

Worksite Wellness in Your School Districts

Karen Nitzkowski

PartnerSHIP 4 Health School and Worksite Wellness Coordinator

Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program in the West Central Counties of Becker, Clay, Otter Tail and Wilkin



Who is in the room?

- Size of school districts: urban/rural
- SHIP School Coordinator
- MDH Staff
- School TA Provider
- Who am I missing

There probably are folks here today who know more or different things than I'm sharing, so know that this is a discussion, not a lecture; please share.

Objectives

- Why Worksite Wellness
- What can worksite wellness look like in a school setting
- How to get started
- How to incorporate it into a busy school calendar
- Will share examples from other school districts throughout presentation
- Health Equity Considerations
- Remember to have **fun** (rock, paper, scissors)

Why Employee Wellness in Schools?

- **Healthy employees** are integral to protecting the health and well being of students and ensuring their **academic success**

District / School Intrinsic Drivers

- Save \$\$ on substitutes
- Increase retention
- Better role models for students
- Impact on student learning

School Employee Intrinsic Drivers

- Better role model for students
- Increase morale
- Better health
- Impact on student learning

Why Employee Wellness in Schools? The Facts.

5.3% of teachers are absent on any given day,
whereas American workers overall...3%



Why are they absent?

59% of absences are from personal illness



So what?

Teacher absence is **expensive** &
there is a **negative relationship** between
teacher absences and student achievement

Laying the Foundation

Two key building blocks:

1. Leadership support and engagement
2. On the ground support and infrastructure
 - Wellness Committee
 - Wellness Champions/Ambassadors
 - Communications



Make up of School Wellness Committee to increase diversity

- ELL teacher and/or student
- Special Education teacher
- At-risk student
- Parent of ELL, Special Ed, at-risk, free and reduced qualifying student
- Alternative high school representation
- Who else?

Wellness Ambassador

Purpose: Wellness ambassadors play a vital role in supporting the promotion of health and wellness among Concordia faculty and staff. Wellness ambassadors serve as Concordia's key communicators of the wellness program helping to direct employees to wellness programs, activities and resources.

Role:

- Share and publicize wellness activities and programs on campus.
- Recruit faculty and staff to participate in wellness programs and activities
- Participate in wellness programs and activities
- Identify potential ideas, strategies and programs for enhancing wellness and health culture/work environment.

Time Commitment: Minimal (1 hour per month)

The Wellness Team will provide guidance, direction, consultation and information to the Wellness Ambassadors.

Conduct an interest survey

- To understand what matters
- To give employees a voice
- Keep it simple
- Use it to determine a wellness plan
- Also consider a health risk assessment sometime in the first two years of your program to determine health risks of your employees (usually offered through health plan)

(Sample surveys as handouts)

Develop a Plan

- **Develop a plan and set goals** with your wellness committee to focus on getting started.
 - Start small and prioritize focus areas
 - In the beginning, build awareness and infrastructure
 - Use the data from an interest survey / health assessment to inform your thinking
 - Assign point people, and check-in



Sample Goals

- #1: By December 2015, gather interest data on at least 20% of school employee population as measured by the participation and results of the school employee interest survey.
- #2: By June 2016, communicate existing wellness offerings to all employees at least 4 times as measured by the number of communications.

Make sure
your goal is...

- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Measureable
- ✓ Achievable
- ✓ Results
- ✓ Timely



INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF HEALTHY FOODS



Environment

Vending.
Healthy snack station.
Cafeteria improvements.
Meetings and events.

Policy

Policy that sustains the improvements.

Systems

RFP services for vending.
Quality assurance practices for vending.
Catering guide.
Management of healthy snack station.
Labeling and signage.

Social **S**upport

Employee survey.
Taste testing.
Morsel Mondays / Tasty Tuesdays / Fruity Fridays.
Lunch and learns.



INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



E

Mapped walking routes; bike racks, showers, lockers; physical activity room/space; a walking workstation.
Higher cost: Sit-to-stand desks.

P

Employees can combine breaks for physical activity time, dress code, walking meetings, work accommodations that support physical activity.

S

Trainings for managers to develop flexible schedules to accommodate PA at work, walking meetings framework, active transportation.

SS

Walking clubs.
Stretch breaks.
Exercise classes lead by employees.

E = Environment. P = Policy. S = Systems. SS = Social Support.

Staff Wellness Included in School Wellness Policy

- **Staff Wellness and Health Promotion**

The Wellness Committee will have a staff wellness subcommittee that identifies and disseminates wellness resources, and performs other functions that support staff wellness in coordination with human resources staff. Schools will implement strategies to support staff in actively promoting and modeling healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Examples of strategies include a healthy foods meeting policy offering healthy options or include healthy eating/weight management programs that are accessible and free or low cost.

Professional Learning

When feasible, the District will offer annual professional learning opportunities and resources for staff to increase knowledge and skills about promoting healthy behaviors in the classroom and school (e.g., increasing the use of kinesthetic teaching approaches or incorporating nutrition lessons into math class). Professional learning will help District staff understand the connections between academics and health and the ways in which health and wellness are integrated into ongoing district reform or academic improvement plans/efforts.

Note from the MN School Boards Association: If the school district is willing to follow through with the staff initiatives described above in their student Wellness Policy, yes, I think adding that language would be fine. I would also suggest adding the Wellness Policy to the list of policies incorporated by reference in Policy 422 if that district has that policy.

Free and Reduced Policy Language

Your school wellness policy should include this language:

The School District specifies how families are provided information about determining eligibility for free/reduced priced meals and takes steps beyond those required by the federal law/regulation to protect the privacy of students who qualify.

Note: it's not included in the model policy handout, but should be under USDA Meal Program section

Communicate Clearly and Often

Communicate and promote your wellness activities to staff members

Tell people why this is important

Communicate in many and in different ways

Communicate to *motivate* employees

Talk about wellness in staff meetings!

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER WITH COMMUNICATIONS



1. We can do more with communications.
2. Messages from top leader is important – convey to employees why the organization is doing a wellness initiative (Invite employee input. Ask for volunteers.).
3. Day-to-day middle managers / supervisors must be champions.
4. Use a number of modes of communication – e-mailed message from top leader, posters announcing events, flyers in mailboxes with an overview of everything.
5. This is a great spot to be creative – morning stretch break, team meetings.

School Calendar

- Annual Plan for Aug-May based on interest survey and health risk assessment.
- Learning/training opportunities built into staff development/in-service days e.g active classroom/active recess trainings, diabetes or heart health presentation from clinic or hospital staff
- Wellness Committee Meetings
 - Quarterly: Sept, Nov, Feb, April; Or monthly standing committee
- Fun, healthy activities can happen before or after school, stress relievers during conferences (e.g. massages); when is it easy to fit in a Turkey Trot, healthy pot luck, 12 Days of Christmas, New Year's fruit and veggie platters in the break room

Staff as wellness role models

- Advocate to equal the playing field when possible; examples could include:
 - No birthday treats or snacks from home for students and staff
 - Food service could provide healthy snacks for staff and students, consider how to cover costs (district provides, pay as able, free and reduced standards)
 - Water bottles for students and staff; refillable water stations
- Physical activity opportunities
 - Student activity breaks with staff participating
 - Can teachers provide before or after school physical activity opportunities for students and they also participate?
Intramurals?

Next Steps

- Identify key stakeholders from your school and district
- Find out what employee wellness efforts are already happening
- Look for opportunities to be a role model for wellness
- Conduct an employee wellness survey
- Convene/use your wellness committee, typically meet quarterly and include staff wellness on agenda
- Involve others and develop a wellness plan
- Communicate and promote your efforts to all staff
- Keep health equity considerations in the forefront as you guide your districts
- Start small
- Have **fun!**

What am I missing?

Time to share your:

- Concerns
- Barriers
- Suggestions
- Successes
- What else?

Contact Information

Thank you from:

Karen Nitzkowski, PartnerSHIP 4 Health
knitzkowski@gmail.com, 701-371-9644