



Louise Archer Elementary School, Vienna, Virginia

- 663 students, in northern Virginia near the District of Columbia
- 3 to 10 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals

Approaches

- Use fundraising activities and rewards that support student health

Words of wisdom

“There are lots of simple things that we can do to improve our lives. Walking is one of the best. Our walking program is such an easy way to recognize and reward kids – and to provide health benefits at the same time. My goal is to find many ways of melding the science of learning with ongoing school programs. Walking around the school area helps our students’ brains and bodies. It also gets them outside and provides tactile, real-life experiences that are sometimes missing in our world of technology and television.”

—Dwayne Young, Principal

Key changes and results

Reported by Dwayne Young, Principal

- Friday afternoon “reward walks” with the principal and pedometers replaced pizza parties as the school’s recognition program for hard-working students.
- Teachers and other staff received pedometers and were encouraged to develop personal walking programs with the goal of achieving 10,000 steps per day.
- Louise Archer administrators and educators have also focused attention on the importance of hydration for brain function. Children are encouraged to have water bottles throughout the school day, including in the classroom.
- Students look forward to walking, both with the principal and at other times of the school day. Some kids say that walking helps them focus better. Teachers have integrated pedometer-related activities into classroom lessons, such as math and health. Some classes also walk together for short periods before tests or other important activities.

- School staff logged over 8,000,000 cumulative steps during the 2002-2003 school year.
- For the first year the costs of the walking/pedometer program were similar to the costs of pizza parties in previous years. The expected future costs will be less since the initial investment in the pedometers has already been made.

Keys to success

- **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP:** Time and commitment and leadership by administrators and other staff
- **AGE-APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT:** Fun, kid-oriented pedometers
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SHIFTS:** Creation of an environment in which physical activity, such as walking, is an honor
- **STAFF INVOLVEMENT:** Staff collaborating to support the reward program and staff receiving support for their own fitness.

Description

Like principals all across the country, Dwayne Young wanted to reward those students who work hard, but may not be recognized by making high grades and honor roll lists. Like many others, he relied on pizza parties to reward deserving students.

In fall 2002 several factors converged to completely change the “On a Roll” reward program at Louise Archer Elementary, an historically African American elementary school. First, Mr. Young became more aware of childhood overweight and its associated health concerns in his school and around the country. Second, at a national staff development conference he heard a presentation on “walking for little children” and learned more about the connection between physical activity and academic achievement. He realized that he didn’t feel very energetic after the weekly pizza party—and that his students probably didn’t either!

Mr. Young presented his observations to the Louise Archer staff and enlisted their support in developing a new recognition program. The school invested in bright yellow, kid-friendly pedometers that were distributed to teachers and other staff.

Every Friday teachers select one student from each class for outstanding effort. Students are given a bright-yellow pedometer for the reward walk and can keep it for 1 week. Weather permitting, the recognized students meet the principal and take a 1-mile walk around the neighborhood. Photos of the walkers are posted. Teachers and other staff were quick to embrace the new "On a Roll" program by nominating deserving students and by "walking the talk" about fitness themselves.

According to Principal Young, the program has been a genuine success, and no one misses the pizza parties! Students value the recognition and are proud to walk around the neighborhood with the principal. Mr. Young values his time with students and reports that they are often more willing to share personal stories while walking. As an added benefit, everyone returns to school energized for the afternoon, rather than ready for a nap after a heavy pizza lunch. This is truly a win-win program: worthy students get needed encouragement to work hard in school, and everybody actively learns about the benefits of physical fitness.

Future plans

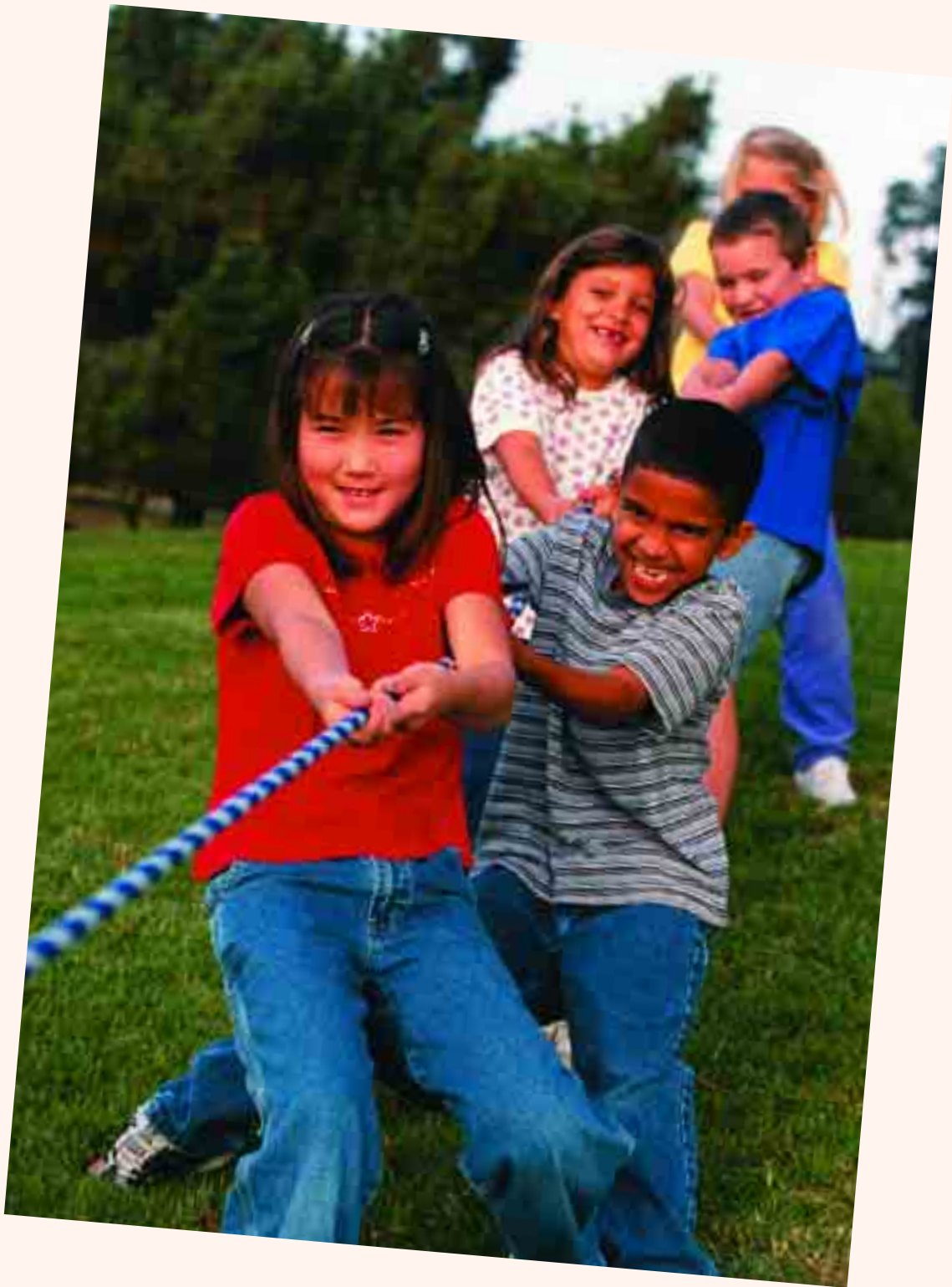
- Continue recognizing student effort with a walking program next year.
- Implement additional cross-curricular programs, linking physical activity to the classroom. One plan is to install an educational climbing wall, which includes lessons on geography, math, and other subjects.

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SUCCESS STORY





McComb School District, McComb, Mississippi

- 3,000 total students (K-12) south of Jackson
- 85 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals

Approaches

- Use fundraising activities and rewards that support student health
- Make more healthful foods and beverages available

Words of wisdom

“So often in education what we know and what we actually do are far too distant. In McComb, we have taken ‘Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs’ very seriously, which reinforces the needs for both a quality physical education program and complete nutrition offerings for our children. We accomplish this through the provision of a nine-component school health program. All of our children in this country deserve what only some of our children are receiving now. We intend to do our part in McComb.”

—*Pat Cooper, EdD, Superintendent*

Key changes and results

Reported by Pat Cooper, EdD, Superintendent

A few years into a 10-year implementation of a coordinated school health program, many changes have been made in the McComb School District’s nutrition environment:

- At the K-8 level the district-banned fundraising with candy or other less nutritious food items (students now sell fruit and wrapping paper) and set guidelines on what snacks can be brought to school.
- Water, 100% juices, milk, and sports drinks are the only beverages available in vending machines; soft drinks are sold after school hours only. According to the superintendent, “Kids will buy whatever is there.” There has been no loss of revenue from these changes; in fact, income is up slightly.

- School meals have improved with pre-packaged salads added at lunch and fewer high-fat/high-sugar items at breakfast.
- Teachers and students have been involved in the process of improving nutrition through surveys about food preferences and the integration of nutrition into classroom curricula.
- Partnerships have been developed with local pediatricians, who have testified on childhood obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease at school board meetings, and the State dairy council affiliate, which has supported nutrition education and milk vending initiatives.

In the remaining years of the plan, the district will develop more specific nutrient standards and offer healthier food and beverage options in all schools.

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Williston Junior High School, Williston, North Dakota

- 356 students in northwestern North Dakota near the Montana border
- 27 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals

Approaches

- Use fundraising activities and rewards that support student health
- Make more healthful foods and beverages available
- Limit student access to competitive foods

Words of wisdom

“Progress or change can begin with a single observation or conversation. Acting on a small change can be the beginning of something bigger—you never know how big the impact can be. Offering healthy alternatives in just one environment such as the breakfast cart can motivate the student to look for other nutritious food choices throughout the day. We feel it’s important to get the students off to a healthy start in the morning.”

—*Sue Grundstad, LRD, Public Health Nutritionist*

Key changes and results

Reported by Sue Grundstad, LRD, Public Health Nutritionist

- A morning “candy cart” was replaced with a “breakfast cart” to offer more nutritious foods for student purchase. With this change, no candy was sold at the junior high before school begins.
- Revenue to the student council, which operated the cart as a fundraiser, stayed the same.
- Soft drink vending machines were turned off for the morning hours before school, but juice vending machines were left on and available for student use.

Keys to success

- **PARENT INVOLVEMENT:** Parents approached the principal with suggestions for change and the reasons for the change.
- **STUDENT INVOLVEMENT:** Student council members decided which foods to offer and came up with the new name, “breakfast cart.”
- **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:** The principal and the student council advisor (the school counselor) actively supported changes.

Description

Junior high students had the option of purchasing candy from the candy cart in the morning before classes. This began as part of a fundraising effort for the student council.

Changes to the candy cart began with a parent’s comment. The parent, also a nutritionist at the Upper Missouri District Health Unit, had a discussion with her 7th grade son. She realized that the money he was taking to school was to purchase candy from the cart. Knowing that good nutrition affected the learning ability of students, she and other nutritionists at the Health Unit discussed possible alternatives to the candy cart.

As a group they had several meetings with the junior high principal. He eventually agreed that the nutritionists could make a presentation on healthier options to the student council, and a meeting was set up by the council advisor.

The presentation included reasons for the proposed change and suggestions for healthier options. The nutritionists offered student council members the chance to taste a variety of items, including “Grip n’ Go” milks (regular and chocolate), 100% orange juice, and multigrain bars.

The students enjoyed the taste testing and decided to sell the milk, juice, and breakfast bars. They also decided to rename their fundraiser the “breakfast cart.” To increase sales of the new items, the Health Unit provided stickers, flying discs, and pencils as promotional incentives, and these were well received by the students.

At the same time as the changes in the morning cart, the principal and school counselor decided to turn off all soft drink machines during the morning hours before school. Machines selling 100% juice were left on for student purchase.

Sales at the new breakfast cart have remained the same as previous sales with the candy cart. These changes have significantly reduced student access to high-fat/high-sugar foods at Williston Junior High. Students now have the opportunity to start the school day with more nutritious foods and beverages.

Future plans

- Health department nutritionists and other school health staff will continue to support the breakfast cart concept. Regular meetings will continue between the school principal and staff from the Upper Missouri Health Unit.
- Nutritionists will provide additional information on healthier vending options as requested by the school administration.

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SUCCESS STORY

