



The Penn State Extension Family Fitness/Childhood Overweight Prevention program targets 8-11 year olds and their parents to improve healthy eating, physical activity, and communication attitudes and behaviors with 9 student and 5 parent lessons (3 joint parent/child), including goal setting, learn at home materials and activities. In 2005-06, the Family Fitness Extension Team ran 11 sites in 7 counties (Snyder, Northumberland, Northampton, Philadelphia, Clinton, Allegheny, Westmoreland Counties) state-wide for this school year. Team gave a state-wide training 2/15 to 22 at the 4-H after-school

conference, St. College, presented overview of program to 30 School nurses at CSIU, Montandon 10/18. Curriculum was peer-reviewed and updated for publication and provided at state-wide training 8/30 to 49 educators and county collaborators, including area hospital and health educators. Team awarded PSU Outreach grant for continued research and program materials; PA Dept of Health grant, worked with WPSU to develop marketing recruitment video and training videos. Developed partnership with PSU Center for Child Obesity Research and Joe Andreacci, Ph.D, Dept of Exercise Science, Bloomsburg University for pilot 3 research.

**Results: Pre versus post program, we saw significant improvement ( $p < .05$ ) in healthy eating behaviors in children:**

- More consumption of whole grains, fruit, breakfast, willingness to try new fruits and vegetables, less higher fat and sugar foods and drinks;
- Increased minutes of physical activity and ease of physical activity, less tv/video/computer time,
- Student/parent-improved communication/agreement and goal setting for healthy eating, physical activity, planning and preparing meals together, increased knowledge of Nutrition Facts labels, (N=157 students, 85 parents, and over 1000 contacts).

**Compared to control groups (N=30 students, 15 parents), we saw the program intervention sites significantly improve in ( $p < .05$ ) improve in:**

- whole grains, trying new fruits and vegetables, consuming less fat foods, setting more healthy eating goals,
- planning meals together,
- increased knowledge of Nutrition Facts labels.
- Preliminary 6 month post average BMI values met our goal of remaining stable (68% n=19/28).

Parents report: "We are more excited about trying a healthier lifestyle." "The class gave us the opportunity to discuss and plan healthy eating, diminished shame (and tears)." "We got closer as a family. She likes to make things herself and help now with cooking." "Our whole family is eating healthier, smaller portions, walking in the neighborhood." "Its fun to eat in now. My son likes to try the whole grain thing." Students report: "I eat more breakfast and exercise more. I know about healthy things in life. I feel better, Much, much better." "I run more. I spent a little less time ...watching TV." "I thought it was a lot of fun and I would like to eat good things. I would like to go next year." "I learned to eat healthy & why its important."

**Short and long term impact:** Short term, students and families are becoming stronger through improved fitness and communication, and will reduce child overweight by improving healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Students and families are more willing to participate in fitness programs after seeing the positive results.

**The public value of the program,** in the long term, will help reduce chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, stroke, and health care costs, and increase demand for personnel to be trained and run these programs.