



# Building Healthy Communities:

Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools

**2014–2015 Program overview**

More information can be found at [bcbsm.com/buildhealth](http://bcbsm.com/buildhealth)

## Introduction

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Fitness Foundation, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, the University of Michigan, and the Center for School Health at Wayne State University have joined together to fight childhood obesity.

We're Michigan's largest nonprofit mutual health insurer, Michigan's state agency dedicated to protecting, preserving and promoting the health and safety of Michigan residents, Michigan's only urban public research university, a community-university collaborative and two nonprofit organizations with statewide impact and leadership roles in fitness, nutrition and health initiatives. Together, we plan to reach more than 100 school buildings during the 2014-2015 school year to improve the health of Michigan's children.

Childhood obesity exacts too high a price across our state in terms of health, economic impact and academic performance. Without intervention, most overweight and obese children become overweight and obese adults, with higher incidence of many chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes and some cancers. We aim to address a vulnerable time in a young person's development by partnering with schools to foster environments where healthy choices are supported, encouraged and expected.

Healthy habits start young, and Building Healthy Communities helps establish the knowledge and behaviors needed for a healthy lifestyle by:

- Educating students through curriculum
- Creating a healthy, supportive environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice
- Encouraging students to practice lessons learned in the classroom
- Increasing access to physical activity opportunities
- Increasing access to healthy, nutrient-rich food and beverages



## Join our mission

To address childhood obesity in Michigan and improve the health of young people, their families and the communities by implementing a comprehensive, school wide network of physical activity and healthy eating opportunities and education.

## Eligibility

- Public, charter or private nonprofit schools in Michigan are eligible.
- Building Healthy Communities is available to all schools regardless of their:
  - free and reduced-price school meals percentage
  - geographic location
- Schools that are taking part in other healthy eating, nutrition education, physical activity or physical education programs are eligible.
- Schools that applied in prior years but did not receive an award are encouraged to apply again.
- Schools must serve students in the sixth grade. Schools that already have Project Healthy Schools aren't eligible for the middle school program.

## Criteria for program awards

Participating schools are selected based on these criteria:

- Demonstrated commitment to putting the program into practice and sustaining it in future school years
- Administrative support for the application and full implementation of the program

**“Health and success in school are interrelated. Schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not healthy and fit physically, mentally and socially.”**

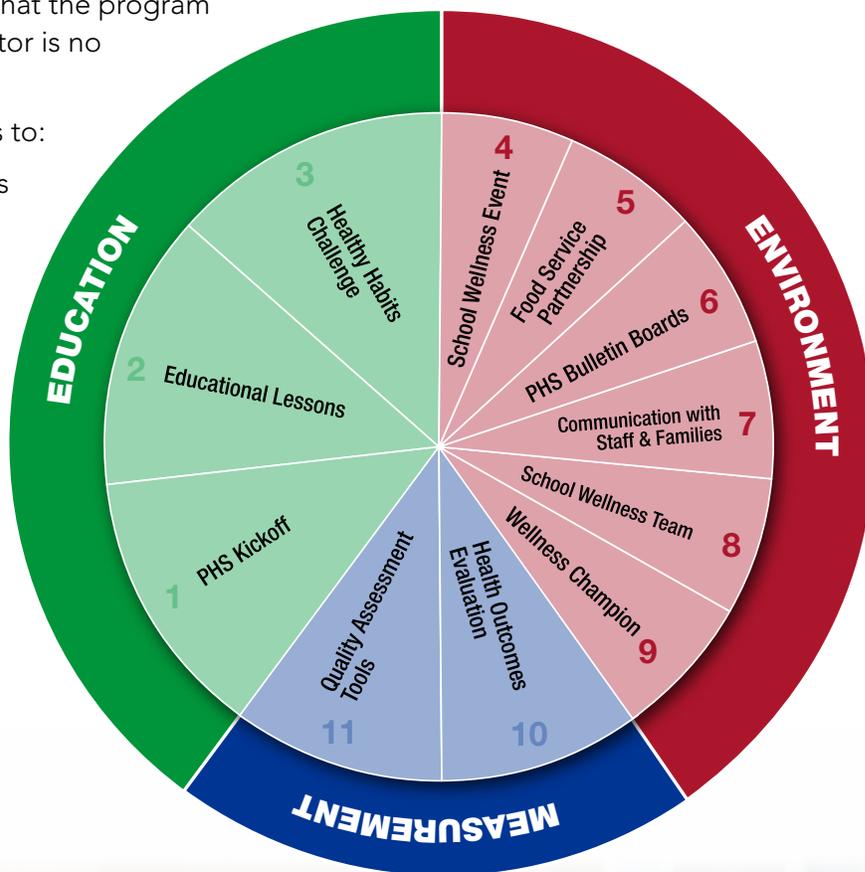
— National Association of State Boards of Education

# Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools

**B**lue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, the Michigan Department of Community Health, and the University of Michigan are partnering to improve the current and future health of middle school students through school-based education and environmental initiatives. *Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools* is an opportunity for middle schools to participate in the program for three years with onsite staff support, while building an environment for long term sustainability. Project Healthy Schools strives to create sustainable programming so that the program will continue even after the coordinator is no longer on-site.

The program goals are for students to:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Choose less sugary food and beverages
- Eat less fast and fatty food
- Be active every day
- Spend less time in front of a screen



## Participating schools will receive

- A hands-on coordinator to establish the program and work closely with your school to ensure that the program is successful and can be sustained over time
- All program materials (including equipment to support educational lessons and physical activity events) and training
- Expertise to implement healthy eating and physical activity goals set by your school wellness team
- An invitation to participate in our network of schools implementing Project Healthy Schools

## The middle school program

The *Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools* has three main components: education, environment and measurement.

**Education:** The education component of Project Healthy Schools will be delivered to sixth grade students.

### 1. Project Healthy Schools kickoff

Schools will assist with the organization of a kickoff activity, event or promotion such as an assembly or skits to excite kids about the program.

### 2. Educational lessons

The curriculum emphasizes the five program goals and has been aligned to the Common Core. Schools will identify:

- A class in the school day (minimum 45-minute period) for 10 lessons to fit. It is strongly encouraged that the lessons are taught during health, physical education or a core class.
- Teachers to teach the lessons to sixth-grade students
- Time for the teachers to be trained
- Space to store the lesson props and materials that will be provided

### 3. Healthy Habits Challenge

Schools will support this fun competition between classes to encourage achievement of healthy goals. It can be done as a one-week or three-week challenge. All materials for the challenge will be provided to the school.

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**Environment:** Changes to the environment are tailored to the specific school's needs and can impact students of all grades, as well as benefit staff and families.

#### **4. School wellness event**

Schools will assist in the planning of a school wellness event such as a field day, 5K run, family fun night or other event to encourage physical activity and healthy eating.

#### **5. Food service partnership**

Schools will facilitate collaboration between Project Healthy Schools and the food service director regarding promotion of healthy food and beverage options and, where possible, incorporate local produce or farm-to-school initiatives and student feedback on school meals.

#### **6. Project Healthy Schools bulletin boards**

Schools will identify a bulletin board for health promotion displays.

#### **7. Communication with staff and families**

Schools will identify their preferred method for the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to contribute information to staff and families regarding the program and general health promotion (newsletters, email blasts, announcements, etc.).

#### **8. School wellness team**

The school will be responsible for identifying school wellness team members before the program begins and for arranging the first meeting. A school wellness team is a group of people with the common interest of creating a healthier school environment. The committee, with assistance from the Project Healthy Schools coordinator, will assess the school's strengths, identify opportunities to enhance the healthy school environment and create an action plan. This team will be responsible for raising funds for the disposable items that are used in Project Healthy Schools lessons (including items such as food, tasting cups, forks, plates, etc.) after two years of program implementation.

#### **9. Wellness champion**

Principals will identify one or two people to serve as wellness champion(s) before the program begins for program sustainability. Once identified, the wellness champion will work closely with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to learn the details of how to implement the program. He or she will take on some Project Healthy Schools duties in year one and transition to be fully responsible for the program by the end of year two. The wellness champion will be compensated for his or her involvement in the program.

**Measurement:** The measurement component is used to understand the health behaviors of the students, to assure the quality of the program and to highlight opportunities for improvement.

#### 10. Health outcomes evaluation

Schools will assist and support the Project Healthy Schools coordinator with administering the Health Behavior Questionnaires to students who receive the educational lessons. Activities may include obtaining class lists, informing teachers, handing out and collecting the questionnaire, etc. All data will be kept fully confidential, and no individual students will be identified.

#### 11. Quality assessment tools

Schools will support the administration of other quality assessment tools to provide program results for the school, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the University of Michigan. These quality assessment tools include feedback or surveys for teachers and students regarding their satisfaction with the educational lessons.

## Participation expectations

To be considered for the program, schools must commit to:

- Implementing all components of the program: education, environment and measurement in collaboration with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator.
- Identifying key personnel to support and sustain the program, including a wellness champion.
- A three-year partnership:
  - **Year one:** The Project Healthy Schools coordinator provides program materials, training and consultation to implement the program in your school and begins training the wellness champion in his or her role.
  - **Year two:** The Project Healthy Schools coordinator continues to provide program materials, training and consultation to transition the program to the wellness champion by the end of the year.
  - **Year three:** The wellness champion will be fully responsible for program implementation. The Project Healthy Schools coordinator will be available as a resource and to connect the wellness champion to the Project Healthy Schools Network.
- Sending the principal (or assistant principal if he or she has been identified as the administrator in charge of the program) and wellness champion to a half-day training where they will receive materials, an orientation to the program and the opportunity to network with other participating schools.

We're committed to leading Michigan to a healthier future — and to investing in the next generation of Michigan citizens.



A partnership between



**Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Blue Care Network**  
of Michigan

