Invigorating Elementary PE to Combat Childhood Overweight in PA

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Speaker Background

- Business background – 3 start-ups
  - Business development background, focus became health promotion
- Physical fitness perspective: personal and group trainer 10 years
  - Elementary physical activity experience—Kindergarten classes; Move It Day; Girl Power; Zumba (Kohls funded)
- Community Health Council member/perspective
- Parent perspective
- Personal history—overweight child and young adult
Childhood Overweight—It’s a Problem

- 1/3 of US children are overweight or obese, BMI > 85th % (CDC Growth Charts)
- Sedentary behavior positively linked to overweight in youth (CDC)
- 75-80% obese adolescents will become obese adults (NIH)
- Increased weight associated with increased risk for co-morbidities like diabetes and cardiovascular disease
- Overweight is *heightened problem in PA*. According to the National Institute for Children’s Health Quality:
  - Our kids less likely than national counterparts to be physically active at least 4 days/week (Childhood Obesity Action Network)
  - More likely to spend two+ hours watching screens (Childhood Obesity Action Network)
  - PA State Board of Education doesn’t mandate PE time requirement
Leading national and state organizations recognize overweight/physical activity as a priority:

- Obesity/inactivity a PA Department of Health Priority (State Health Assessment/SHA)

Childhood overweight a Healthy People 2020 Leading Health Indicator

- Objective NWS-10.4 tracks the proportion of children and adolescents with obesity (BMI at or above the gender- and age-specific 95th percentile from the CDC Growth Charts)

- HP2020 Target: 14.5%, a 10% improvement over the baseline

- Most Recent: In 2013–2016, the rate of obesity was 17.8% among children and adolescents aged 2–19 years
Interventions Can Help

- CDC’s Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child program can guide stakeholders
- Intervention example: Community Preventive Services Task Force Enhanced School-Based Physical Education
  - Schools can use intervention to inform their programs to improve PA and overweight among elementary children
  - Ideas include:
    - Swapping lower intensity games for more vigorous options during PE class
    - Promoting family physical events by allowing outside use of facilities by the public
    - Provide all teachers with movement idea toolkit (potential in-service session)
Interventions Can Help – continued

- Increase community partnerships that promote physical activity
- Establish before/after school optional workouts
- The issues are funding, volunteers to staff
  - Much of the traction behind these ideas rests on finding wellness “warriors” to spearhead coordinated efforts and do the work
The solution to getting elementary-aged kids to move more/live healthier must include school and families/caregivers.

- Consider interventions that include family physical activity and nutrition
  - Example: Rhode Island, South County Food, Fitness & Fun
- Support research on evidence-based interventions that can be replicated with long-lasting results
- Identify adults in and outside the schools who can serve as wellness champions (paid or volunteer basis)
Example: Cornwall-Lebanon School District

- 2100 students across four elementary schools
- Elementary students have PE 1/week for about 40 minutes
- Recess opportunities (weather dependent) at elementary level, varies in length
- Key District stakeholders agree on core issues (interviews with Asst. Superintendent; Elementary Principal; PE Teacher and Curriculum Lead)
  - CDC suggestions (and others) are theoretically good, but in real-time, significant challenges remain:
    - Family and community engagement (the same families participate; others don’t see the value)
    - If home life doesn’t support PA and good nutrition, hard for school to un-do that
    - Teaching time is at a premium
    - Need staff and others to be wellness champions to help support programs (often unpaid)
Summary

- CDC recommendations help, but the issue is complicated:
  - Childhood overweight/obesity related to physical inactivity and poor eating habits
  - School time can include options to move more, provide healthy food options
  - But family structure can support poor health behaviors
- Community, families must be included to make sustainable impact
- Enlisting “Wellness Champions” critical to sustained success
Resources

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)-BMI growth charts, obesity statistics; Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)-obesity statistics
- National Institute for Children’s Health Quality-Childhood Obesity Action Network summary statistics
- PA Department of Health-State Health Assessment data
- HealthyPeople2020-obesity goals
- Community Preventive Services Task Force-interventions