Much has been written about childhood obesity in the last five years and millions of federal dollars have been invested in interventions and policies. A focus of youth obesity prevention efforts inevitably targets the school setting.

**Why?** Over 95 percent of children and youth are enrolled in schools (National Center for Education Statistics) and physical activity and healthy eating have long been fundamental aspects of the education system in the United States. Because recent research has demonstrated the connection between physical activity, good nutrition, and academic performance as well as the impact of targeted, sustained obesity prevention interventions on children’s health, schools are seen as an effective system for addressing childhood obesity and its related behaviors. (Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and the Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation).

**According to the CDC, schools play a particularly critical role by establishing a safe and supportive environment with policies and practices that support healthy behaviors. Schools also provide opportunities for students to learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.**

**This month’s Grantee Focus**

The Western Upper Peninsula Health Department (WUPHD) utilizes the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Program, CATCH UP, along with Consortium partners representing 5 local elementary schools with children in grades Kindergarten to 5th.

Visit ruralhealthlink.org to hear the interview with Sara Salo, CATCH Coordinator, Western UP Health Department.
There are several effective approaches when it comes to implementing physical activity and nutrition programs in the school setting. Listed below are a few programs that have been successful:

**After School Setting** – According to the evidence, impactful afterschool programs, or SAFE programs, implement four practices:
1) **staff use a Sequenced step-by-step training approach**, 
2) **staff emphasize Active forms of learning by having youth practice new skills**, 
3) **specific time and attention is focused on skill development; and** 
4) **programs are Explicit in defining the skills they are attempting to promote**.

The National After School Association has established standards for healthy eating and physical activity specifically for out-of-school time programs. These standards highlight best practices in afterschool menus and movement.

**Classroom Setting** - Integrating physical activity (PA) and nutrition content with core academic concepts is becoming more popular and relevant given trends in children’s diet and sedentary behavior. Research in classroom-based PA suggests it is beneficial and potentially “fitness promoting” for children. Movement can occur in the classroom without compromising learning and, in fact, some studies suggest PA may enhance on-task behavior, student concentration, memory, and academic achievement. Program examples include Brain Gym, Michigan Brain Breaks, Energizers and **Take 10!**.

**Breakfast** - Studies have shown that breakfast improves children’s standardized test performance, memory, concentration, behavior, and health. For students, ideal breakfast foods are rich in whole grains, fiber, and protein. Food for Thought is a three-year "Breakfast in the Classroom" campaign to ensure that students in the Los Angeles Unified School District eat a nutritious breakfast every morning. By the end of the 2013 school year, 300 schools in LAUSD will have Breakfast in the Classroom programming. Click here for more information.

**Lunch: Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids** - The Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 ensures that low-income children can participate in child nutrition programs and receive the meals they need. Highlights include: expanding the Afterschool Meal Program to all 50 states; 2) implementing strategies to reduce red tape in helping children obtain school meals; 3) enhancing the nutritional quality of food served in school-based and preschool settings; and 4) trying to improve the health of “competitive foods” offered or sold in schools. Click here for more information.

**Recess** - A 2009 Pediatrics article reported a link between recess and classroom behavior among about 11,000 children age 8 and 9. Those who had more than 15 minutes of recess a day showed better behavior in class than those who had little or none. Instant Recess, the brainchild of Dr. Toni Yancey, provides structured 10-minute breaks for children and youth of all ages. Click here for more information.

**Policy** - Policy is important for codifying, sustaining, and providing accountability for efforts to infuse physical activity into the school setting. However, in drafting policy language, it is often necessary to make tough decisions between what is best practice and what is realistic for a given school, district, or state.

**Get more information:** Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) Policy Continuum Physical Activity and Physical Education Requirements by state

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**VALUABLE RESOURCES**

**Alliance for a Healthier Generation**
The Alliance provides expert advice and resources for school professionals, teachers and students in addition to information specifically for parents. Parents serve as key role models in the home and they can also help ensure that health is a priority at their child’s school.

**CDC’s School Health Index**
The School Health Index (SHI): Self-Assessment & Planning Guide was developed by CDC in partnership with school administrators and staff, school health experts, parents, and national nongovernmental health and education agencies.

**CDC’s Coordinated School Health**
Coordinated school health (CSH) is recommended by CDC as a strategy for improving students’ health and learning. CSH is a philosophy; a way for schools to examine 8 aspects of school health and coordinate their efforts for greater impact.

**National Association of State Boards of Education**
The National Association of State Boards of Education exists to serve and strengthen State Boards of Education in their pursuit of high levels of academic achievement for all students.

**National School Board Association**
**Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative**
The National School Boards Association provides information and ideas on policy development in the school setting related to childhood obesity behaviors.

**Fuel Up to Play 60**
Fuel Up to Play 60 encourages youth to eat healthy and move more — and studies suggest that well-nourished, physically active kids can be better students.

**Healthy Hungry Free Kids Act 2010**
Improving child nutrition is the focal point of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The legislation authorizes funding and sets policy for USDA’s core child nutrition programs. Visit the website for more information.

**Weight of the Nation**
In 2012, HBO released a 4-part film series and a number of bonus short films to educate viewers on the consequences, choices, the impact on children, and challenges. The shorts feature several “child-focused” topics.
LEADING BY EXAMPLE: GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

This month we are featuring several grantees that are implementing positive impact and change within schools in their local communities. Each organization is actively working to raise awareness surrounding nutrition and physical activity for students while working closely with teachers, parents and administrators.

Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital is implementing the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Program in two rural counties in Oregon. They are in 12 schools (in-school programs), seven afterschool programs and three early childhood programs in Lincoln and Linn counties as a strategy to combat the region’s childhood obesity epidemic. Approximately 4,000 children will be served by the program and their target population is low-income children from 3 to 12 years of age; however, the program is open to all children from 3 to 12 years of age in Lincoln and Linn counties.

Program: Coast to Cascades CATCH Kids Club
For more information contact Marilyn Kennelly at: mkennelly@samhealth.org
Website: http://catchinfo.org/

Health Enrichment Network in Louisiana is piloting Growing Up Fit Together; an obesity prevention program that targets first, second and third grade students in 23 Louisiana elementary schools. Growing Up Fit Together works with teachers, students and families to promote healthy lifestyle skills through seven lessons (modules) taught by a Growing Up Fit Together Obesity Prevention Coordinator assigned to that participating school. The lessons cover topics such as heart health, oral health, nutrition and exercise. There are three components to the program: (1) Get Moving (2) Get Healthy, and (3) Learning Together. Get more information at: www.growingupfit.org/

Baptist Health Madisonville in Kentucky is using the evidence-based TAKE 10!® model that integrates grade-specific physical activity and nutrition concepts with core academic subjects: language arts, math, social studies and science. The program is part of the Kentucky Delta Rural Project and currently they are implementing TAKE 10!® in 64 elementary schools.

Website: www.baptisthealthmadisonville.com/education/kentucky-delta-rural-project/

Unified School District #498 Marshall County, project Healthy Early Learning Project (HELP) The goals of HELP are to promote and strengthen early learning policies and standards that create healthy learning environments for preschools; to create healthy sustainable learning environments that encourages increased physical activity; to create healthy sustainable learning environments that encourages good nutrition habits; and to engage and empower families and communities in the prevention of childhood obesity and the onset of chronic disease. Additional outcomes for the HELP include, the increased percentage or preschool students who achieve appropriate Body Mass Index. The preschool sites are using a variety of evidenced based curricula such as SPARK, Early Sprouts, Healthy HOPS and Animal Trackers.

For more information contact Philisha Stallbaumer at: philishas@bluevalley.net

Looking for funding opportunities?
Check out the websites below for more information.

- General Mills Foundation
- USDA Team Nutrition
- Fuel Up To Play 60 Mini-grants
- Action for Healthy Kids Mini-grants

REFERENCES CITED

- Durlak JA, Weissberg RP. Afterschool programs that follow evidence-based practices to promote social and emotional development are effective. 2010. Accessed on-line at: www.expandinglearning.org
Stay tuned for more information on CHSD’s upcoming events:

**Mental Health Peer Learning Seminar**
September 16, 2013
This Peer Learning Seminar will focus on mental/behavioral health services, including approaches and innovations for improving access and care in rural communities.

**Oral Health Peer Learning Seminar**
September 16, 2013
This Peer Learning Seminar will focus on strategies for expanding access to oral health care in rural communities.

**Chronic Disease Care Management Peer Learning Seminar**
October 22, 2013
More details to come!

**Access to Care Peer Learning Seminar**
October 22, 2013
This Peer Learning Seminar will focus on strategies for expanding access to primary and specialty care for the under and uninsured.

Stay connected, join a Peer Group!
For more information, click [here](#).