

Port Jervis Middle School Gets Fit - Orange County

Process of Creating Change

Port Jervis Middle School (PJMS), Port Jervis, NY has over 700 children in grades 6-8. In November of 2006, PJMS signed up for Orange County's Fit Kids, a program funded by the New York State Department of Health's Healthy Heart Program.

The assistant principal was very enthusiastic about improving the wellness of her students and staff. The school formed a wellness committee, met with the Orange County Department of Health (OCDH) and initiated a Cafeteria Council to discuss suggestions for improving school menus with the Food Service Director.

PJMS kicked off Fit Kids with a Wellness Event and Interactive Fitness Show on January 23, 2007. A health fair with hands-on demonstrations promoted healthy behaviors. Students visited each health fair station and were required to ask and answer a series of health-related questions. The *Jumping Jacks with Jill* assembly featured a registered dietitian who entertained the students in "rock star" style with lessons in nutrition, physical fitness, and media literacy. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

In the spring 2007, PJMS nursing staff and a teacher implemented *Port Jervis Middle School Fit Kids Nutrition Group*. It is designed to advise students about healthy food choices as well as increasing their physical activity. They meet at lunch time to review food logs and discuss wellness-related issues. A registered dietitian from The Orange County Eating Disorders Coalition provides consultation. During recess, the students participate in a walking club and other activities such a Turbo Jam video workout. The school nurse monitors BMI, waist circumference and body composition in her office on a voluntary basis. OCDH's Fit Kids program assisted PJMS with purchasing pedometers to enhance walking club activities.

PJMS planned a "No Junk Food Week" activity in March. "Healthy Choices" lunch/recess groups made posters to promote the "No Junk Food Week" theme. Daily school announcements in the morning provided nutrition facts and the Cafeteria Council met with the Food Service Director to organize healthy snack taste tests during lunch periods. The students voted for their favorite snack, which was featured in the cafeteria during No Junk Food Week.



On April 28, 2007 PJMS hosted its first annual *Fit Kids "Get Real-Family Fitness Day"*. It was designed to engage students, staff and families in activities surrounding the "TV Turnoff Week" campaign. Students and families participated in races, a bike rodeo and a baseball clinic. A health fair was held, healthy refreshments were served and OCDH was on hand to support Fit Kids.

Evidence of Change

Success has been demonstrated by the level of participation of the staff and students. Since the inception of the Fit Kids Nutrition Group and Walking Club, the staff has now formed their own walking club.

Costs Incurred

The costs incurred were approximately \$2,000 for pedometers, supplies for wellness fairs, vendors, assemblies, and t-shirts for all the students that participated.

Other Money Leveraged

In-kind contributions were made by OCDH public health educators, Orange County Runner's club, and Orange County Bike Association. These organizations donated time and expertise to organize health fairs, fitness events and the bike rodeo.

Lessons Learned

- ▲ When working with students to improve health, self-esteem must be addressed. The nutrition club gave students an opportunity to look closely at what they were putting in their bodies and why. The club also provided a non-judgmental environment to address self-esteem concerns.
- ▲ Families need to be involved. Students were able to share what they learned in school with their families. Family events then gave the whole family a chance to learn ways to be physically fit and spend time together.

Type of Change: Environmental, Practice
Risk Factor: Physical Activity
Location: Port Jervis Middle School, Orange County
Reach/Impact: 700

