

CHAMBERSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Joseph Padasak, Superintendent
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Letter of Intent

Introduction

The Chambersburg Area School District is fortunate to have a 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program at two locations: Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School and Andrew Buchanan Elementary School. From the hours of 3PM and 6PM every day that school is in session, the program provides a safe place for children to be, tutoring, homework help, recreation, academic and cultural enrichment, mentoring, and a nutrition program that features a healthy snack and a hot supper. The program serves over 100 children, classified by the Commonwealth as “at-risk” from King Street, Hamilton Heights, Thaddeus Stevens, Coldbrook, and Andrew Buchanan Elementary Schools in grades 2-5. The term “at-risk” has several definitions, including eligibility for the federal free and reduced lunch program, academic underachievement, and problematical social behavior. Over 80% of our students are eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program, which makes the provision of a strong nutrition program a critically important element of the 21st Century CLC program. Therefore, we propose to consolidate our current recreation, exercise, snacks, supper, and nutrition modules into a comprehensive, coherent, and professional wellness program that employs professionals and educates our staff for the best possible delivery of these services. That program is CATCH (Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health) a model program designated by the General Mills Champions for Healthy Kids initiative, the General Mills Foundation, the American Dietetic Association Foundation, and the President’s Challenge, and the University of Minnesota’s Division of Epidemiology and Community Health. A model program is one that has been designated by research to be successful in the positively affecting the behavior of youth. The focus of the CATCH program here is on reduction of obesity to change children’s behaviors, school environment, make food service modifications, increase physical activity and provide family reinforcement resulting in reduced obesity and a state of improved wellness for each child.

The problem

The rapid increase in obesity and lack of physical activity among children and adolescents is generating widespread concern about its ill effects in our community and across the country.

Target Population

It is fair to say that our target population includes all children in grades 2-5 in the Chambersburg Area School District. However, our service is limited to the group of at-risk students in grades 2-5 attending those elementary schools who are eligible for federally subsidized school lunch programs and who participate in the 21st Century Community Learning Center program, as follows: Thaddeus Stevens, Andrew Buchanan, U.L. Gordy, and King Street elementary schools.

Evidence

Since the 1970s, the prevalence of overweight among children has more than tripled for children 6-11 years. (Ogden CL, Flegal KM, Carroll MD, Johnson CL. Prevalence and trends in overweight among US children and adolescents, 1999-2000. *JAMA*. 2002;288(14):1728-1732.)

Nearly one-third of children and adolescents, of both sexes, aged 6-19 years (31.0%) are considered to be either at risk for overweight. Risks include the onset of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes hypertension, osteoporosis, and some cancers. (US Department of Health and Human Services and US Department of Agriculture dietary guidebooks.)

Other Services

There are many services and educational programs that target childhood obesity in our area. However, there is no other service in south central Pennsylvania that has the comprehensive characteristics of the CATCH program and also targets our target population: of the grades 2-5 in after-school programs for at-risk children. The CATCH program has often been the subject of research publications and its findings have been applied in many programs across the country. Local services fighting childhood obesity will benefit similarly.

Proposal

We propose to purchase and implement for our after-school program the CATCH KIDS CLUB program package of the University of Texas School of Public Health, an established, research-based multi-component health promotion program that is employed to change children's behaviors, school environment, make food service modifications, increase physical activity and provide family reinforcement resulting in reduced obesity and a state of improved wellness for each child.

Who Will Benefit

Direct beneficiaries include the approximately 120 second through fifth graders in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers in the CASD after-school programs at Thaddeus Stevens and Andrew Buchanan Elementary Schools. These at-risk students live in various public housing projects and in central Chambersburg. Their family members and friends will indirectly benefit because many health problems that existed before the intervention will be less of a cause for concern. Families will also gain pride and self-esteem from the CKC's efforts to encourage them to become part of their children's education.

Desired Outcomes

- Reduced obesity in at-risk children (grades 2-5), or movement along the path to reduced obesity.

- At-risk children (grades 2-5) experience reduced risk of cardiovascular disease at any age
- At-risk children (grades 2-5) acquire improved nutrition knowledge and a deeper understanding of nutrition-related social behaviors
- At-risk children (grades 2-5) develop improved healthful eating behavior
- At-risk children (grades 2-5) develop improved physical activity patterns
- At-risk children (grades 2-5) enjoy improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- At-risk children (grades 2-5) experience improved cognition and academic achievement

“Marketing”

Given the fact that our 120 children are in our care for five days per week and three hours per day, it takes only our scheduling activity to create their automatic participation in the program.

Leadership

Our programs are led by the same teams that have been in place in the after-school programs for the last three years. Leadership takes place at each site and in each classroom. At each site we have a site coordinator, tutors, group leaders, and classroom assistants, all involved in the hands-on educational process. The program director, Dr. James Wolfson, is the director of our effort. He writes all grants, has three years of administrative experience in this program, one of only 57 selected in 2004 by the Department of Education, and is a former college professor and management consultant. Active in the community, he has established and led the Waters Institute for African-American History and the Franklin County History Scholars. (www.cvcon.com)

Activities

Nutrition-Related Activities:

- Participants eat one nutritious snack and supper per day
- Selection and preparation of healthy meals
- Nutrition education programming
- Hygiene education and practice

Physical Development Activities:

30 min/day activity opportunity:

- Participants given choices in physical activities
- Participants receive skill building assistance in physical activities
- Participants required to be involved in moderate to vigorous physical activity at least 40% of daily physical activity time
- Programming on effects of drugs, alcohol, smoking

Measurement Activities

Nutrition knowledge and attitude surveys (children and parents)
Taking of physical measurements: height, weight, body mass, girth
Physical activity surveys to ascertain actual extent and nature of physical activities

Potential Obstacles

Narrative educational presentations may not be palatable to young children. The school food service may be uncooperative with respect to preparing our nutritionist's menus, if the food service handles the PEARS reimbursement improperly it will cause cash flow problems, and if it is late in serving the food, it will cause transportation problems. There may be problems in teaching the new CATCH systems.

Collaborators (Most are individuals and contractors)

Lecturers on health , nutrition - 4-H Cooperative Extension, PA Dept of Ag.
Nutritionist - provides menus
Physical Therapist exercise routines, games, and reporting
Food Service- Chambersburg Area School District
Nurse to provide metrics (weight loss, waist measure)
Commonwealth of PA – PEARS Reimbursement Program
Project Share-provides snacks

Research

We have examined many articles on the subject of programming to reduce obesity in the after-school program environment. (See citations above for two sources of problem documentation.) The University of Texas CATCH Kids Club (examined in *Public Health Nutrition*: 8(2), 133-140) intervention program has had numerous tests in the areas of improving child nutrition, obesity reduction, and improvement of the child's physical being. Reported results in an earlier article include a reduction in self reported fat consumption and an increase in self-reported physical exercise, with significant positive effects maintained. (Nader, P., Stone, EJ, Lytle, LA, Perry, CL, Osganian, SK, Kelder, SH, et al. Three year Maintenance of improved diet and physical activity; the CATCH cohort. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 1999,153(7), 695-704.

Project Cost

The anticipated project cost is \$15,000 per year. Since there are no capital assets to purchase, and if we assume limited enrollment, and we assume that complete staff training will be repeated yearly, that cost will remain the same each year the 21st Century project ceases to use the services of CATCH.

Funding Request from Summit Endowment

\$7,500 per year for each year that the CATCH program is employed

Funding Request from Others

\$7,500 per year has been committed by the 21st Century Community Learning Center. As a backup measure we have submitted funding requests to General Mills Corp., a longtime supporter of the CATCH program, and Pennsylvania Highmark Blue Shield for \$7500 each.

Mission Statement

As the CASD's 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program for at-risk children, the characteristics of our mission follows: from the hours of 3PM and 6PM every day that school is in session, our program is to provide a safe place for children to be, (with tutoring, homework help, recreation, academic and cultural enrichment, mentoring, and a nutrition program), to serve working families in our community, and to facilitate academic achievement.

Current operations

Services include: operation on all school days, Monday - Friday from 3-6 PM during the school year, eight-week summer camp, Monday through Friday, from 8 AM – 3 PM, academic assistance (tutoring, homework help, and mentoring,) behavioral improvement and cultural enrichment, acquisition of social skills, service learning, recreation, and field trips. We support at-risk children in grades 1-5 during the school year and grades 1-9 during the summer term. The program also provides education for parents and families, and computer laboratories that aid in the learning of academic subject matter, provide the opportunity for internet exploration, Transportation home is provide for children in grades 1-7. We execute our tutoring activity integrating the work of our district's PEAP program. We facilitate the acquisition of computer skills for students and adults in the community.

Our remarkable success to date has come from our investment in people: caring leaders, teachers, and learners who have come together to provide our students with a 5:1 student staff ratio in a thoroughly professional atmosphere. We have seen rising grades, improved test scores, and some remarkable transformations in self-esteem and social behavior.

Staffing

Our staff has worked together for over 2 years, and is now qualified in all aspects of after-school work, will receive training at all levels of service delivery from the CATCH program. We are fully staffed at this time and expect no problems.

Federal Tax Status

The Chambersburg Area School District is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Annual Operating Budget

\$429,846