

Student Wellness Team Local Wellness Policy Implementation Grant Report

How Students Drive Local Wellness Policy Changes in Districts

October 2007



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A grant of \$500 was awarded to 47 high schools during the 2006-07 school year to implement their local wellness policy (LWP).

Grantees were required to:

- Create a student wellness team.
- Complete the Healthy Schools Action Tool (HSAT) and action plan.
- Implement at least one school-wide LWP related action.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded 20 of the 47 grants awarded by Michigan Department of Education (MDE). These projects had the potential to reach over 13,000 students. However, two of the schools withdrew from the grant and did not spend the \$500.

Schools used their funds in a variety of ways to implement their LWP:

- Nutrition education and healthy eating changes, including introducing new fruits and vegetables, enhancing the nutrition curriculum with additional materials, marketing nutritional information in the school environment.
- Physical activity and education changes, including coupling healthy eating with positive physical activity messages.
- Other wellness activities, including providing information for parents and developing student wellness team formation.

Overall, the majority of funds to implement the LWP focused on testing new, more nutritious foods and marketing nutritional and physical activity information.

Results from this intervention demonstrate that involving high school students in the implementation of LWP is important if not critical to success. Students provide an untapped resource to implement coordinated school health efforts dealing with healthy eating, nutrition education, physical activity, and physical education. However, it is strongly recommended that an adult lead be identified to mentor and work with the student wellness team in order to convey student interests to the school's coordinated school health team and district administration.

HSAT and ACTION PLANS

The HSAT is an assessment tool that contains questions organized into eight modules, each representing an important component of a healthy school environment. Each module includes score cards that direct schools towards areas that need improvement and planning sheets that help schools set priorities for action and determine a timeline to complete their actions. Out of the 20 schools funded by the USDA, 18 schools completed the HSAT.

HSAT Score Card Summaries

HSAT Module (n=38)	Range (%)	Average (%)
Module 1: Policies & Environment	39.4-70.2	54.1
Module 2: Health Education	63.3-100.0	82.2
Module 3: Physical Education & Other PA	48.5-86.7	70.4
Module 4: Nutrition Services	42.9-100.0	80.3
Module 5: Health Services	0-100.0	42.2
Module 6: Counseling & Social Services	10.0-100.0	73.3
Module 7: Health Promotion for Staff	0-71.4	28.6
Module 8: Family & Community Involvement	0-93.3	37.3
TOTAL SCORE	49.0-76.3	61.9

For all schools, the highest average score occurred in *Module 2: Health Education* (82.2), the lowest average score in *Module 7: Health Promotion for Staff* (28.6) and *Module 8: Family and Community Involvement* (37.3). A high degree of variability exists between schools, as evidenced by the wide ranges in scores.

USE OF FUNDING

Schools used their funds in a variety of ways to implement their LWP; 17 of the 20 schools indicated how they spent their funds at the time of this report: four schools used funding for both nutrition and physical activity, 11 schools focused primarily on nutrition, one school spent all their money on physical activity promotion, and one school spent money on other supporting wellness components (primarily marketing). The primary actions that schools used funding for included:

Nutrition Standards and Healthy Eating:

- Taste-testing healthful foods
- Posters and bulletin board materials about nutrition
- Nutrition curriculum materials
- Portable, traveling kitchen equipment to support nutrition education
- Calorie counting, body mass index, and artery/fat models
- Registered Dietician to help in Life Skills classes

Physical Activity and Physical Education:

- Dance instruction videos for use at lunch time
- Bulletin board materials and handouts

STUDENT SURVEY - SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In May 2007, grantees were requested to complete an online survey reflecting on their experiences through this grant. The questionnaire was completed by 18 of the 20 USDA grantees. The questions and their responses are summarized below.

Question 1: How many students were on the student wellness team?

The number of students ranged from one to more than four: 56% of the teams had three to four students on them and 39% of the teams had more than four students.

Question 2: How many adults actively supported the student wellness team?

The number of adults ranged from one to more than four: 33% of the teams had three to four adults supporting and 44% of the teams had more than four adults supporting.

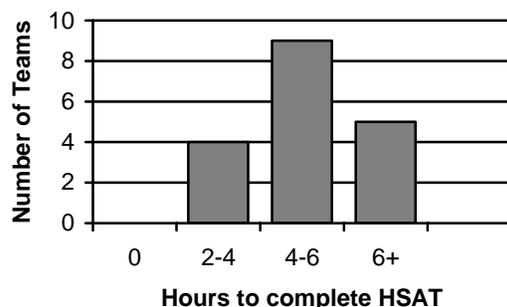
Question 3: Of all the team members involved in completing HSAT, select the top three titles of people who you would recommend to other schools that must be on the team to ensure successful implementation?

The top three titles of people were food service director/manager, health education teacher, and student.

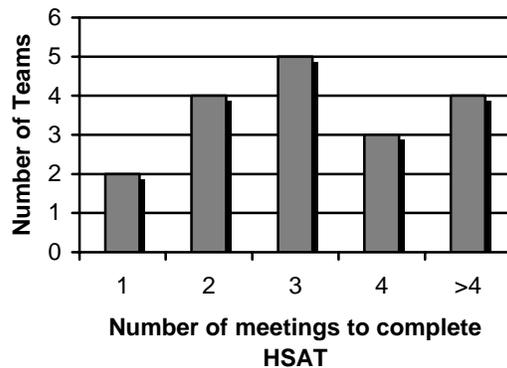
Question 4: How many people took part in completing the HSAT?

Five respondents indicated that four or less people took part in completing the HSAT. Five respondents indicated that between five and six people took part in completing the HSAT. Four respondents indicated that between seven and eight people took part in completing the HSAT. Four respondents indicated that more than eight people took part in completing the HSAT.

Question 5: How much time did it take your team to complete HSAT, including the HSAT Action Plan?



Question 6: How many meetings did it take your team to complete HSAT?



Question 7: Does your student wellness team continue to meet regularly?

The wellness teams were considered to be still active by 83% of respondents, yet only 50% of respondents indicated they were still meeting regularly with their teams. All respondents say they plan to update their HSAT action plan online in the future.

Question 8: What was the most surprising result/finding your team discovered as a result of going through the HSAT?

Going through the HSAT process proved to be a real eye-opener for many of the grantees. Some of the surprises they encountered included: how involved students wanted to be, how many avenues for change there really are, and overall lack of awareness and understanding by teachers and students.

Question 9: What would you say was the most beneficial part of completing HSAT?

The benefits focused on pushing the momentum forward for improving school wellness. Specific examples included bringing health-related issues to the attention of students, staff, and administration; involving students in bringing about change; and providing guidelines and a set of targets.

Question 10: What would you say was the most difficult part of completing HSAT?

All respondents indicated that finding the time to meet within everyone's busy schedule was the most difficult part of doing HSAT.

Question 11: Please list the changes your wellness team made as a result of receiving the Student Wellness Team Local Wellness Policy Implementation Grant?

The following changes were identified as a result of the mini-grants:

- More healthy food choices offered in concessions, vending, school store, and cafeteria.
- Improved communication between food services and students.
- After school and lunch time physical activities were provided.
- More students were encouraged to eat breakfast.

Question 12: Is there anything else that you haven't reported already that resulted from receiving this grant?

While most respondents did not report additional information, one respondent wrote, "We received a lot of positive feedback and encouragement from staff and students to continue to challenge them to eat healthy."

Question 13: Overall, what would you say was your team's greatest challenge in attempting to improve the school health environment? How were you able to overcome it?

Challenges were very similar among respondents, as were the solutions:

Challenge	Solution
Finding time for the team to meet	Meet at lunch times and in the evenings after activities had ended – adults had to be flexible to meet student schedules
Steering individuals away from empty calories	Offer taste testing opportunities Continually communicating the facts of poor health choices
Keeping exercise & healthy eating integrated in class activities over time	Intermittent reminders to staff

Question 14: How did your team use your district's local wellness policy in this grant?

The LWP was used as a reference/informational document by 78% of the respondents, 44% used it to guide them as they created their HSAT action plan, and 28% used it to leverage district buy-in of what they accomplished.

Question 15: Please list any recommendations (pearls of wisdom) for schools wanting to implement their district's local wellness policy.

Recommendations included the following:

- Get students involved to make changes.
- Work closely with food services.
- Involve everyone from students to community members, administrators to parents, teachers to school board members.
- Be patient. It takes time to change ideas and habits.
- Just get started.

Question 16: Prior to receiving this grant, would you say that the school staff understood that your district had a local wellness policy?

Of the respondents, 22% indicated that the staff understood the LWP prior to receiving the grant.

Question 17: After receiving this grant, would you say that the school staff now knows more about the district's local wellness policy?

Of the respondents, 78% indicated that the school staff knew more about the LWP after implementing the grant.

Question 18: What is the biggest impact so far that your district or school has experienced since adopting its local wellness policy?

The two major impacts addressed by most of the respondents included: increased awareness of the importance of good nutrition and physical activity and changes in food served in the cafeteria, school snacks, etc.

Question 19: How did you present the grant information to your school board?

The grant information was given as a formal presentation at a board meeting by 78% of respondents, while other presentations included groups like the Safe & Drug-Free Schools Advisory Board, Coordinated School Health Council, school administrators, and administrative assistants.

Question 20: Would your team recommend that other schools attempting to implement their district's local wellness policy present what they are doing to the school board?

It was recommended by 94% of respondents that schools should present what they are doing to the school board.

Question 21: What did your team like best about receiving the grant?

The school teams reiterated that finding the students' voice and letting them make decisions, finding out what the awareness level of the school community was, being able to offer real solutions with some funding, and actually seeing change occur were all critical elements.

Question 22: What would you say was the primary driver of change in your school?

While all elements are critical in leading to school change, eight respondents identified forming a student wellness team as the primary driver of change, three respondents identified the local wellness policy, three respondents mentioned HSAT, and two respondents said involving the teaching staff.

Question 23: If you had unlimited funding to implement another recommendation in your action plan, what action would you choose to implement?

The actions the schools would like to implement included:

- Build a gym.
- Make changes in vending machines.
- Hire a school nurse.
- Provide free breakfast for all students.
- Fund a physical education or intramural events.
- Purchase physical activity equipment for healthy living demonstrations.

Question 24: Is there anything you would like to tell other schools trying to improve their school health environment?

- Keep working and be patient.
- Don't get pulled off task.
- Have regular meetings.
- Involve the kids.
- Work with the health teacher and cafeteria staff.
- Never give up.
- Go for little changes.
- Continue to emphasize healthy lifestyles.

SUCCESS STORIES

Participating schools submitted success stories that can be accessed at <http://www.mihealthtools.org>.