

The School Environment Project: A Rural Case Study

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Overview of Presentation

- The Community
- The Project
- How we do CBPR



The Community



Partner Community

- San Luis Valley in southern Colorado

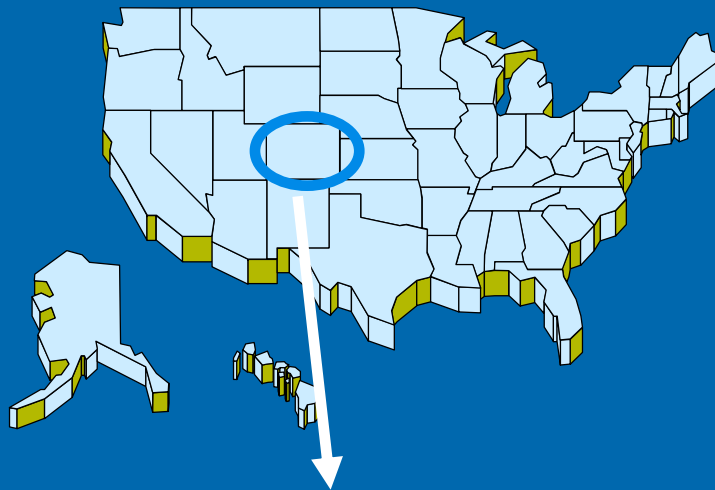
- Elevation 7,500 feet

- Rural, regional center, farming and tourism

- Total population 14,966 (2000)

- 42% Hispanic, 54% non-Hispanic White

- Median income \$29,447 vs \$47,203 in Colorado (1999)



COLORADO







Health Issues Among Children in the San Luis Valley

- **24%** 1st graders overweight or at risk for overweight
- By 5th grade, **38%** overweight or at risk



The Project



How did the School Environment Project come to be?



RMPRC

Community Advisory Board

- 10-15 community leaders and health providers
 - Elected officials
 - Education
 - Mental health
 - Parents/Early childhood
 - Health care
 - Public health
 - Health education
 - Community
 - Churches
 - Economic development



COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

- Identify community needs and concerns
- Set research priorities and provide input on research
- Identify community members to participate on project steering committees
- Promote community support for and involvement in research

Community Advisory Board suggested a shift in research agenda...

...from classroom education (1998-2003) to environmental and policy changes (2004-2009)

School Environment Project was “born”





The School Environment Project

Project Goal: Increase opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating by making school-level environmental and policy changes

How we do CBPR



Doing CBPR

1. Establishing a Steering Committee
2. Building Trust and Communication




1. Establishing a Steering Committee

Goal was to put together a group...

- comprised of school stakeholders and possibly parents/students,
- representing diverse geographic and cultural regions of “the community”,
- that would guide and oversee all phases of the research

Who we were looking for:

- 8 community members who:
 - Believe in physical activity and nutrition
 - Interested in healthy child development
 - Familiar with the school system
 - Can express thoughts at meetings
 - Can be active, constructive team players
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Identifying and Selecting Partners

Step 1: Met with superintendents, principals before grant went in

Step 2: Sent them follow up letter 6 months later

Step 3: Got names from Community Advisory Board

Step 4: Called superintendents and principals to get names of people

Step 5: Met with those people, face to face

Step 6: Invited people to join

Steering Committee



- 3 principals
- 1 school counselor
- 2 food service directors
- 1 physical education teacher
- 1 superintendent
- 1 school nurse
- 1 public health nurse
- 3 members of RMPRC




Steering Committee's Role

- Provide advice, wisdom, and thoughts on:
 - the goals of the project
 - the design
 - how and when we work with schools
 - how we evaluate whether the project is working
 - how we disseminate the findings from the project
- Oversee the project and its implementation

2. Building Trust and Communication




Steering Committee Manual

1. Project description
 2. Operating Policies
 3. List of members
 4. Vision and mission
 5. Memo of understanding
 6. Meeting schedule, agendas, minutes
 7. Project timeline
 8. Info on CBPR
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Memo of Agreement

- 2 year commitment (minimum)
- Attend annual retreat
- Attend monthly meeting
- Spend 2 hours per month doing project related work
- Review and provide comments to documents
- \$1000 stipend per year

Meeting Norms

- Don't hold back/be silent if you disagree
 - Invite people by name to share their thoughts
 - Have a social time; try to get to know others
(meal time should be free of the agenda and used as time to socialize)
 - Several others...
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Decision Making Rules

- Quorum for making a decision is 50% plus 1
- Have a scribe to track discussion
- Strive for consensus but if that's not possible, majority rules

The Vision Statement

A shared picture of the ideal ultimate future that will inspire us and help us rise to the highest level. It will elicit others to join us. The vision is somewhat far off in the future...it will take many years to get to it.



Our Vision

“The School Environment Project Steering Committee will celebrate healthy, active children living in environments where the entire community creates a cycle of lifelong physical activity and healthy eating.”

Running Meetings

- Always have an outcome-driven agenda
- Committee members lead at least one topic
- Do a round robin to hear from everyone
- Use visuals (whiteboard)
- Balance topics so it's not all about research
- Do process checks to get input on how meetings are going
- Send out meeting notes and action items promptly after meeting

Agenda - Jan 21 2005

- 8:00-8:30 Breakfast/Socialize
- 8:30-8:40 Information Sharing
- 8:40- 8:50 Meeting Objectives/Review Minutes
- 8:50-9:30 Recognizing our Talents
- 9:30-10:30 Role of Steering Committee in 2005
- 10:30-10:45 Physical Activity Break
- 10:45-11:15 Recruitment Process
- 11:15-12:15 Food Issues on School Campuses
- 12:15-12:30 Summary and Adjourn
- 12:30-1:00 Lunch

Build Relationships

- Be there in person
- Eat
- Have fun
- Do “check ins” and announcements
- Present together at conferences
- “Family Reunion”
- Learn together
- Phone calls and emails in between meetings
- Share grant and educational opportunities



Potential Threats to Trust and Group Cohesion

1. Being the outside researcher from Denver trying to work in a very tightly knit community
2. We've had some conflict around imbalance between research and action

Other Challenges

- Getting people together
- Keeping it meaningful and important
- Getting people to voice their opinions
- Finding the right balance to engage the community in the research process



WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED!

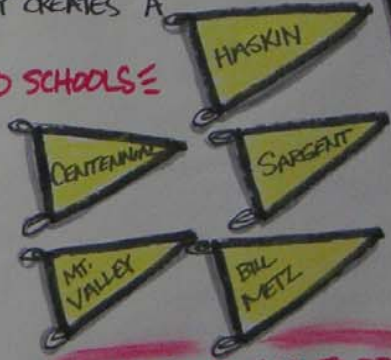
ENERGETIC & MOTIVATED STEERING COMMITTEE

CREATED A VISION STATEMENT

"THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE WILL CELEBRATE HEALTHY, ACTIVE CHILDREN LIVING IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY CREATES A CYCLE OF LIFELONG PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY EATING."

RECRUITED 10 SCHOOLS

CONDUCTED INTERVENTION



WHAT WE NEED TO DO THIS YEAR

- SHARE DATA WITH SCHOOLS
- FINISH IM WITH 5 SCHOOLS

WHAT WE NEED TO DO BEYOND THIS YEAR

- COLLECT STUDENT LEVEL ACTIVITY AND EATING DATA (SOFT, LUNCHROOM PLATE WASTE, CAN USE REAL PIX LEE TOOL)
- ANSWER RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
 - A. ARE KIDS MORE ACTIVE? ARE THEY EATING HEALTHIER FOODS?
 - B. DOES THAT DEPEND ON WHETHER IM v. SHE WAS USED?
 - C. IS IM A REASONABLE WAY OF BRINGING COMMUNITY AND TOGETHER TO MAKE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS?

Summary: Why things are working well

- Obesity and diabetes are important to the community
- Members are “inclusive stakeholders”
- Our vision anchors and motivates us
- Early on, we invested in process: meeting norms and decision-making rules; retreats
- We learn from each other, share ideas and resources
- We utilize each other’s areas of expertise
- We’re building a personal connection

Steering Committee (Community)

Rachel Brown (School Counselor)
Vivian Gallegos (Public Health Nurse)
Marcella Garcia (Principal)
Michelle Hashbarger (Principal)
Carol Keith (Food Service Director)
Mark Lara (Food Service Director)
Jerry LeBlanc (Principal)
John Naranjo (PE Teacher)
Julie Schrader (School Nurse)
John Tillman (Board of Superintendents)

Co-Investigators

Julie Marshall
Lori Crane
John Kittelson

Project Team

Elaine Belansky (Lead Investigator)
Robert Chavez (Study Coordinator)
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