

# 2011-2012 Wellness Committee Annual Report

## Committee Members:

Robert Angeli, Chairperson  
Scott Hozebin, Board of Education Representative  
Angela Simpson, Health Department Representative  
Kaisha Cave, Parent Representative  
Lois Lehman, Curriculum and Adult Education Administrator  
Ann Hushin, Maloney High School Principal  
Dan Coffey, Casimir Pulaski Elementary School Principal  
David Levenduski, Ben Franklin Elementary School Principal  
Roberto Soto, Washington Middle School Assistant Principal  
Frank Auletta, Maloney High School Physical Education Department Chairperson  
Ellen Kearney, Casimir Pulaski Elementary School Physical Education Teacher  
Riley Bartolomeo, Student Representative, Maloney High School  
Antonietta Baggetta, Cafeteria Manager, John Barry Elementary  
Susan Maffé, Food Services Director, Co-Chairperson

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 required that each local education agency (LEA) or school district participating in National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program develop a local wellness policy that promotes the health of students and addresses the growing problem of childhood obesity. As per the legislation, each school districts local wellness policy at a minimum must address/establish:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school based activities that are designed to promote student wellness
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on each school campus during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity
- Implementation measurement, including designation of one or more persons within the local education agency or school, charged with the operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy
- Involvement of parents, students and representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in the development of the school wellness policy.

The Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy, HF1.4, requires an annual report to the Superintendent and the Board, evaluating the implementation of the policy and the regulations as well as recommendations for changes or revisions. The Wellness Committee is proud of their accomplishments in the 2011-2012 school year. A brief summary of these accomplishments is below.

### **Coordinated School Health Grant Award**

The Coordinated School Health Leadership project was designed to build a district's capacity to implement policies, practices and programs that reduce health and educational disparities for all students and to align health and wellness strategies to the district's school improvement/strategic plan. Meriden is one of the few districts in Connecticut that was selected to participate in this pilot. Our Director of Curriculum presented Meriden's accomplishments at the State Department of Education Coordinated School Health Annual Spring Conference in May, 2012.

The Action Plan Objectives for Meriden were to:

- Implement a comprehensive health curriculum in Grades K-8 taught by physical education/health teachers
- Increase student understanding of health and wellness
- Provide staff with fitness opportunities
- Increase parent awareness and knowledge of health issues

Nathan Hale, Platt and Washington are pilot schools for this program, with approximately \$13,000 in funds to use over a 3 year period (July 2010 – June 2013). Some of the notable efforts and accomplishments of each school this year are below:

- Nathan Hale - Additional opportunities and encouragement to participate in physical education and physical activities before and after school with new athletic and fitness equipment, PTO sponsored updated playscape for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to use during recess, on site Zumba classes for teachers, assemblies focusing on healthy eating patterns, participation in USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, which provided a free fresh fruit or vegetable snack daily to all students in 2012.
- Washington – Monthly newsletters to students, staff and families including health tips and fitness facts, physical activity evenings for students, staff and families. Taking Rachel's Challenge, inspiring, equipping and empowering students to make a positive difference in their world and replace bullying and violent behavior with kindness and compassion so students can learn more in a safer, more respectful environment. Establishment of a "Fit Club" and "Circuit Class" for staff.
- Platt High School – Making the school campus a smoke free environment and school wide anti-tobacco presentations, fitness center enhancements, educating parents and students on wellness opportunities, and encouraging staff wellness.

At the district level, a revised K-8 Health Curriculum was implemented taught by Physical Education/Health teachers. In addition, the Health and Wellness Curriculum for ninth graders was updated by the Physical Education/Health Curriculum Committee.

### **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Grant Award**

Five Meriden Elementary Schools were awarded a total of over \$150,000 in 2011-2012 to participate in USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. The goals of the grant are to: create a healthier school environment, increase the variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that children experience, make an impact in children's diets by increasing the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, and to serve fresh fruits and vegetables to all students for free throughout the school day. With the continued

success of the program, all elementary schools were excited to take advantage of the opportunity to apply for the 2012-2013 grants. We are currently awaiting grant awards and anticipate receipt of approximately \$150,000 for the upcoming year.

### **Fuel Up To Play 60 Grant Award**

The Wellness Committee encouraged participation in Fuel Up To Play 60, a partnership by the National Dairy Council and the National Football League, further empowering students to take action to improve nutrition and physical activity at their school and for their own health. Each school is eligible for up to \$4,000.00 of funding each school year.

Under the leadership of Ellen Kearney and Jennifer Kelley, Casimir Pulaski was awarded \$4,000.00 for the 2011-2012 year, instituting a fitness club with student leaders and taste testing of whole grains, dairy products, legumes and dark green and orange vegetables with recipes created and prepared in a joint venture between Food Services and the Venture Program. Ms. Kearney has submitted another grant request for \$4,000 of funding for the 2012-2013 to support equipment purchases for Casimir Pulaski's extended day physical activity programs and educational nutrition activities.

### **Action for Healthy Kids Layering Project**

Meriden Public Schools was awarded \$10,000 to implement the Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) Layering Project. AFHK programs include: Game On (Grades K-5), Fuel Up to Play 60 (Grades K-8) and Students Taking Charge (Grades 9-12). The Layering Project provided \$2,500 to each of four schools in Meriden: John Barry, Lincoln, Venture and Maloney. Funds were utilized to purchase and promote the following:

- John Barry: planting and gardening supplies for the school garden, purchase of playground stencils and paint, development of the student "Recharge Club" and purchase of new Wii controllers, jump ropes, pedometers, water bottles and t-shirts for student participants, student taste testing, the provision of healthy snacks at family events, and purchase of health and nutrition planners for the 2012-2013 school year.
- Lincoln: establishment of the LMS walking club, purchase of pedometers, t-shirts and awards for an upcoming walk-a-thon and student taste testing.
- Venture: purchase of uniforms for Venture basketball team, physical education and Wii equipment, kitchen equipment to support culinary class, a green house, and planted a vegetable garden.
- Maloney: purchase of physical education equipment, kayaks, beautification of outdoor eating areas and school breakfast participation contest with prizes of free YMCA gym memberships.

Nine grants have been submitted to Action for Healthy Kids for the 2012-2013 school year and we are currently awaiting awards.

### **Meriden's Health Heroes Initiative**

Based on a similar program in New Haven, Riley Bartolomeo, our Maloney High School student representative has partnered with Nathan Hale Elementary to introduce this program, with the goals of: increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, getting one hour of physical activity daily, limiting television to two hours a day and getting eight to ten hours of sleep each night. In the 2011-2012 school year, with the Principal, Instructional Associate and Physical Education Teacher, Riley conducted a student survey on eating habits and physical activity with 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, initiated a "health hero" segment to morning announcements and a health hero wall, displaying pictures of people doing healthy activities and eating healthy foods. In the 2012-2013 school year, Riley intends to work with the PTO and reach out to parents and guardians to continue to promote the program.

### **Wellness Committee Webpage**

A webpage was created to further notify parents and students of our policy, efforts and progress. The link to the website is: [http://www.meridenk12.org/Departments/Food\\_Services/Wellness\\_Policy/](http://www.meridenk12.org/Departments/Food_Services/Wellness_Policy/)

### **Resources for Parents and Teachers**

Additional parent and teacher resources were added to the Food Services Website and will continue to be enhanced. The link to the website is: [http://www.meridenk12.org/Departments/Food\\_Services/Parents\\_and\\_Teachers/](http://www.meridenk12.org/Departments/Food_Services/Parents_and_Teachers/)

### **Nutrition and Allergen Information**

A webpage was created with nutrition and allergen information for all items offered as a part of a reimbursable meal or for a la carte or vending purchases. The link to the website is: [http://www.meridenk12.org/Departments/Food\\_Services/Nutrition\\_and\\_Allergen\\_Information/](http://www.meridenk12.org/Departments/Food_Services/Nutrition_and_Allergen_Information/)

### **Continued Healthy Food Certification Participation**

Meriden proudly continues to voluntarily certify with the State of Connecticut Department of Child Nutrition to sell only snack items that meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards, which focus on limiting calories, fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and sugars, moderating portion size and promoting increased intake of nutrient dense foods, such as whole grains.

### **John Barry School Garden**

Under the leadership of Marcia Johnson of John Barry Elementary, students proudly planted eggplant, yellow squash, grape, cherry and beefsteak tomatoes, string beans and cucumbers during their "summer in the garden" program. Watering and weeding became an after school activity and students participated throughout the day in garden themed activities integrated with the curriculum areas of science, math, social studies, reading, writing and art. Students who participated in the program also participated in John Barry's summer school breakfast program and attended a New Opportunities Summer Lunch Site in the park.

Ms. Johnson has been funded twice through "Donors Choose" for last year's "Summer in the Garden" and for this year's "Garden to Table – Sharing the Bounty". This year, the garden will be doubled in size and in addition to last year's plantings, will include lettuce, greens, herbs and flowers. The "bounty" will be shared with a local soup kitchen and homeless shelter, in addition to being offered in the immediate neighborhood through a small "garden market".

### **Recess Rocks**

Several Elementary Schools took advantage of a free trial of "Recess Rocks". Designed to improve students physical condition, fight childhood obesity and heighten awareness and the desire for a healthy fit body, Recess Rocks provides structured, non-competitive physical activity breaks blended into the school day to assist students in reaching the recommended 60 minutes per day of physical activity. The benefits of physical activity include: helping to reduce stress, promoting strong bones, joints, muscles, refocusing attention, changing/improving mood and heightening the capacity for learning.

### **Healthier US School Challenge Applications**

Washington and Lincoln Middle Schools are in the process of submitting applications to obtain Healthier US School Challenge Silver Awards/Certification from USDA. Currently, less than 2% of the schools in the nation have this five year certification, which recognizes excellence in nutrition services provided and opportunities for physical education and activity that result in a healthier school environment. With the extended day program activities at Casimir Pulaski being offered in 2012, Pulaski will become eligible for certification and will be applying for a Gold Award.

### **Summer School Breakfast and Expansion of Meriden's Summer Feeding Program**

In July 2011, John Barry Elementary piloted a breakfast program through the seamless summer food service program for our elementary students entering grades 1, 2 and 3 enrolled in summer school from July 5 - 22 . Summer is a time of food insecurity for many families and breakfast was offered in the classroom to each student enrolled at the beginning of the school day and was also offered to all children 18 and under from the community for a 45 minute period on the patio outside of the cafeteria. Due to differing regulations for the seamless summer food service program, these meals will all be able to be provided at no cost to families or the food services program.

In fourteen days, over 4,700 students and children from the community were served a free breakfast. A summer school staff survey was completed and 97% of teachers stated that they wanted to see the program offered again in 2012. The summer school breakfast program at John Barry will be offered again in 2012 along with a pilot program of healthy working snacks prior to dismissal.

### **Promotion of New Opportunities Summer Feeding Program**

Meriden Public Schools Food Services Program has worked closely with New Opportunities to promote their Summer Food Services Program in its 25 locations throughout Meriden. The promotion has included information on student menus, Meriden Public Schools community access television station and a webpage with information on Food Services Website.

### **Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010**

The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 required the USDA to develop new nutrition standards for school breakfasts and lunches based upon the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and current science, as reviewed and recommended by the Institute of Medicine. The changes to lunch, scheduled to be implemented in 2012-2013, are the first in over 15 years.

The changes include:

- strict limits on and a reduction of calories (up to 40%)
- sodium reduction

- larger serving sizes of vegetables
- a requirement that a fruit or vegetable serving of a minimum of ½ cup to be selected with each reimbursable meal
- an increase in whole grains
- and a reduction in the maximum serving size of entrees and grain products.

**Staff Wellness Initiatives**

A voluntary wellness program was offered by the City of Meriden to all Board of Education employees who purchase health insurance. CIGNA, our health insurance provider, has also provided opportunities for reduced cost wellness classes and Weight Watchers at Work.

**Partnerships with University of Connecticut and St. Joseph's College Dietetic Programs**

The Food Services Program has developed partnerships with The University of Connecticut and St. Joseph's College Dietetics Programs and hosted students for School Food Service Rotations, further encouraging Dietitians to choose School Nutrition as a career.

**Recommended Policy Changes and Revisions**

The Wellness Committee currently has no recommendations for policy changes or revisions. Our committee looks forward to another productive year and assisting our students, families and staff in meeting the health and wellness challenges they encounter.