

Eleven Illinois Schools Strive to Meet the Challenge!

Summary Report
2007-2008 *HealthierUS* School Challenge Mini-grants



Presented by
Illinois Nutrition Education and
Training Program

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Introduction

The Illinois Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program awarded eleven competitive mini-grants, funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, to help schools meet the *HealthierUS* School Challenge. The mini-grants provided up to \$2,500.00 per school or district, and impacted fourteen elementary schools.

The *HealthierUS* School Challenge, established by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), is a program that recognizes schools that take specific steps to improve their school nutrition environment and address childhood obesity. To be certified, schools must meet the following criteria:

- Enroll as a Team Nutrition School.
- Offer reimbursable lunches that demonstrate healthy menu planning practices, reflect the principles of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and meet USDA nutrition standards for school meals.
- Adhere to additional guidelines established by FNS for foods served or sold outside of the National School Lunch Program.
- Provide nutrition education to students.
- Provide students the opportunity for physical activity, and
- Maintain an Average Daily Participation for reimbursable lunches that meets or exceeds 70% of school enrollment.

The following schools/districts received a 2007-2008 Illinois *HealthierUS* School Challenge Competitive Mini-Grant.

District	School(s)
Bushnell-Prairie City Community Unit School District 170	Bushnell-Prairie City Elementary
Cartersville Unit 5 District	Tri-C Elementary School
Century Community Unit School District 100	Century Elementary
Morrison Community Unit School District 6	Northside Elementary School
Morrison Community Unit School District 6	Southside Elementary School
Oak Park Public Schools District 97	William Hatch Elementary School
Oak Park Public Schools District 97	Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School
Red Hill Community Unit School District 10 (Received mini-grant as a district)	Bridgeport Grade School Sumner Attendance Center Petty Elementary
Ridgeview Community Unit School District 19	Ridgeview Elementary
Salem School District 111	Hawthorn School
University of Chicago Charter School Corporation	North Kenwood/Oakland Charter School
Yorkville Community Unit School District 115	Bristol Bay Elementary School

During the grant period, May 1, 2008 through April 30, 2008, eleven of the fourteen schools were able to take steps to meet *HealthierUS* School Challenge criteria using mini-grant funds. North Kenwood/Oakland Charter School (Chicago), Bristol Bay Elementary School (Yorkville) and Century Elementary (Ullin) were unable to complete the grant obligations due to changes in staff or barriers presented by their bid process and opted to return mini-grant funding. Nine of those eleven schools went on to submit *HealthierUS* School Challenge applications.

School Achievement Highlights

The following summaries highlight wellness achievement at the eleven elementary schools that received funding to prepare for submission of a *HealthierUS* School Challenge application.

Bushnell-Prairie City Elementary, Bushnell

Bushnell-Prairie City Elementary utilized mini-grant funds to implement the *SPARK* classroom curriculum for nutrition and physical education. This program teaches children how to set goals for physical activity and healthy food choices. Also, kids learn the relationship between physical activity, food intake and body composition. In addition to implementing this curriculum, they offered children physical education daily and nutrition education twice weekly, Bushnell-Prairie City took the following action to improve wellness within the school environment:

- offered weekly healthy food tips over the intercom
- highlighted a monthly nutrition book with a bulletin board and display in the library
- created a school garden during summer enrichment classes that contained radishes, lettuce, tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers, and potatoes in an effort to encourage vegetable consumption by students
- encouraged children to walk with a friend at recess
- implemented a variety of fresh grab and go fruits and veggies like apples, bananas and carrot sticks to lunch menus
- substituted 51 percent or more whole wheat flour into recipes for baked items, including pumpkin bars and whole wheat cookies

Bushnell-Prairie City Elementary applied for the Silver *HealthierUS* School Challenge certification.

Hawthorn School, Salem

Hawthorn School made use of mini-grant funds to purchase *NUTRIKIDS* menu planning software. The software has assisted Hawthorn in developing and promoting a six-week menu cycle that contains more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Students were involved in menu changes and taste tested new foods, completed food preference surveys and assisted with menu planning. The following healthier fare was added to the menus to meet *HealthierUS* guidelines:

- Tangerines
- Spinach salad
- Black bean salsa
- Baked new potatoes
- Stop light peppers (raw red, yellow and green sliced peppers for dipping)
- Kiwi
- Commodity whole wheat spaghetti
- Whole grain bread
- Whole grain tortilla chips

Hawthorn School submitted a Silver *HealthierUS* School Challenge application.

Northside Elementary School, Morrison

Northside Elementary purchased a large variety of wellness education materials to meet their nutrition education requirements for the Challenge. Purchases of books, DVDs, posters, and games for the classrooms included *Janey Junkfood's Fresh Adventure* DVD, *MyPyramid Bingo* and *Look After Yourself* curriculum.

In addition, a registered dietitian from the local health department worked with the food service director to review lunch menus and offer guidance in meeting Challenge criteria. School staff also received training on the latest wellness and physical activity information at the Illinois Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance conference in an effort to enrich physical education and nutrition education at their school.

Northside Elementary submitted a Silver *HealthierUS* School Challenge application.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School, Oak Park

Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School purchased a large variety of nutrition education materials to meet the nutrition education criteria for the Challenge, including DVDs, posters, games, and books for the students. Nutrition education materials utilized included *Dudley's Classroom Adventure* DVD, fruit and vegetable flash cards and a children's food portion size poster for the cafeteria.

In addition, funding allowed staff to develop twelve classroom nutrition education lessons that were integrated into language arts and mathematic curriculum for students. Mini-grant funds were also used to partner with Seven Generations Ahead, a local non-profit organization, to put on an educational nutrition fair for students and staff.

Despite additional marketing of the National School Lunch Program, the school was unable to reach a 62 percent Average Daily Participation on lunch menus. For that reason, they were unable to meet the *HealthierUS* criteria and submit an application. They were, however, able to increase their ADP from an average of 41-43 percent to almost 60 percent. Marketing efforts to increase ADP included promoting healthier foods and school meals with food samples, posters, PTO presentations, and newsletters for parents.

Red Hill Community Unit School District 10, Bridgeport (Bridgeport Grade School, Petty Elementary and Sumner Attendance Center)

Red Hill School District employed a variety of activities through the use of mini-grant funds to meet nutrition education and menu criteria for the *HealthierUS* School Challenge:

- A registered dietitian was hired to review lunch menus and educate the school community about the menu improvements that included a choice of whole wheat or white bread, a choice of entrée and a daily serving of fruit
- *MyPyramid for Kids* education materials were printed and integrated into physical education classes in four grade levels
- Posters promoting nutrition were purchased for all cafeterias
- School nursing staff took a nutrition course and used the information to provide nutrition education activities to students
- A personal trainer also visited the schools and provided physical education for 30 minutes
- Schools held a “Taste the Spinach” Challenge and provided education on the MyPyramid milk group taking milk mustache pictures of the students

School nurses and principals worked diligently with the local paper in Bridgeport to promote many of these activities to the community through feature articles and pictures.

Each of Red Hill School District’s three schools submitted an application for a Silver *HealthierUS* award.

Ridgeview Elementary, Colfax

Ridgeview Elementary purchased *CATCH* and *Eat Well & Keep Moving* curricula for student education with mini-grant funds. **CATCH** is a Coordinated School Health Program, reinforcing math comprehension and reading skills, designed to promote physical activity, healthy food choices, and prevent tobacco use in elementary school children. It has been aligned with Illinois Learning Standards. *Eat Well & Keep Moving* is an interdisciplinary, evidence-based curriculum that can easily integrate into core subjects and promotes literacy. The six components of the program include classroom education, physical education, school-wide promotional campaigns, food service, staff wellness, and parent involvement. Implementation of both curricula has helped Ridgeview Elementary meet *HealthierUS* nutrition education criteria and their local wellness policy requirement to provide students with 50 hours of nutrition education each school year.

In addition, a registered dietitian was hired to review and assist the district in revising the school lunch menus. School lunch menu improvements included the following additions to the menu:

- fresh broccoli with low fat ranch dip and fresh pears to meet the fresh fruit and vegetable criteria
- baked beans and refried beans to meet the dried bean and pea requirement
- whole grain buns for sandwiches and whole grain corn chips for nachos

Staff development was also provided through attendance at the Southern Illinois Healthy Children Task Force Conference.

Ridgeview Elementary applied for the Gold award status.

Southside Elementary School, Morrison

Southside Elementary purchased a variety of nutrition education materials, including *SPARK* curriculum for grades 3-6. Children have enjoyed logging their daily exercise with their parents with the home materials from *SPARK*. Other nutrition education materials purchased for teachers to use with students in the classroom include a *MyPyramid: Pass It On DVD*, *Health, Hygiene & Nutrition* activity books and *How to Teach Nutrition to Kids* resource book.

The school food service department creates a nutritious and unique menu each month with newly purchased nutrition software. School staff received training on the latest wellness and physical activity information at the Illinois Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance conference in an effort to enrich physical education and nutrition education at their school.

Southside Elementary School applied for a Silver *HealthierUS* award.

Tri-C Elementary School, Carterville

Tri-C Elementary got their elementary school in top wellness shape with a variety of nutrition education materials for their library and classrooms, including food models that demonstrate appropriate portion sizes. Also, funds were used to purchase *CATCH* curriculum components to help meet the nutrition education criteria for a Challenge application.

In addition, nutrition software components were purchased to enhance the school menus and students were surveyed for fruit and vegetable preferences. Menu improvements were able to save each student the equivalent of 24 to 36 grams of fat per month. These improvements included the following menu modifications:

- switched regular corn dogs, to low-fat, whole grain corn dogs
- used a dried cheese sauce mix for nachos to replace the higher fat cheese sauce
- removed grilled cheese from the menu and served lean chicken and turkey sandwiches once or twice a month

Tri-C was assisted by a dietetic intern from Southern Illinois University on all projects to prepare the school to take the Challenge.

Tri-C Elementary School applied for a Silver *HealthierUS* award.

William Hatch Elementary School, Oak Park

William Hatch Elementary utilized a large portion of their funds to purchase ETR's HealthSmart curriculum for grades K-6 to meet the nutrition education criteria for the Challenge. The HealthSmart curriculum has been field-tested with a nutrition education component that addresses national health and language arts education standards. William Hatch also contracted with nutrition and fitness professionals to provide staff development in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.

Despite additional efforts marketing the National School Lunch Program, the school was unable to reach a 62% Average Daily Participation (ADP) on lunch menus. For this reason, they were unable to submit a *HealthierUS* application. Marketing efforts to raise ADP included the following activities:

- a challenge to classrooms to meet a 70 percent ADP with a reward of an extra physical education class during one school week
- letters to parents explaining the Challenge and encouraging participation in the school lunch program

Summary

Of the eleven schools that received mini-grant funding and took strides to submit an application, nine were able to submit *HealthierUS* School Challenge applications. Two schools found it difficult to meet the minimum Average Daily Participation in the National School Lunch Program due to a large number of children bringing lunches from home to accommodate cultural food preferences, religious diet restrictions and a strong community preference toward organic and non-processed foods. All eleven schools were able to make lunch menu improvements that better aligned their school menus with the Challenge criteria and implement new nutrition education programs for students.

Congratulations to all of the mini-grant recipients and *HealthierUS* School Challenge applicants on making a difference for Illinois children!

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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.