys. (This is desired, but not required.)



Students ride stationary bikes at a school health fair.



Students do jumping jacks as part of ACES Day at Michigan Stadium.

Program overview

Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools is a program that encourages healthy habits through assessment, education, environmental change and measurement. In addition, this program builds a sustainable framework for continuous school wellness improvements. The educational lessons are designed for use in the sixth grade, but may also be used in the fifth or seventh grade. The program benefits all students in the school as well as school staff and parents. The program helps foster environmental changes and wellness initiatives that are tailored to the needs of each school. The goals of the program are for students to:

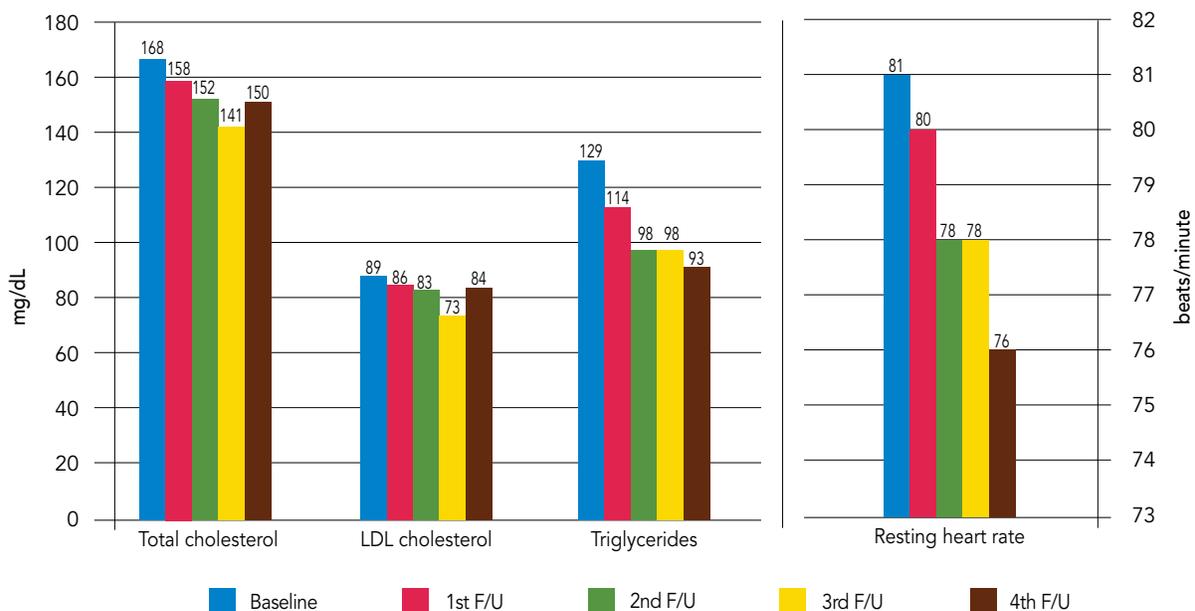
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Choose less sugary food and beverages
- Eat less fast and fatty food
- Be active every day
- Spend less time in front of a screen

Program results

Project Healthy Schools research published in the December 2015 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* shows that students' cardiovascular risk factors improved after participating in this program. These benefits were sustained over four years. Students from low-income communities showed the most improvement, even though they started the program with worse behavioral and physiological measures than students from high-income communities. In addition, following the program, students:

- Engaged in more moderate to vigorous physical activity
- Increased their fruit and vegetable consumption
- Decreased unhealthy snack consumption
- Decreased sedentary time, which included reducing television viewing and video game playing

Changes in physiological measures over four years: sixth-grade baseline to ninth-grade



This shows that students participating in Project Healthy Schools make lasting health improvements.

5 steps to school wellness

Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinators provide on-site and electronic support to assist the school wellness champions and wellness team with the program. This includes implementing the five-step process that lays the groundwork for continued success and sustainability of a healthy school culture. Nearly 80% of the schools that have implemented Project Healthy Schools since 2004 continue to use the program today.

1. Build support

- Identify one or more school wellness champions.
- Form a school wellness team.
- Engage your community.

2. Assess school wellness culture

- Administer the pre-program Health Behavior Questionnaire.
- Complete the Healthy School Action Tools Core Assessment, and complete two topic area assessments (Healthy Eating, and Physical Education and Physical Activity)
- Conduct a lunchroom assessment.

3. Make an action plan

- Analyze the assessment results.
- Identify your school's wellness goals.
- Create an action plan.

4. Take action

- Teach 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons.
- Hold at least four school-wide wellness initiatives.

5. Measure success

- Administer the post-program Health Behavior Questionnaire.
- Complete the post-lesson surveys.
- Share your school's photos and success stories.



Students learn to read nutrition labels to find out how much sugar is in their favorite beverages.

“The lessons were engaging and exciting in the classroom.”

— Susan Lahti, teacher and wellness champion at Boyne City Middle School

“After the salad lesson in December, we sold 72 salads in January (20% increase). After the second lesson in March, our sales for that month jumped to 89, a 50% increase from our normal sales!”

— Jillian Wensel, former assistant director of food service at MacDonald Middle School, East Lansing



Two students taste roasted acorn squash for the first time during a Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools tasting event.

Resources in the first year

- **On-site wellness coordinator** — A hands-on Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will make regular contact with your school through on-site visits and electronic communication to:
 - Train the school wellness champions
 - Provide guidance for delivering the lessons
 - Assist the wellness team in completing the Healthy School Action Tools (HSAT)
 - Assist the wellness team in developing an action plan
 - Help facilitate nutrition, physical activity, staff wellness and other wellness activities
 - Conduct a lunchroom assessment and provide guidance on lunchroom best practices
 - Work closely with your school to implement policy, systems and environmental changes
 - Assist in forming food service and community partnerships
 - Work with the wellness team to identify resources to sustain the program
- **Educational lessons** — The program includes 10 fun, evidence-based, hands-on nutrition and physical activity lessons. One or more teachers will be trained to deliver the lessons to the school’s fifth-, sixth- or seventh-grade students. Each lesson comes with:
 - A written lesson plan with step-by-step instructions
 - PowerPoint slides to help facilitate instruction
 - Props and equipment for all learning activities
 - Additional enrichment activities and lesson extensions
 - A parent packet with optional family engagement exercises
 - Answers to frequently asked questions about nutrition

- **Tools and resources** — The program will provide:
 - A stipend for the wellness champions
 - Funding for equipment and supplies to support wellness initiatives and environmental changes
 - Online access to lesson materials and other resources through the password-protected Project Healthy Schools Portal
 - Written plans, activity descriptions, scripts, costumes and prizes for planning a kickoff event
 - Ideas, descriptions, instructions and examples for planning and executing a wide range of wellness initiatives for students and staff
 - Assessment tools, including the Healthy School Action Tools and a lunchroom assessment
 - A health behavior questionnaire and program surveys to measure success
 - Professional development opportunities
 - A banner to display at your school, content for newsletters, healthy tips for announcements and health promotion bulletin board materials for use throughout the school year
 - Information about how to access additional public resources, wellness grants and awards
- **Wellness champion network** — Project Healthy Schools wellness champions can network with dozens of wellness champions from across the state through the Project Healthy Schools Portal and wellness champion gatherings. This provides wellness champions with the opportunity to earn continuing education hours, share ideas, learn best practices, ask questions and share success stories.



Resources in the second year and beyond

After the first year, responsibility for the program transitions to the school wellness champions and wellness team. Schools will continue to have access to:

- **Consultation** — A Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will continue to be available to provide consultation and technical assistance by phone and email.
- **Wellness champion network** — Continue to connect with wellness champions from other schools to earn SCECHs, network and share ideas and information.
- **Online tools and resources** — The school wellness champions will have web-based access to program materials and other online resources through the Project Healthy Schools Portal.

Expectations of participating schools

Participating schools commit to implementing and sustaining the program through the following five-step process:

Step 1: Build support

- **Identify one or more school wellness champions** — The wellness champion is the main point of contact for the Project Healthy Schools coordinator and should have an interest in health promotion. The wellness champions will work closely with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to learn how to implement the program, transitioning to full responsibility for the program by the end of the first year.
- **Form a school wellness team** — A school wellness team is a collaborative group committed to improving the health, wellness and academic achievement of the students. The goal of the wellness team is to create a healthy school environment where students can learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors that will have a positive effect on their health and academic performance.
- **Engage your community** — Schools will share information about the program through a variety of communication channels, as well as display the provided program banner and health promotion bulletin board materials, rotating content throughout the school year.

Step 2: Assess school wellness culture

- **Administer the pre-program Health Behavior Questionnaire** — All students who will receive the Project Healthy Schools lessons must complete the questionnaire prior to starting the lessons.
- **Complete the Healthy School Action Tools** — During the first year of the program, schools will complete the Healthy School Action Tools with assistance from the Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator.
- **Conduct a lunchroom assessment** — Work with the school's food service to review current practices and identify areas for improvement.

Step 3: Make an action plan

- **Create an action plan** — Use the data from all the assessments in Step 2 above to guide your planning. Prioritize the wellness areas that need attention and set some S.M.A.R.T. wellness goals. Then explore all the resources available from the program and create an action plan.

Step 4: Take action

- **Teach 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons** — The curriculum for the 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons emphasizes the five program goals. All fifth-, sixth- or seventh-grade students will receive the 10 lessons from a teacher or teachers trained in their delivery. All the lesson props will be provided and then maintained by the school.
- **Hold school-wide wellness initiatives** — Schools are encouraged to plan at least four wellness initiatives based on the S.M.A.R.T. goals identified through the assessment data. Some examples of wellness initiatives include daily or hourly physical activity breaks, 5K walks or runs, health fairs, healthy cooking demonstrations, lunchroom food tastings and staff wellness events. The Project Healthy Schools coordinator will provide assistance with planning and funding the wellness initiatives in the first year.

Step 5: Measure success

The measurement component is used to understand the health behaviors of the students, ensure the quality of the program and highlight opportunities for improvement. This information is also useful for planning and setting goals for the following year. All data will be kept fully confidential, and no individual students will be identified.

- **Administer post-program Health Behavior Questionnaire** — Schools will administer the online post-program Health Behavior Questionnaire to all students who receive the educational lessons.
- **Complete the post-lesson surveys** — Schools will support the administration of surveys for teachers and students regarding their satisfaction with the lessons.
- **Share photos and success stories** — Schools will provide examples of program impact and celebrate their wellness efforts by sharing school-wide success stories. The success stories can include quotes from students or staff and photos of students engaged in the program (with signed releases, if applicable). The success stories and photos may be shared statewide.

Key dates at a glance

February 25, 2020	Webinar with Q & A from 3:30 to 4 p.m.
April 17, 2020	Applications due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time
Completed by May 15, 2020	Mandatory principal and school wellness champions phone interview or school visit
Week of June 1, 2020	Selected schools announced
Fall 2020	Program implementation begins

How to apply

1. Sign up to attend the optional webinar on February 25 at <https://primetime.bluejeans.com/a2m/register/edjykabd>* (If you experience problems registering for the webinar with Internet Explorer, please copy and paste this registration link into another web browser)
2. Review the application, frequently asked questions and other information on the Project Healthy Schools website at projecthealthyschools.org/BHC.*
3. Contact Jean DuRussel-Weston with program or application questions by phone at 734-764-0290 or email projecthealthyschools@umich.edu.
4. Apply at projecthealthyschools.org/BHC* by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time April 17, 2020.

We're committed to leading Michigan
to a healthier future — and investing
in the next generation of Michigan citizens.



A partnership between

