



School Wellness: Moving Toward Action to Prevent Childhood Obesity in Rural Communities

Perspectives from Extension Field Faculty

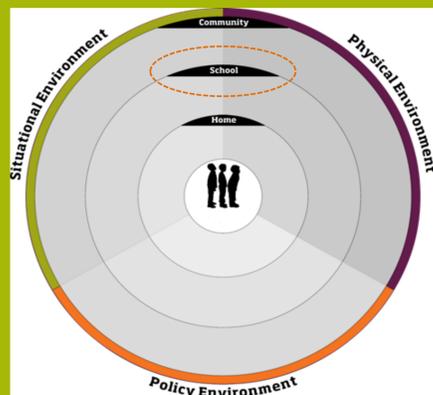
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OVERVIEW

Childhood overweight and obesity is a significant issue facing communities throughout the nation. Obesity in children is associated with increased risk of chronic diseases and mental health issues, as well as poor academic performance. Research suggests that youth living in rural communities have higher rates of obesity and overweight than their urban counterparts.

Generating Rural Options for Weight Healthy Kids and Communities (GROW HKC) is a research project being conducted in six rural communities across Oregon. GROW utilizes a community-based participatory approach to research, identify, and change factors that contribute to obesity in elementary-aged children. This research examines three realms of influence (family, school, and community) to better understand the physical, situational, and policy factors that contribute to obesity in rural youth.



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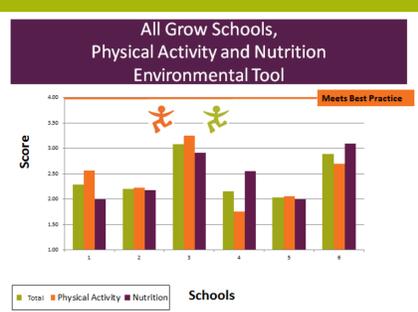
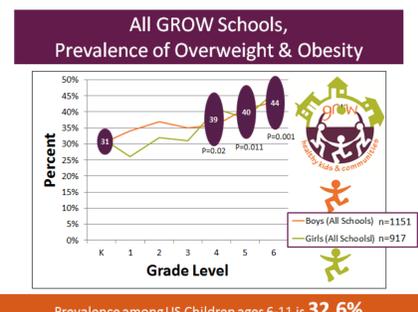
For more information on GROW Healthy Kids & Communities please contact GrowHKC@oregonstate.edu or at 541-737-4542.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

This research project is built on the premise that lasting change occurs when the school and community are involved in identifying the barriers to healthy living and take part in carrying out the proposed solutions. This project is also based on the socioecological model for changes in health behaviors.

Extension faculty collaborated with each participating school to facilitate data collection using research-based assessment tools including:

- Physical Activity Assessments
- Height and Weight Assessments
- School Environmental Assessments



FORMING A COMMITTEE

Collected data was subsequently organized into reports and presented to school stakeholders. Stakeholders were invited to build collaborative and broadly represented School Wellness Committees to address issues revealed by the assessments. Each School Wellness Committee then mobilized to find solutions and change their school's physical, situational, and policy environments based on the assessments and other research-based strategies provided by GROW, including:

- Grants and start up funds
- Resource Guides for Best Practices
- Balanced Energy Physical Activity (BEPA) Toolkits

Balanced Energy Physical Activity Toolkit

Item	# Per Kit	Item	# Per Kit
Activity Card Pack	1	Jump Ropes	16
All 4 Kids CD / DVD	1	My Plate Poster	1
Balloons	25	Plastic Bin	1
Bean Bags	32	Plastic Buckets	4
Set of Numbered Cards	1	Plastic Cones (Blue)	5
Dice	6	Plastic Cones (Orange)	5
Foam Basketballs	10	Rubber Disks / Poly Spots	24
Inflatable Beach Balls	20	Scarves	32

BEPAT Videos and Support

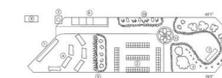


<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/growhkc/bepa>

ACTION FOR WELLNESS

School Wellness Committees continue to meet regularly to make data-informed decisions and take action to generate lasting solutions for their schools. Collaborative and lasting solutions driven by GROW assessments and research-based strategies include, but are not limited to the following:

School Gardens



Facilitated Recess



Fitness Trails



RE-ASSESSMENT

Throughout the duration of the study, the GROW team works with school stakeholders to implement the same research-based assessment tools. The results continue to assist School Wellness Committees in making informed and responsive decisions for the well-being of their elementary school through environmental change. Re-assessments also allow the School Wellness Committees to measure, track, and celebrate improvements to the school environment. Data collected and shared with school partners has resulted in measurable changes in the three counties.

CHALLENGE & SUCCESS

Each school's capacity to take action varied in the three counties and each GROW team faced a diversity of challenges. Team members confronted these challenges with the following strategies for success:

Challenge	Successful Strategy
GROW's lack of connection with schools and awareness of school procedures	→ Learn functions, spheres of influence, and culture of school by attending committee meetings and spending regular work hours at school
Stakeholder's lack of familiarity with the assessment tools	→ Comprehensive training and pilot test of assessment tools
Lack of buy-in and commitment from school community	→ Recruit school administrators or teachers to complete nutrition, physical activity, or child health assessments → Empowering school by building their awareness of the issue, knowledge of research-based practices, and capacity to generate long-term/sustainable initiatives
Lack of focused and dedicated Wellness Committee	→ Invite the right people, including representation from administration, families, public health, food services, and teachers → Collaborate on making decisions and creating a mission statement to help maintain focus → Obtain a start-up fund or know where to obtain start-up funds for initiatives → Identify those willing to administer grant(s) → Highlight early successes and recognize efforts that came before you; integrate those into the committee's future plans