

Healthy Communities Projects

Interim Progress Report

January 2007

ABOUT THE PROJECTS

Purpose

Washington State Department of Health has funded Healthy Communities Projects to pilot implementation of the State Plan for Nutrition and Physical Activity in selected communities in order to test approaches to the State Plan objectives.

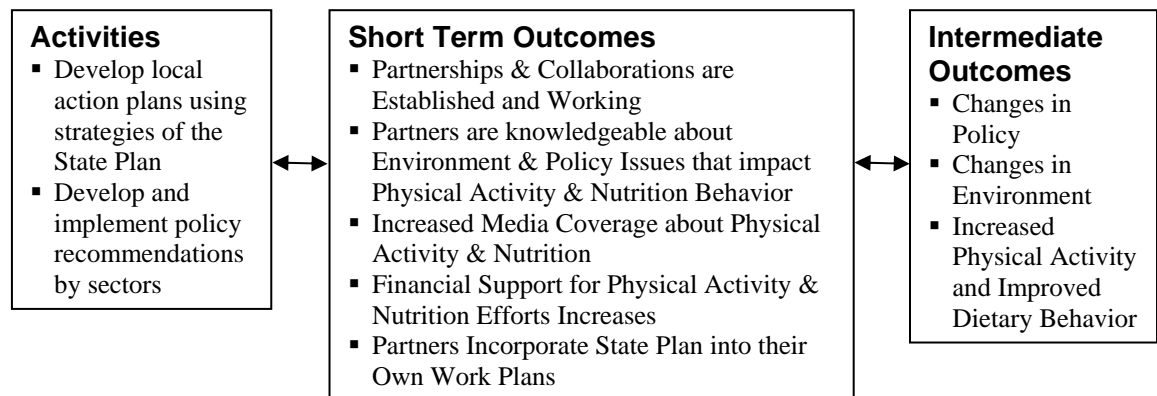
Each Healthy Communities Project has two major phases:

- **Assessment:** A community advisory team conducts a community-wide assessment of nutrition and physical activities policies and environments in order to identify three priorities based on the State Plan.
- **Implementation:** Priority area project teams comprised of key stakeholders design action plans, implement the plans, and use program evaluation to monitor the progress and outcomes. Program evaluation questions include:
 - Is the action plan implemented?
 - Is progress made toward achieving objectives?
 - Do policies and environments change?
 - Do nutrition and physical activity outcomes improve?

Related State Plan Objectives

- Increase access to health promoting foods
- Reduce hunger & food insecurity in Washington
- Increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their infants and toddlers
- Increase the number of people who have access to free or low cost recreational opportunities for physical activity
- Increase the proportion of children who meet recommendations for moderate or vigorous physical activity
- Increase the number of active community environments in Washington

Relationship to State Plan Logic Model



Project Components

1. Moses Lake Healthy Communities Project, 2002-2007
2. Mount Vernon Healthy Communities Project, 2004-2008
3. Kittitas, Spokane and Puyallup Healthy Communities Projects, 2006-

Mount Vernon Healthy Communities Project

OVERVIEW

The **Mount Vernon Healthy Communities Project** identified three priorities:

1. Access to health-promoting foods
2. Increase the number of healthy community environments
3. Increase the number of physical activity opportunities available to children

Project areas and objectives that address these priorities include:

- School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy Committee
- Healthy School Pilot
- Urban Trails Committee
- Farmers' Market
- Safe Routes to Schools

POLICY & ENVIRONMENT CHANGES: MONITORING PROGRESS

School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy Committee

- * School nutrition policy changes have resulted in new school food and beverage standards and changes in vending machine content and contracts. The committee has monitored school vending machines and conducted student taste tests for new menu items.
- * Mount Vernon School District was awarded \$1,000 by the 2006 Washington Board of Health School Board Challenge for work on school nutrition and physical activity policies and environmental changes.
- * Following the formation and adoption of the Healthy School Project (HSP) Action Plan at Lincoln Elementary in 2005 the HSP Committee has been working to implement the plan.

Healthy School Project

Lincoln Elementary School is a pilot site for testing programs and changes to implement nutrition and physical activity environment and policy. In the 2005-2006 school year several ideas were tested.

- Several Lincoln teachers volunteered to lead physical activities such as active games, yoga, hiking, and walking during the regular "Specialist Time". Previously only art and library options were offered.
- Students participated in three "Walking School Bus" demonstrations
- After school physical activities were offered including: Kick Boxing, Yoga, Running Club, Fitness Circuit and Basketball.

Evaluation informed all stages of the project.

- School nutrition and physical activity environment and policy audits in 2005
- Administrator, teacher, staff, student and parent surveys in 2005
- Monitoring and feedback during the 2005-2006 school year
- Follow up surveys at end of school year in spring and summer 2006

Nutrition Objectives

Ensure schools provide healthful foods and beverages

- Introduce and maintain quality, healthful choices in all Mount Vernon school vending machines
- Work with Mount Vernon School District (MVSD) to influence the content of the new school nutrition and policy mandated to be adopted by August 2005
- Increase the amount of local produce served in Mount Vernon schools

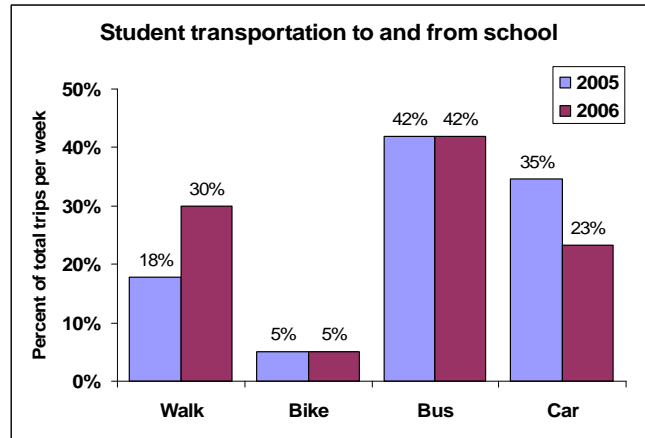
Physical Activity Objectives

Encourage policies that provide opportunities for students to be physically active outside of formal physical education classes.

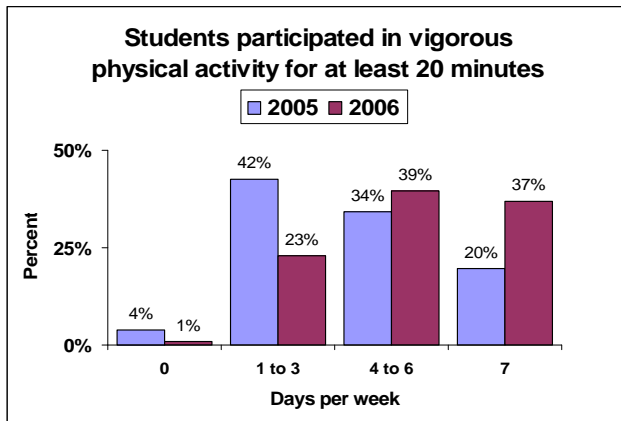
- Increase opportunities for children to be physically active outside of the regular school day.
- Increase opportunities for children to be physically active at school during the school day
- Increase opportunities for children to be physically active in the community

Healthy School Project (continued)

Student transportation to and from school was estimated from parent surveys in 2005 (74 parents representing 107 students) and 2006 (49 parents for 72 students) based on 10 trips per week per student. In 2006 compared to 2005 there was a 12% increase in walking and a corresponding 12% decrease in car travel while the percent going by bus and by bike remained unchanged. These findings were also supported by the popularity of the Walking School Bus program and indicate a successful outcome for the Healthy School Project.



Parent surveys: 2005 N=74; 2006 N=49

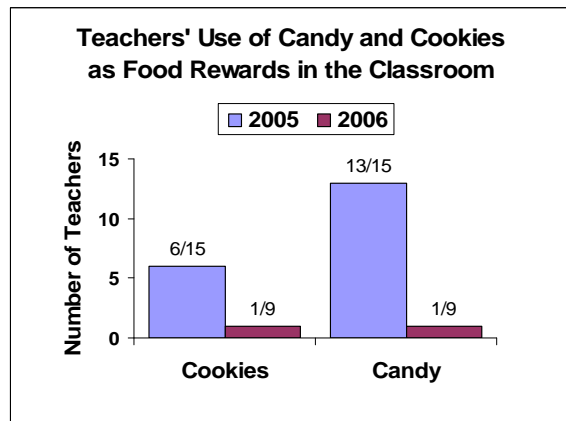


Student surveys: 2005 N=132; 2006 N=114

Student surveys of fourth, fifth and sixth graders in 2005 and 2006 showed an increase in the percentage of students who experienced vigorous physical activity that made them sweat and breathe hard for 20 minutes seven days per week with a corresponding decrease in the students who did this only 1-3 times per week.

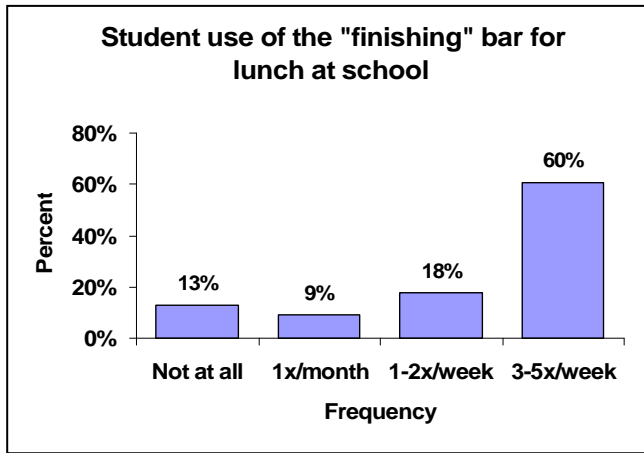
Teachers were surveyed pre and post Healthy School Pilot interventions. Survey results indicated a decreased use of certain foods as rewards. In 2005 13 out of 15 teachers surveyed used candy as a reward, but in 2006 only 1 out of 9 teachers said they were using candy as a reward.

Parent survey results regarding types of food used for classroom celebrations were more mixed. Many parents did not want any "junk food" or sweets in the classroom, other parents felt that occasional treats and sweets such as cupcakes and cookies should be allowed for special events. The dialogue on this topic continues.

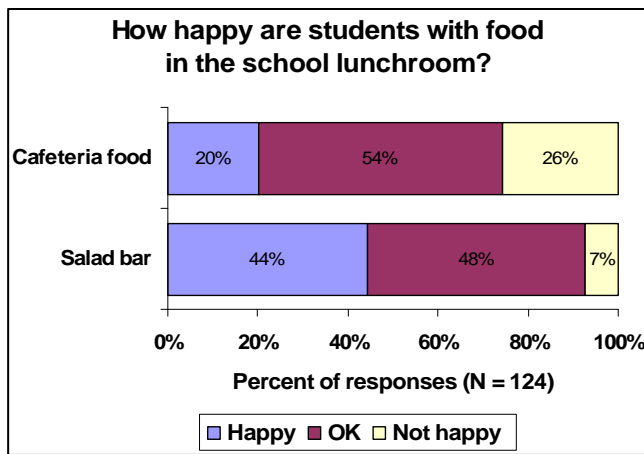


**POLICY &
ENVIRONMENT
CHANGES:
MONITORING
PROGRESS**

Healthy School Project (continued)



Fourth, fifth and sixth grade students (N=124) were surveyed about their nutrition experiences at Lincoln Elementary. The new "finishing" bar that provided fresh salad vegetables in the lunch room proved to be popular with students! Sixty percent of the students used the finishing bar 3-5 times per week.



Ninety-three percent of the students were "OK" or "Happy" with the finishing bar, while 74% of the students were "OK" or "Happy" with cafeteria food overall.

**POLICY &
ENVIRONMENT
CHANGES:
MONITORING
PROGRESS**

Urban Trails Committee

UTC meets monthly and actively works with other Mount Vernon stakeholders to plan and implement trail projects, and increase connectivity of trails, sidewalks and parks.

- * In September 2005 the Mt Vernon City Council adopted the Trail Signage Policy and the Adopt-A-Trail Program, both developed by UTC.
- * In January 2006 UTC developed a master Trail Signage Plan and budget. Funds were secured from community partners for the purchase of kiosks and way-finding signage. The committee has been working with new partner Skagit County GIS to develop a Mount Vernon Trail Map. UTC is currently working on Trail Rules and Courtesies.
- * By March 2006 nine miles of trails had been designated and undergone improvements, and six sections of trail had been adopted by community members.
- * UTC has partnered with Skagit County Parks and Recreation and the Skagit County Active Community Task Force to purchase and install trail monitors and software. Trail use is being monitored by infrared trail counters: long term counts are collected from five trail access sites and additional sites are monitored using "roving" counters. Trails being monitored include Kulshan Trail and Padilla Bay Shore Trail.
- * MVHCP in partnership with the City of Mount Vernon receives funding and technical support from the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance to work on the proposed Skagit River Trail to create trails in Mount Vernon.
- * UTC is currently working with Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation to create trail and park development standards. The goal is to recommend a set of standards to City Council for adoption and implementation through Development and Economic Services.

Objectives

- Increase active community environments
- Identify and connect trails
- Encourage access to Skagit River levees for the public

Partners

Urban Trails Committee (UTC) partners include:

- City and Mayor of Mount Vernon
- Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation
- Skagit County Parks and Recreation Department,
- Skagit County Health Department
- Skagit County Geographic Information Services
- Skagit County Physical Activity Coalition
- Skagit County Active Community Task Force
- Skagit Valley Hospital.

Safe Routes to School

MVSDP, City of Mount Vernon Public Works, Mount Vernon Police and MVHCP partnered to form a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning team, which worked on a successful application for a Washington State Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School Grant. The grant funds will provide funding for making sidewalk improvements and adding active speed detectors in two school zones. The grant also includes an enforcement and education component for a "Yield to Pedestrian" campaign as well as walk to school activities at two target schools.

- * A Safe Kids Coalition "Walk this Way" grant was used to pilot three walking school bus demonstrations at Lincoln School in May 2006, and to update Safe Route maps for all district elementary schools.
- * MVHCP partnered with Skagit County Active Community Task Force to hold a SRTS Funding Partnerships workshop in May and a SRTS National Training in July.

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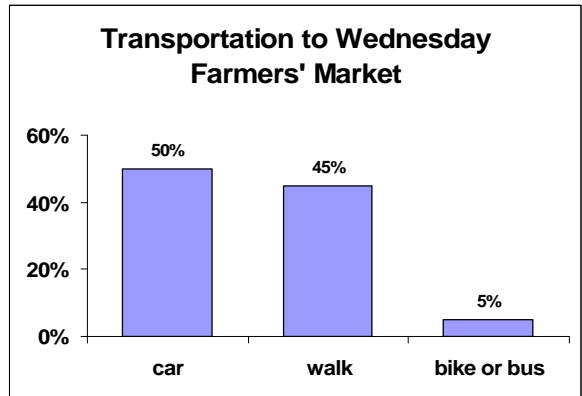
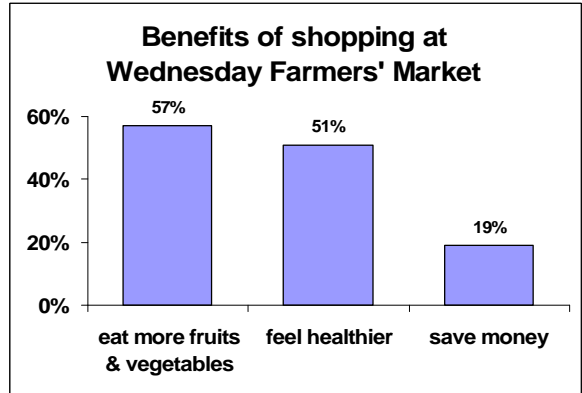
Farmers' Market

The *Skagit Cooks!* farmers' market project is a collaborative effort of the Skagit Valley Hospital, the Mount Vernon Farmers' Market, and the MVHCP, with funding from a grant from Project for Public Places. *Skagit Cooks!* launched a new Wednesday Farmers' Market at the Skagit Valley Hospital in July 2006. The grant also provided setting an EBT system for both markets that enabled the use of food stamp to purchase produce at the market; and partnerships with the Skagit Valley Coop to provide cooking demonstration and Skagit County Children's Museum to run children's education activities at the Saturday markets.

Evaluation is tracking market attendance, use of WIC vouchers and Basic Food Quest cards at both Saturday and Wednesday markets to assess access by low income shoppers.

Surveys in July through September tracked how people traveled to the market.

- It was estimated that 50% of shoppers walked, bicycled or rode a city bus to the Wednesday farmers' market compared to 50% that used cars.
- A majority indicted that because of their purchase they would eat more fruits & vegetables and feel healthier.
- Only 19% thought that they'd save money by shopping at the market, but 76% were satisfied with the prices.
- Many shoppers commented that they enjoyed the market and wanted it to grow – more vendors, longer hours and a longer season!



Two surveys of vendors and monthly market reports provided information about vendor satisfaction with the new market. There was an average of nine vendors per week.

- Vendor revenue totaled \$33,000 for the 12 weeks of the Wednesday market
- Most vendors were satisfied with the *volume of shoppers* (63% very satisfied, 25% satisfied, 13% somewhat satisfied)
- Most vendors were satisfied with the *volume of revenue* (50% very satisfied, 25% satisfied, 25% somewhat satisfied)
- 78% of the vendors indicated they were interested in selling at the market again next year; 22% said they weren't sure yet.

LESSONS LEARNED

School Policies & Environment: Healthy School Project

- * Working with all stakeholders: parents, students, teachers, staff and administration to plan, implement and evaluate changes in school regarding nutrition and physical activity policies and opportunities. Active dialogues with stakeholders lead to increased understanding, problem solving, and progress toward Healthy Community objectives and goals.

Urban Trails Committee

- * Monitoring progress and celebrating successes of all projects – big and small - helps build capacity and sustain effort for achieving even more challenging long-range goals. Examples of urban trails actions in Mount Vernon include 9 miles of designated trails, trail maps, trail signage, adopt-a-trail system in place, trails adopted, trail usage evaluation plan, trail counters purchased and installed, and progress with incorporating dike access into the trail system.

Farmers' Market

- * Community partners are opportunities waiting to happen. The successful Wednesday Farmers' Market pleased shoppers and vendors and also added a way for Skagit Valley Hospital to promote healthy eating and physical activity by helping to bring a popular resource to their employees and the community.

Safe Routes to School

- * Safe Routes efforts exemplify the synergy of the Mount Vernon Healthy Communities partnerships. Stakeholders including city, schools, transportation and safety work together with teachers, parents and kids to make getting to school safer, more fun and more popular.

Acknowledgement

- * Project partners and community members in Mount Vernon actively participated in all phases of the evaluation processes and continue to apply evaluation to inform their Healthy Communities Project.
- * Special thanks go to Liz McNett Crowl, the project coordinator, Rita Ordonez of the Farmers' Market project, and many others who contributed to the evaluations.