



# OUSD Site Wellness Champion Program

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Oakland Unified School District**



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## What is a Site Wellness Champion?

In support of OUSD's Full Service Community District Thriving Students Strategic Plan, a Site Wellness Champion is a school site staff member identified to lead specific health and wellness programs at a school, often in partnership with another site wellness champion.



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## Wellness Champions are School Leaders!

- Wellness Policy Implementation
- Daily classroom physical activity breaks
- Safe Routes to School programs
- Produce Market promotion
- Family Nutrition Education
- Green Gloves (Recycling/Composting)
- Staff Wellness
- Harvest of the Month/ Nutrition Education
- Indoor Air Quality
- School Gardens



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## Wellness Champions are School Leaders!

- 70 Champions at 48 schools
- Funding Partners
  - Kaiser Permanente
  - S.D. Bechtel, Jr Foundation
  - The California Endowment
  - Alameda County Public Health Department
- Technical Assistance Partners
  - OUSD LCI, Nutrition Services, HR
  - Transform
  - Alameda County PHD



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## 2013-2014 Participating Schools

Acorn Woodland

Dewey

Bella Vista

East Oakland Pride

Brookfield

Encompass

Bunche

Esperanza

Burckhalter

Frick

Chabot

Fruitvale

Claremont

Garfield

CCPA

Global Family

Community United

Greenleaf



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## 2013-2014 Participating Schools

Hoover	Madison Park Lower Campus
Horace Mann	Manzanita Community
Howard	Manzanita Seed
ICS	Melrose Leadership
Joaquin Miller	MLK
Korematsu	Montclair
La Escuelita	Montera
Lafayette	New Highland
Laurel	Parker



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## 2013-2014 Participating Schools

Piedmont Ave

Place at Prescott

Reach Academy

Redwood Heights

Rise

Roosevelt

Rudsdale

Sojourner Truth

Think College Now

Westlake



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**FAMILY, SCHOOL &  
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**  
DEPARTMENT



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# APPENDICES

# Ensuring Student Wellness by Promoting Healthy Eating & Physical Activity

Dewey High School - Oakland, CA

2013

## WHY FOCUS ON A GARDEN AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM?

Dewey High School, a continuation school, took a comprehensive approach when considering ways to provide healthy outlets for at-risk youth. Wellness Champions, recognizing that students “have their social and mental state in check if they exercise and they’ve had some [healthy] food and water”, decided to implement two projects—a school garden and a physical education (PE) program—to create a healthier and more positive environment for students and staff.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade
- 238 students
- 80% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

### Ethnicity:

- 56% African American
- 31% Hispanic/Latino
- 2% Other

## ACTION STEPS

One of the first steps Dewey’s Wellness Champions focused on was building trusting relationships with students and allowing them to help envision the projects. With student buy-in and principal and teacher support, Wellness Champions began implementing the projects over the course of the 2012-2013 school year. The PE project initially started during the school day, but once students became excited about exercising, staff established before and after-school workout programs focused on endurance, martial arts, as well as self-discipline. The garden was supported by a grant from PG&E and provided an excellent opportunity for student leadership, with students helping think through various elements, from what would be planted to where the soil came from. The Culinary Arts program used produce from the garden for cooking. Both projects clearly link back to student health and success in the classroom—newfound interest in healthy,



fresh food and regular physical activity fuels students' minds and bodies. On their way to the gym, students walk by an enticing array of vegetables in tidy planter boxes, free for the tasting.

*"Food doesn't come from the corner store, but from the earth. We are reconnecting them to nutrition."*

Wellness Champion

### CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

While Wellness Champions experienced some initial hurdles to the garden project, related to where the garden boxes could be placed, transporting soil into the school, and protecting seeds from pests, they were eventually able to overcome them by problem solving creatively and working with the District. They built the boxes in a location that wouldn't interfere with campus landscaping already in place and planted seeds in the winter to avoid pests. In the gym, challenges primarily relate to wear and tear or loss of the equipment, and staff are thinking through solutions for upkeep or ways to garner additional resources for maintenance. To motivate students to keep working out, the Wellness Champions bring in well known community leaders to provide inspiration and workout tips.

### IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The garden and physical activity projects are changing behaviors and promoting wellness among students and staff by incorporating health into the school day and providing mentorship at all levels. There are healthier options in the cafeteria since the school lunch program transitioned to scratch cooking, and both students and staff work out using the school facilities, which helps strengthen relationships and build trust. Wellness

Champions have noticed a major culture shift with the students in particular. "I have seen students who haven't eaten anything but packaged food who are now eating from the garden...Even if it's not hitting them now, it will continue to affect them" stated one Wellness Champion. The programs even support students' career development, helping them learn new skills and connecting them with internship and college opportunities.

### ADVICE FOR OTHER SCHOOLS

For Dewey's Wellness team, consistency has been extremely important. In order to keep student investment and excitement high, school staff have to be reliable and walk the walk, especially for those students who are not being supported to be healthy at home. In addition, having staff and students who really want to support wellness work and lead the efforts makes a huge difference, because as one Wellness Champion noted, "You can't do it alone."

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# Recycling School Waste for Healthier Environments and Kids

Esperanza Elementary and Fred T. Korematsu Discovery Academy – Oakland, CA

2013

## WHY FOCUS ON A CAFETERIA WASTE SORTING PROGRAM?

The shared cafeteria for Esperanza Elementary and Fred T. Korematsu Discovery Academy produces large amounts of food waste—in fact, the cafeteria collects 5-10 gallons of tossed food at least four times each week. In an effort to teach young students about the benefits of recycling and reducing waste, as well as how composting cafeteria food can fuel school gardens and produce healthy foods, Wellness Champions and staff worked together to create a waste sorting program.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Esperanza Elementary

- K-5<sup>th</sup> grade
- 329 students
- 100% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

#### Ethnicity:

- 98% Hispanic/Latino
- 2% Other

### Fred T. Korematsu Discovery Academy

- K-5<sup>th</sup> grade
- 374 students
- 100% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

#### Ethnicity:

- 77% Hispanic/Latino
- 17% African American
- 6% Other

## ACTION STEPS

Over the course of one school year, Wellness Champions for the two campuses taught students about the value of waste sorting by creating hands-on opportunities for students to learn the uses of different items that would otherwise end up in the garbage. Bright bins were brought in and labeled for compost and recycling, students practiced waste sorting at lunch, and one Wellness Champion dressed up as a centipede to attract attention and increase student awareness on how to properly sort lunch waste. Cafeteria and custodial staff helped to implement a waste sorting system that fit well with the regular lunch and cleaning activities. Wellness staff also created informational sheets for teachers so that the messaging about health and recycling was reaching students not only in the cafeteria, but in the classroom as well. In addition to teaching kids how to recycle, the waste project took students into the garden, showing them how to make compost and plant fruits and vegetables, all while incorporating physical activity.



## CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

School staff and parent culture that does not always support recycling and school gardening has been one challenge for the cafeteria waste sorting and garden programs. Although some parents and staff support the program by recycling in the classroom, others simply do not have the time to participate or are not interested in getting involved in the waste recycling or garden efforts. In response, Wellness Champions have tried to make the process less intensive so parents and staff want to be engaged. Rather than have to plant new produce every year, champions have started planting perennial fruits and vegetables to reduce the work for students and parents. The Wellness Champions also hope to keep parents engaged through the school's adult education program, since that is where they are able to share information about school programs and maintain parent interest in school activities.

## IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

One major success of the waste program is that it allows students to learn about the environment and their food system while also creating a system that feeds the school garden. According to one Wellness Champion, with the new programs in place, "Students are learning new behaviors and ways of doing things" that will stick with them over the long-term. The principals of both campuses agree that the waste program has helped students become more aware of the importance of waste-reduction. They are more mindful of what happens to their remaining food and the composting and garden element has helped

*"The after-school kids do all the composting and they love it...there are so many teaching moments in the garden."*

Wellness Champion

improve students' eating habits and knowledge of nutrition, which is particularly important in a community without much access to healthy foods.

## ADVICE FOR OTHER SCHOOLS

Having a school district that supports school gardens and waste reduction has helped Esperanza and Korematsu's waste sorting and garden composting projects succeed. Thinking strategically about necessary partners, such as OUSD Buildings and Grounds or mulch or recycling companies who can pick up waste, can also be helpful over the long-term. In addition, Wellness Champions highlight the importance of engaging the community in waste reduction and garden projects, so that families see them as assets and not more work. Not only does community engagement help projects succeed, it also creates a learning community, where students, parents, and school staff can interact with and learn from one another.

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# Creating a Healthy School Food Culture

Manzanita SEED Elementary - Oakland, CA

2013

## WHY FOCUS ON A JUNK FOOD FREE CAMPUS?

Math and reading at school—of course! But schools can also educate students on important health and wellness life skills. Recognizing this role, Manzanita SEED Wellness Champions jumped at the opportunity to create a healthy school food environment. In many schools, parties and celebrations include junk food, but at Manzanita SEED, that is no longer the case. The school has integrated healthy foods so seamlessly into the school day that students, teachers, staff and parents alike are excited about healthy eating.

## DEMOGRAPHICS:

- K-5<sup>th</sup> grade
- 274 students
- 100% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

### Ethnicity:

- 68% Hispanic/Latino
- 15% African American
- 7% Asian
- 6% White
- 4% Other

## ACTION STEPS

Manzanita SEED's comprehensive approach to school wellness has created a culture of healthy eating. Once a week, the school hosts an OUSD School Produce Market where students learn about different types of fruits and vegetables. The after school program participates in the wellness activities by hosting cooking and nutrition classes in which students prepare meals with interesting and healthy ingredients. In addition to encouraging healthy eating among students, the school encourages parent involvement in healthy eating activities by allowing parents to fulfill required volunteer hours at the school farmers market or by serving healthy snacks during school breaks. The School Wellness Policy has transformed celebrations by clearly laying out the school's junk food free policy and providing a healthy alternatives list for parents and teachers.



## CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

While Manzanita SEED strives to provide the healthiest options it can, there are occasional challenges with unhealthy food and snacks provided by the school district or parents. Wellness Champions respond to these challenges by reinforcing the Wellness Policy. In the case of the district, they fill out a school rating sheet noting that the snack provided was not in alignment with the Wellness Policy. If parents bring cupcakes or cookies onto campus, staff let them know that Manzanita SEED is a junk food free campus and encourage them to consider healthy options such as fruit instead. Manzanita SEED's principal has played an important role, supporting the Wellness Policy and helping to reinforce it on campus.

## IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

At Manzanita SEED, "The students have internalized the Wellness Policy...and are craving healthy foods." Instead of sneaking in candy or soda, students look forward to trying new foods such as figs and persimmons. Parents are thrilled about the changes that they have seen at the school, supporting the school's efforts to keep their children healthy by volunteering at food-related events and providing healthy snacks for celebrations. Manzanita SEED can see the "fruits" of their efforts; students are healthier overall and are more focused and alert in the classroom.

*"The transition from families being put off by the Wellness Policy to welcoming the Harvest of the Month Box is exciting...[It] has become a part of our family cultures – the kids and parents will carry this with them forever."*

Wellness Champion

## ADVICE FOR OTHER SCHOOLS

Wellness Champions suggest that "consistency is the key" to creating a healthy school food environment. Ensure that all parts of the school at all times, from classrooms during the school day to school community events, align with the school's Wellness Policy and give families an opportunity to learn about and enjoy healthy foods. Schools should ensure that any Wellness Policy is clearly defined and easy to read, so that parents, teachers and students can understand and refer to the policy. Finally, Wellness Champions will be successful by encouraging schools to do what they do best: educating students about the impacts of unhealthy foods on brains and bodies so that they feel invested and excited about healthy eating and support a policy that promotes their health.

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# Creating a Healthy School Environment by Improving Indoor Air Quality

Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School - Oakland, CA

2013

## WHY FOCUS ON IMPROVING INDOOR AIR QUALITY?

At Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary (MLK), almost one third of students have asthma, placing indoor air quality at the top of the school Wellness Champion's to-do list.

## ACTION STEPS

MLK's Wellness Champion started her indoor air quality work during the 2012-2013 school year by meeting with school staff, including the principal and custodian, to educate them on the simple steps the school could take to improve indoor air quality and increase students' health. With guidance from the district, the

MLK Wellness Champion conducted a staff survey and completed a school walk-through, identifying problem areas with asthma triggers, such as classrooms with blocked ventilation, incorrect thermostat settings, and air fresheners and chemical cleaners. Staff addressed problem areas by cleaning air vents and clearing blockages, creating and posting signage with ventilation setting tips, resetting classroom thermostats, and replacing chemical cleaners and sprays with mild products such as baking soda. MLK's Principal appreciated that small steps could make a difference, describing that the school was "missing out on doing simple things to improve the air quality. We know better now so we do better."

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- K-5<sup>th</sup> grade
- 284 students
- 89% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

### Ethnicity:

- 63% African American
- 14% Hispanic/Latino
- 9% White
- 8% Asian
- 6% Other

## CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

For MLK's wellness initiative, limited time has been the biggest hurdle. The Wellness



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Champion—also the school nurse—is very busy seeing students throughout the day, so making time to focus on monitoring classrooms for asthma triggers or checking in with teachers to see if they are following the recommendations can be challenging. In an effort to sustain the work and address indoor air quality in a time-efficient manner, the school is considering an annual staff reminder training as well as teacher information packets that highlight simple solutions for maximizing air quality in the classroom.

### IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

One of the biggest impacts of MLK's indoor air quality improvement process has been increased awareness of the issue. MLK's Wellness Champion noted that, "Now staff know that having good air quality is important, and they understand what they should do in their classroom to make sure the air is good." In addition to increasing awareness, MLK received a clean air award from California Breathing, a program of the State Health Department, to purchase classroom items and special cleaning products to help maintain good indoor air quality. The Wellness Champion's efforts are also helping to inform parents of potential asthma triggers in the home as well as the asthma resources available to families. Most importantly, the changes are impacting student health—students with asthma have higher attendance rates this year as compared to last year.

*"Many changes are cheap and easy to make but we need a person to monitor and keep awareness up. Having the nurse do wellness is great."*

MLK Principal

### ADVICE FOR OTHER SCHOOLS

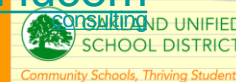
MLK's Wellness Champion suggests that gaining the principal's support for an air quality improvement project is crucial to creating teacher and staff buy-in. Teachers are exceptionally busy, so asking them to focus on ventilation and room setup can feel challenging if not framed as integral to the school's mission. Educating teachers about the impact of poor indoor air quality on student learning and performance helps teachers see the value in taking the time to move classroom furniture, unblock vents, or check the thermostat for the correct settings. From the principal's perspective, the Wellness Champion has been key to the success of MLK's indoor air quality efforts—having a staff member provide leadership and take time to monitor classrooms and identify potential problem areas ensures student health while allowing teachers to focus on teaching.

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# Encouraging Staff Wellness Programs to Promote School Success

Roosevelt Middle School – Oakland, CA

2013

## WHY FOCUS ON STAFF WELLNESS?

As part of its mission to create a thriving, vibrant school, Roosevelt Middle School prioritized addressing teacher stress by building camaraderie and a strong team sense among the staff. Roosevelt Middle School took a holistic approach to stress-reduction, championing wellness efforts that promote overall health for school staff. This approach fit well with Roosevelt's principal's philosophy that fulfilled staff do their best work, and that schools need to create spaces for staff that encourage collaborative thinking and relaxation outside of the classroom to ensure success.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 693 students
- 99.86% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

### Ethnicity:

- 42% Asian
- 36% Hispanic/Latino
- 18% African American
- 4% Other

## ACTION STEPS

Roosevelt Wellness Champions and the School Wellness Council identified the need for a staff Wellness Center as key to elevating staff morale and fostering well-being. Creating a Wellness Center out of the space once occupied by the newly relocated school health clinic was a low cost way to provide a comfortable place for staff to relax, connect with co-workers, catch up on work, or access on-site wellness experts and health information. Healthy food and physical activity opportunities were also identified as areas for improvement and the Wellness Council took a few small steps that had a big impact. They swapped out weekly donuts for staff-prepared healthy breakfasts such as fruit and granola, and encouraged physical activity with a regular Zumba class taught by an instructor paid through a mini-grant from OUSD. The Wellness Council encourages socializing



outside of school by coordinating get-togethers and outdoor activities for staff that promote bonding and physical activity. These staff wellness activities were conducted during the 2012-2013 school year and plans are underway to continue addressing staff wellness over the coming years.

### CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

School leadership buy-in was crucial to ensuring the success of Roosevelt's staff wellness activities. While leadership was initially hesitant to approve the Wellness Center due to concerns that the space might not contribute to teacher productivity, the Wellness Council successfully advocated for the space as a venue to encourage creative thinking and staff well-being. Now, all staff, including the vice principal, regularly use the Wellness Center and benefit from the space and interaction with their peers.

### IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Roosevelt's staff wellness efforts have had tangible impacts for staff and students. The principal noted that staff is more cohesive, positive, and less stressed since the Wellness Council efforts began. The Principal also noted that test scores have gone up, student absenteeism has decreased and there have been fewer student suspensions – achievements to which the staff wellness efforts have contributed.

*"Wellness activities make this a community school; there has been a shift among students and staff for the campus to be more positive."*

### ADVICE FOR OTHER SCHOOLS

The Roosevelt Wellness Champions suggest that staff wellness efforts focus on making wellness activities fun and engaging for everyone to garner buy-in from leadership and staff. One Wellness Champion noted that "being creative and keeping wellness activities from feeling like extra work" is critical to the success of a staff wellness initiative given how busy the school day can get. Additionally, schools should know that it does not require a lot of work or money to make a difference; something as simple as a nice space for staff gatherings and regular social activities can go a long way towards team building and an increased sense of well-being among staff.

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# Bringing Parents to the Forefront of Student Wellness

Urban Promise Academy – Oakland, CA

2013

## WHY FOCUS ON PARENT ENGAGEMENT?

Urban Promise Academy (UPA) thinks big – both in terms of academic achievement and student health. When UPA decided to take on student wellness in 2010, they included a broad range of topics from healthy eating and physical activity to student safety and social and emotional health. Early on, school staff recognized that they wouldn't be successful in addressing wellness unless parents were engaged to the fullest extent possible. School Wellness Champions, understanding that parents play a key role in promoting the health of their children, set to work identifying activities that would create excitement about wellness among parents and recruit them to be a part of the school's wellness process to improve student and community well-being.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 315 students
- 100% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

### Ethnicity:

- 92% Hispanic/Latino
- 3% African American
- 5% Other

## ACTION STEPS

Over the past four years, UPA has developed a number of successful strategies for parent outreach and involvement that have not only informed parents about how health impacts their families, but have also allowed school staff to learn from parents in the process. In order for parents to feel engaged at school, UPA Wellness Champions knew that parents had to feel involved and that their voices were being heard. UPA's wellness team took steps to fully engage parents by creating a welcoming family resource center where parents and staff can interact and parents feel that their input is valued. In addition to helping parents feel heard, UPA generated momentum for parents to be healthy too, by creating parent nutrition and fitness classes. UPA hires and trains parent champions to engage in a variety of school wellness activities, including running the lunch salad bar, supervising activity time in the gym before



school, and overseeing garden maintenance. Parent champions further engage other parents by training and organizing parent volunteers to support these activities and other school events. According to the principal, the wellness activities are often the hook that initially gets parents involved in the school.

*"Family engagement has changed the culture of the school and it is a warm, wonderful place to be."*

Principal

### CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

While UPA has successfully created an environment that feels very welcoming and comfortable to Latino parents (the majority of the school community), engaging parents of different ethnicities has been more challenging. UPA Wellness Champions have worked to address this challenge by creating open and clear channels of communication for all parents. Parents are invited to many school events and teachers and staff even share their cell phone numbers with parents in an effort to create a sense of accessibility for all families.

### IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

According to UPA's principal, "The wellness work [at UPA] has been transformative for our school." With parents engaged and involved in their children's wellness and academics, UPA has seen attendance rates increase, office referrals decrease, and student test scores that place the school among the highest achievers in the entire district. Parents are truly invested, providing real leadership within the school. Promoting open communication and parent engagement has paid off, resulting in a healthy and tight-knit community.

### ADVICE FOR OTHER SCHOOLS

Creating a culture where parents and school staff help and learn from one another was critical to successfully implementing parent engagement activities at UPA. Providing a welcoming space for parents encourages their involvement and gives them a reason to come to school regularly. In addition, having a Wellness Champion that knows and is truly available to the parents helps foster a sense of support and community among parents and school staff. UPA's principal summed up the school's success by saying, "Health and wellness is a community thing – if you target only students it misses the holistic approach."

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