

School Wellness Committees See Growth



Detroit Lakes physical education class utilizing their school bike fleet.



New York Mills improved their school lunch line to include more fruits and veggies.

Good Nutrition + Physical Activity

How can schools improve their students' academic performance and attendance? Research has shown that these two school health markers are closely linked to good nutrition and physical activity.

PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) staff members Karen Nitzkorski (School Wellness Coordinator) and Karensa Tischer (Registered Dietitian) work with schools to create and support wellness committees to assess the school environment surrounding these two issues. School wellness committees include teachers, students, administrators, nurses and community members who want to influence the health and wellness of students and staff.

Some of the results of the committees' work include: Second Chance Breakfast, healthier concessions, lunchroom share tables, Chefs to School, Safe Routes to School, active classrooms, active recess, bike fleets, and the Healthy Schools Summit. All of these efforts focus on expanding opportunities for healthy eating or physical activity.

Growth from 2010 - 2019

Schools are increasingly seeing the benefits of a comprehensive wellness policy that supports a healthy school environment. This work began in 2010 with four school districts including Detroit Lakes, Perham, Breckenridge and Dilworth. Today, PS4H is honored to have the opportunity to work with 13 public school districts and one private school.



Worksite Wellness and School Wellness Coordinator Karen Nitzkorski is excited about their work within schools: "Our work with schools is so important. We have the opportunity to impact *all* students who walk through the doors."

This past year, the student wellness committee members have been asked their thoughts about the prevalence of vaping in our schools, school meals and if their teachers are providing activity breaks in the classroom. The students reported a shockingly high prevalence of vaping among their peers. Because of their input, the districts are using resources available from PS4H's Tobacco Prevention Coordinator along with their own resources to impact this youth epidemic. In one case, students in Otter Tail County helped to pass a Tobacco 21 ordinance as a way to protect their fellow students from the harms of tobacco and vaping.

PS4H thanks these partner schools: Battle Lake, Breckenridge, Detroit Lakes, Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton, Fergus Falls, Hawley, Henning, Lake Park Audubon, Moorhead, New York Mills, Perham, St. Mary's School (Breckenridge), Rothsay and Underwood.

School district personnel and interested community members are invited to join school wellness committees to further this critical work to continue to promote healthy environments for our youth.

May 2019

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