

## West Road Gets Fit - Dutchess County

### Process of Creating Change

West Road/ D'Aquanni Intermediate School, Pleasant Valley, NY is an elementary school in the Arlington school district with over 400 children in grades 3 – 5. In August 2006, West Road signed up for Dutchess County's Fit Kids, a program funded by the New York State Department of Health's Healthy Heart Program. What was immediately apparent was the full involvement of the principal and her desire to change the school's environment by increasing physical activity and improving nutrition. Part of her motivation stemmed from the observed incidence of overweight among her students. An active PTA and enthusiastic teachers were other assets.

West Road has a large before-school program serving 100 children. This group was used to launch the Healthy Mind, Healthy Body, Healthy You program through which children walk up to two miles around the track, two days a week. For incentives, walkers select a colorful plastic foot for every three miles walked.

The walking program was launched in the fall of 2006 with two 8-week sessions and another will be held in spring 2007. During the winter months, the school held an indoor walking program. Students used step counters and logged their total steps for the day on a calendar. Over a dozen staff members used pedometers to track their steps as well.

Through Fit Kids, West Road was provided with thirty pairs of snowshoes. Due to a short snow season, this equipment did not get as much use as anticipated, but snowshoe fever caught on. Each grade had two 30-minute snow shoeing lessons before school. The collective response from students was "it was great." The school is seeking funds to purchase more snowshoes for next year.

What is most positive is that physical activity has caught on. During TV-Turnoff Week in April, two physical activity events are planned. On "Track Tuesday," students will be encouraged to walk three times around the track. A kickball tournament will be held on "Kickball Friday." Also planned are a roller skating evening and a "Kickin' Picnic" for families to play kickball as an American Cancer Society's



Relay for Life fundraiser. The "Run West" event in June will provide funds to pave the school's track and will include a 5K race, a one-mile "Fun Run", and relay races.

### Evidence of Change

Success has been demonstrated by the variety of activities and level of student participation. The school plans to pave the track, a permanent environmental change that will permit its year-round use. Two additional elementary schools in the district are planning to start the program.

### Costs Incurred and Other Money Leveraged

A key feature of this success story is that no direct costs to the district or changes in staffing were involved. The Dutchess County Department of Health contributed approximately 300 step counters. Dutchess Quarry donated \$2,000 worth of pea stone to improve the track. The Arlington grounds crew and the principal spent two days spreading the stone and a Dutchess Quarry employee assisted by donating time. Funds to purchase mileage markers and plastic feet incentives were provided by a former West Road student who works for Dutchess Quarry.

### Lessons Learned

- ▲ The walking program offers kids a chance to be both active and social. By exercising first thing in the morning, students can begin their day rosy cheeked, invigorated and ready to learn.
- ▲ Success can be attained by piloting a program on a small scale with 100 students before school. With this experience, a relatively easy transition can be made to include the entire student body, staff and families.
- ▲ Physical activity can be fun and this is an example of how children and adults alike can learn to enjoy a wide range of non-team related sports.

<b>Type of Change</b>	Environmental, Practice
<b>Risk Factor Addressed</b>	Physical Activity
<b>Location of Change</b>	West Road/D'Aquanni Intermediate School, Dutchess County
<b>Reach/Impact of Change</b>	433 students

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NYS Healthy Heart Program