

Final Report and Recommendations to be Disseminated by Late Summer 2009

Preliminary Focus Group Findings:

- **Training that is hands-on and relevant**
 - Didactic and experiential
 - Classroom management techniques
- **Clear manual, all supporting materials are needed**
 - All materials required for the lesson incorporated
 - More support materials needed
- **Ongoing support is needed**
 - Technical assistance from program developers
 - Peer support, networking, communication, and sharing
- **Clear link of curriculum to standards**
- **Clear fit of curriculum to what teachers already do fosters buy-in**
- **Significant preparation time was needed**
 - Significant amount of time spent on lesson preparation
 - Prior years of teaching/experience was helpful
 - Recommended for more experienced teachers
- **Despite some challenges, children enjoyed the programs**

Findings from Process Evaluation:

- 5 urban schools and 5 rural/suburban schools
- 7 of 10 schools had intervention and comparison classes
- 32 intervention classrooms, 22 comparison classrooms
- 971 (558 intervention, 413 comparison) k-grade three children participated
- one-quarter of the children in each of the 4 grade levels
- 474 (49% boys, 495 (51% girls; mean age 6.8 yrs
- 69% white; 10% black; 10% Asian American.; 8% Latino, 3% American Indian, .6% other/unknown
- 96% spoke English as primary language in the home



Shown above, from top: Dr. Cindy Crusto, Principal Evaluator; Marie Russell, Grant Manager, presents on the Food & Fitness Project at the Weitzman Symposium, Wesleyan University, June 4, 2009



Cindy A. Crusto, Ph.D., Dawn Sugarman, Ph.D., & Tejal Patel, B.A.
Yale University School of Medicine, The Consultation Center

Food & Fitness

Nutrition & Physical Activity Program SUMMER 2009 Newsletter

Food & Fitness Project Draws to a Close

Dear Food & Fitness Advocates:

Many, many thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the Food & Fitness research program. The curriculum implementation phase was completed in mid May and the project is now drawing to a close. At this time, the Food & Fitness team, including our partners at the Yale Consultation Center, are working to finish the evaluation and to plan for the dissemination of the final results and recommendations.



Marie Russell
Grant Manager

The project's success is due to the efforts and commitment of teachers, administrators, school staff, students, curriculum consultants, the **CT Department of Public Health (DPH)**, the **Yale Consultation Center**, the **Community Health Center, Inc.**, and volunteers who together put in countless hours to make this challenging undertaking a truly remarkable project.

The Food & Fitness team strove to maintain the delicate balance between meeting the needs and expectations of key stakeholders while maintaining the professional objectivity needed to evaluate the curriculum with a fair, balanced hand. We worked to maximize benefit and feasibility of programming for teachers and students while maintaining the highest level of fidelity possible with the pilot programs.

The Food & Fitness Program was executed within difficult time and logistical constraints, with all of the planning,

implementation, and evaluation of four curricula in ten schools being carried out in one short year. The CT Department of Public Health, particularly the DPH Program Manager, **Dr. Mario Garcia**, were instrumental with their support and flexibility by approving pragmatic solutions, such as adding a Food & Fitness Educator as necessitated in the urban schools.

Whole communities involved in this project are able to have critical dialogue about physical activity and nutrition education due to experiencing all four programs in their school community. Rich, meaningful evidence and a wide variety of lessons learned will be reported through examining each program in urban, rural, private, and public schools, with teachers trained or with an outside educator provided, in kindergarten through third grade.

The final report, which will be produced by **Dr. Cindy Crusto** of the Yale Consultation Program, will be delivered to the DPH by late summer. It will address the charges given to the Community Health Center by the DPH: to test and evaluate two nutrition and two physical activity curricula; to make recommendations as to promotion of each curricula; and to recommend how each curricula may be implemented by other CT schools.

Thank you again for your tireless efforts on behalf of this project. May this endeavor serve to form a foundation for further progress in state and national efforts to combat the growing childhood obesity epidemic.

Sincerely,

Marie Russell
Grant Manager, Food & Fitness Program



Shown at left: Physical Education Teacher, John Dombi leads first grade students in a Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK) at Joel School in Clinton.

Shown at right: Joel School Physical Education teacher, Derek Karcich, joins the fun during a first grade SPARK class.



635 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457

MARY FARNSWORTH, Manager
Community Health & Wellness Programs
(860) 347-6971 ext. 3634
farnswm@chc1.com

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Food & Fitness

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
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Shown at left: Lori Petras' second grade students are engaged during a nutrition lesson using the Food is Elementary curriculum at Farm Hill School in Middletown.

Shown below: Gina Wohlke instructs students her third grade students using the Food Is Elementary curriculum at Joel School in Clinton.



Shown above: Project Coordinator, Erin Murphy, leads a Dance Dance Revolution (DDR) class at Goodwin School in Old Saybrook. DDR was piloted during the Recess Rocks Curriculum intervention.

At right: Erin Murphy, Project Coordinator



At left: Julie Cranick, Food & Fitness Educator

"My class, known as the Wohlke Wonders enjoyed F.I.E (Food is Elementary) so much. It was the highlight of their week, especially when it was cooking week. Some of the comments made by them are priceless: You inspired me to try new foods, when we cook I like to try everything, I can cook all of the dishes at home and introduce them to my family, I have been eating more healthy lately, I love this program because I actually felt like I was in the different countries we have learned about. These are just some of the positive comments from the children. Parents were actually asked to buy lima beans and corn to make succotash!!! Thanks again for reviving veteran teachers."

Gina Wohlke and Chris Comiskey
Joel School, Clinton, CT

A View Through the Lens

By Dave Therault; dtherault@gmail.com; (203) 233-8222

As the videographer documenting the Food & Fitness program, I have had the opportunity of observing children participating in each of the four programs. In seeing the enthusiasm of the boys for the food and nutrition classes I think that things surely have changed since I went to school and boys wouldn't be caught taking "Home Ec."

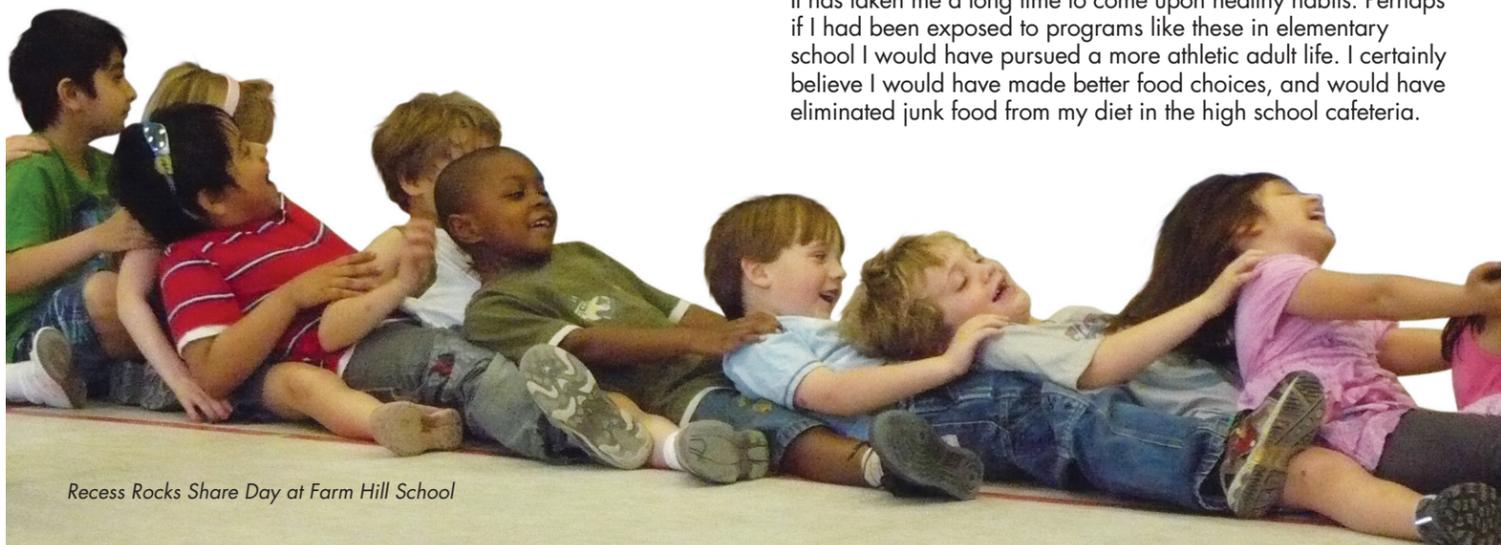
I was impressed by the level of interest in nutrition shown by students who were learning and clearly understanding concepts which I only learned well into my adult life. And they were eagerly trying new foods, which again I had only reluctantly acquired tastes for well past my school years. Whole grains, dried fruits (other than raisins), using sesame oil, avoiding

trans-fats, and choosing fresh over canned or processed—these children are given the foundation in knowledge and experience for preventing health problems and living happier lives, and they are enjoying the process of learning.

The fitness programs seemed to inspire a joy for movement and activity that had also not been part of my elementary school life. Teachers made the best of recreation time in recess by structuring movement intended to make the body stronger and more flexible, at the same time exposing young students to Asian, Oriental and other world cultures.

In PE class, I noticed in many students what seemed to be the sheer joy of working up a sweat and getting more fit. It was only when I started to review and edit the footage I had shot that I really noticed something. These kids were truly engaged, hanging on everything the teachers were saying and really trying to learn. But something else was captured by the video camera—happiness. Students were learning to do difficult things and having the times of their young lives doing it.

It has taken me a long time to come upon healthy habits. Perhaps if I had been exposed to programs like these in elementary school I would have pursued a more athletic adult life. I certainly believe I would have made better food choices, and would have eliminated junk food from my diet in the high school cafeteria.



Recess Rocks Share Day at Farm Hill School

Hats Off to the Pilot Teachers and Principals

Thank you to all of our participating intervention teachers:

Saint Bridget School – Cheshire, CT

Pamela Lupo
Florinda McKenna
Rosanne Silver
Sharon Van Wie
Jill Veiga
Peter Vitale

Joel School – Clinton, CT

Christine Comiskey
Amy Conderino
Lisa Corrone
Echo Damiano
John Dombi
Derek Karcich
Gina Wohlke

St. Mary School – Branford, CT

Linda Arsenault
Michelle Benivegna
Rosemary Grant
Lori Hamilton
Janice Voss

Goodwin School – Old Saybrook, CT

Nelie Brown
Janette Dodds
Caren Goodhue
Heidi Hayes
Chris Kelley
Jeanne Meade
Dawn Ranaudo

Farm Hill School – Middletown, CT

Elizabeth Caffrey
Charles Harwood
Kathy Lagana
Lori Petras
Karen Smith

Lawrence School – Middletown, CT

Erin DeToro
Kaitlin DiDomenico
Bonnie Gaboury
Andree Gervais
Charles Harwood

Spencer School – Middletown, CT

Amanda Amtmanis
Colleen Cardinal
Chris Gates-Wnuk
Maureen Maley
JoAnn O'Leary

Snow School – Middletown, CT

Amanda Amtmanis
Pat Heizman
Lauren Kunzik
Lynda Murdy
Lisa Pramuka

Thank you to all of our comparison classroom teachers:

Saint Bridget School – Cheshire, CT

Michelle Geoffrey
Maryanne Pisani

Joel School – Clinton, CT

Heather Cannata
Melissa McCormack

Goodwin School – Old Saybrook, CT

Mary Annino
Marsha Rosenthal

Farm Hill School – Middletown, CT

Claudia McCutcheon
Kiley Sullivan

Lawrence School – Middletown, CT

Sue Imai
Carrie Nelson

Spencer School – Middletown, CT

Matt Fuggi
Margaret Mullen

Snow School – Middletown, CT

Liz Cubeta
Jean Mozdziesz

Wesley School – Middletown, CT

Ann Anderson
Jennifer Nuzzo
Janice Pawlak
Lenore Williams
Joel Young

Our Lady of Mercy School – Madison, CT

Laurel Ann Carta
Cara Fitzgerald
Lydia Forgetta-Sheffield
Kathy Gontero
Shirley Penna

And of course, thank you to all of the supportive principals:

Dr. John Alforne,
Our Lady of Mercy School
Donna Binkowski, St. Mary School
Sheila Brown, Goodwin Elementary
Joe Cassella, Wesley Elementary
Amy Clarke, Spencer Elementary
James Gaudreau, Snow Elementary
Jack Gedney, Joel Elementary
Pat Girard, Farm Hill Elementary
Enza Macri, Lawrence Elementary
Claudia Norman, Joel Elementary
Marge Whalen, St. Bridget School



Shown above: Program Coordinator, Erin Murphy, volunteered her vacation time this past spring rebuilding a home as part of The St. Bernard Project in New Orleans, LA.

Shown below: Parents, caregivers, children and staff working together to prepare meals for Family Cook's Family Night.

