



## Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

### Title

Building partnerships to promote healthy eating and active living at Westmorland Union Elementary School.

### Intervention Summary

The Westmorland Union Elementary School has been a partner with the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention (NEOP) program for the past 8 years. Through the partnership several activities related to nutrition education and physical activity have been accomplished. School events such as the Walk to School and the Nutrition Olympics received great support from outside agencies such as U.S. Border Patrol, Clinicas de Salud del Pueblo, and Imperial County Children and Families First Commission. In the last couple of years, the partnership has expanded to include school wellness policy work.

In June 2014, NEOP was approached by the Westmorland School Food Director with a request for technical assistance on their school wellness policy. NEOP hit the ground running, and searched for key information and tools that could assist our partner with assessing their wellness policies to determine if revisions were necessary. An initial assessment was completed in June 2014 utilizing the WellSat tool. After completing this process, it wasn't until June of 2015 that work on the wellness policies started to take place.

In an effort to provide additional resources and technical assistance to our partner, the first step taken included creating a toolkit that outlined local and state resources for developing and maintaining school wellness policies. The toolkit provided a checklist of elements required in local school wellness policies which lead to the establishment of a School Wellness Committee. The formation of the committee was a slow process, but now includes 6 members. Membership includes: the Westmorland Elementary School District Food Director, Principal/Superintendent, Vice Principal, teachers, and NEOP

staff. Once the group started to meet, the WellSAT was completed again in June of 2015.

Through weekly meetings, the federal school wellness requirements were reviewed in addition to scores from the WellSAT tool. Due to the committee's dedication over the past few months, Westmorland's school wellness policies have been revised to include more details on promoting nutrition and physical activity through: school events, increased nutrition education, and increased access to water. On September 18, 2015, the new school wellness policies were approved by the school board. This was a huge success for the committee. The policies are currently under legal review for finalization.

In addition to wellness policies, the committee has also partnered with NEOP to offer a train the trainer to all K-6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers on the Serving Up MyPlate A Yummy Curriculum and coordinated installation of water stations for the school cafeteria through the CA4Health Project. This has provided students with an option to drink free cold water as a beverage during lunch time. Students are also being encouraged to take their refillable water bottles to school every day in an effort to increase water consumption. The Rethink Your Drink campaign has been utilized during all events as well as nutrition presentations emphasizing the importance of consuming water.

## **Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions**

One of the barriers faced initially was recruitment of stakeholders from the community and school to participate in the school wellness committee. The initial school wellness committee consisted of 3 members (Westmorland Elementary School District Food Director and NEOP staff). Members brainstormed on ways to encourage participation in the community to the right stakeholders. The committee recruited 3 more members by inviting stakeholders to be part of the school wellness committee using methods such as email distribution and the school website. The committee started out small with only 3 members and grew to 6 members over the last few months. The committee plans to keep actively recruiting stakeholders.

## **Future Directions/Sustainable Success**

The short term goal is to continue to provide technical assistance to the school wellness committee on their primary focus areas. The school wellness committee is scheduled to meet four times a year to develop and implement a plan of action on how they will educate students, staff, and parents on changes to the policy. The long term goal is to enhance the events by partnering with more agencies, include more nutrition education during the school year, and move forward with installing more water stations for different parts of the school.

We hope to sustain and build on PSE successes through continued partnership and participation in events and quarterly school wellness committee meetings.

## Contact information about this Narrative

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