



**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
Community Schools, Thriving Students

Oakland Unified School District Wellness Program 2015 Evaluation Report

Prepared by Bright Research Group
For the Community Schools and Student Services Department
July 2015



I. Introduction

Schools and school districts are playing increasing roles in supporting the health and wellbeing of students, families and staff by promoting a culture of health through wellness policies and councils. Over the past fifteen years, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has expanded its commitment to a full service community schools model, where schools are seen as hubs for accessing health and social services. The School District’s work in promoting health is guided by the [Wellness Policy](#), which was first developed in 2004, adopted in 2006 and updated in 2014. The Wellness Program provides a structure for operationalizing the District’s Wellness Policy. This report explores the structure, contributions, and lessons learned from OUSD’s Wellness Program, as an innovative approach to supporting a cultural shift towards wellness and health in Oakland schools and throughout the District as a whole.

Wellness Policy Elements

- Nutrition
- School Gardens
- Physical Education and Physical Activity
- Health Education
- Positive School Climate
- Physical School Environment
- Access & Coordination of Health Services
- Staff Wellness
- Assessment & Communications

I.1. OUSD Wellness Program

The Wellness Policy outlines an overall strategy for guiding the District’s work to support health and wellness in six key areas. The Wellness Program provides an infrastructure for operationalizing this policy across the district and at individual school sites. The Wellness Program provides technical assistance to site and District level wellness efforts, convenes the District Wellness Council and convenes a learning community for an after school wellness learning community.

School Site Wellness Champion Initiative:

Wellness Champions are selected at school sites to be stewards of health and wellness and then also in one or more focus areas. An OUSD Site Wellness Champion is an existing school site staff member, often a teacher, identified to lead specific health and wellness programs at their school. Wellness Champions select one or more Focus Area, and implement specific programs and activities in that Focus Area at their school. Wellness Champions attend approximately six professional development sessions per school year, convene wellness councils, and promote a culture of wellness at their school. The Wellness Champion Initiative has grown from a small initiative in eight schools in 2008 to a program operating in more than forty schools across the District in 2015.



The District Wellness Council: At the District Level, the Wellness Council is convened to share learnings and promote the integration of health and wellness priorities in District decision-making. The Council oversees implementation of the District Wellness Policy and is the advisory board to the entire OUSD Wellness Program. The partnerships for the Council and programs are unique in that they are internal and external. Within OUSD, the Wellness Program brings together the Health & Wellness Unit, Behavioral Health Unit, Social Emotional Learning Unit, After School Programs Office, Nutrition Services Department, Custodial Services Department, Teaching and Learning Department, Risk Management and Human Resources/ Benefits Department. Outside agencies provide strong partnerships in a variety of ways include Alameda County Public Health Department, HOPE Collaborative, Coaching Corps, UC Cooperative Extension, YMCA, and private foundations.

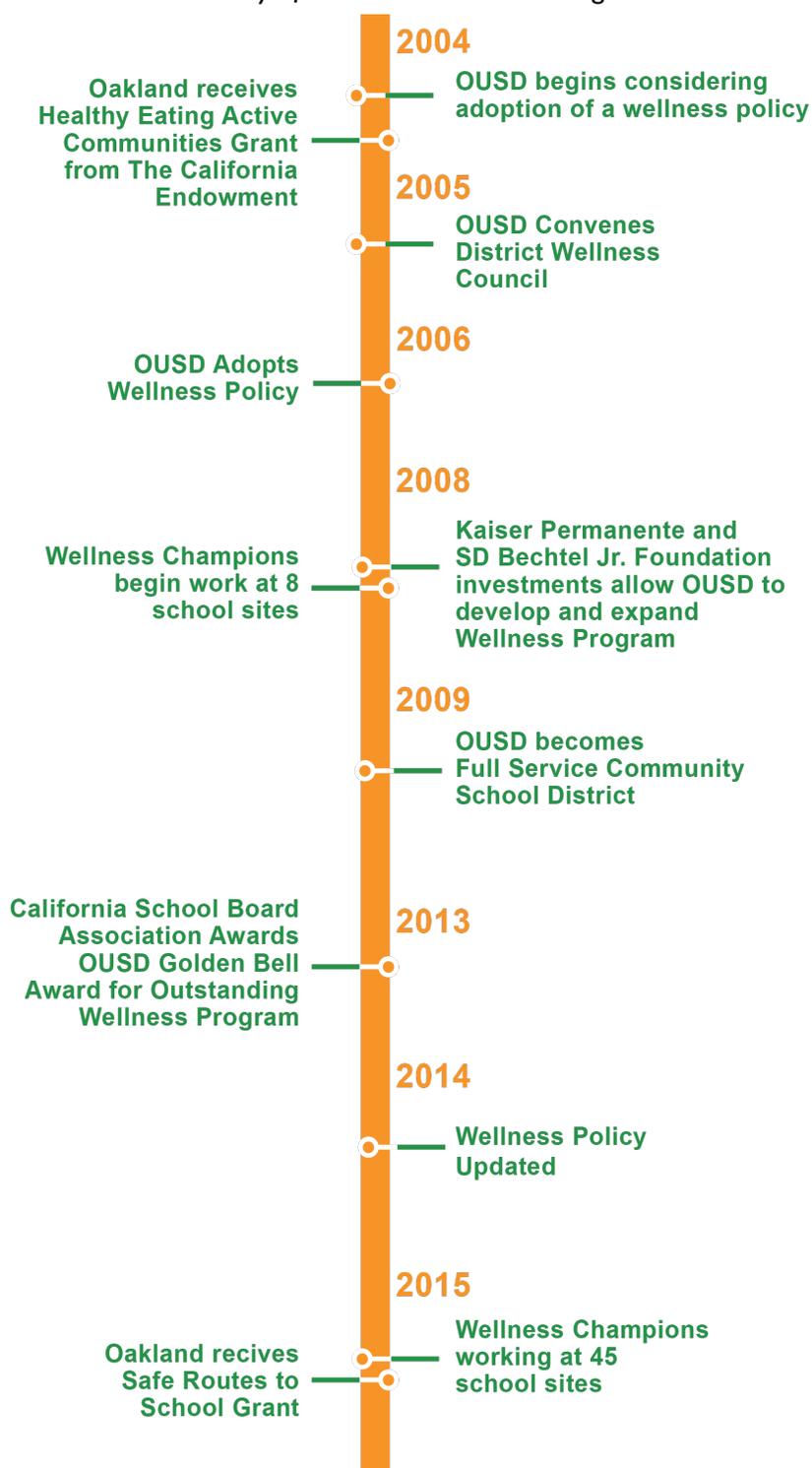
History of the Wellness Program in Oakland

Community schools are built on the premise that healthy students who are part of strong families do better in school. OUSD has been a leader in bringing resources, partnerships and programming to schools and communities to promote the health and wellbeing of students, families and staff for more than 10 years.

The OUSD Site Wellness Champion Initiative began in 2008 and has expanded in size and impact since. The California Endowment, as

part of their Healthy Eating and Active Communities (HEAC) investment, supported Wellness Champions. This initial funding was used to start the Oakland Fresh Produce Market program and to support efforts to create healthier playgrounds, gardens and green spaces at District schools. Funding

History of the OUSD Wellness Program



from the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Community Benefits Program, the Alameda County Public Health Department and The California Endowment enabled a significant expansion between 2010 and 2015.

I.2. Purpose of the Evaluation

Bright Research Group, an external evaluator, used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to answer evaluation questions, as outlined in the table below:

Table 1. Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation Question	Method	Format
How are Wellness Champions, Wellness Councils, and Afterschool programming contributing to a culture of wellness at school sites and the District overall? How is the wellness program supporting student health?	Wellness Champion Activity Log	Administered three times a year; completed by Wellness Champions at all 45 sites to track activities, outcomes, strategies and lessons learned
	Wellness Policy Inventory Survey	Administered in the spring; completed by Wellness Champions or principals at all OUSD schools (including those without Wellness Champions)
	California Healthy Kids Survey	Baseline analysis of health of schools in Oakland.
	Wellness Program Logic Model	Logic model describing the strategies, outcomes, and long term goals of the Wellness Program.
What are the lessons learned, challenges and successes of the Wellness Champion program at school sites? How is the Wellness Program supporting the work of the Wellness Champions at school sites?	Wellness Policy Inventory Survey	See above
	Wellness Champion Focus Group	One focus group focused on lessons learned, contributions, and support needed for school site wellness champions.
	Youth Leader Focus Groups	Two focus groups with youth leaders at Fremont High School and Montera Middle School exploring the role of young people in promoting a culture of health in their schools and communities.
	After School Provider Focus Group	One focus group with After School Providers participating in after school nutrition/cooking program and wellness learning community.

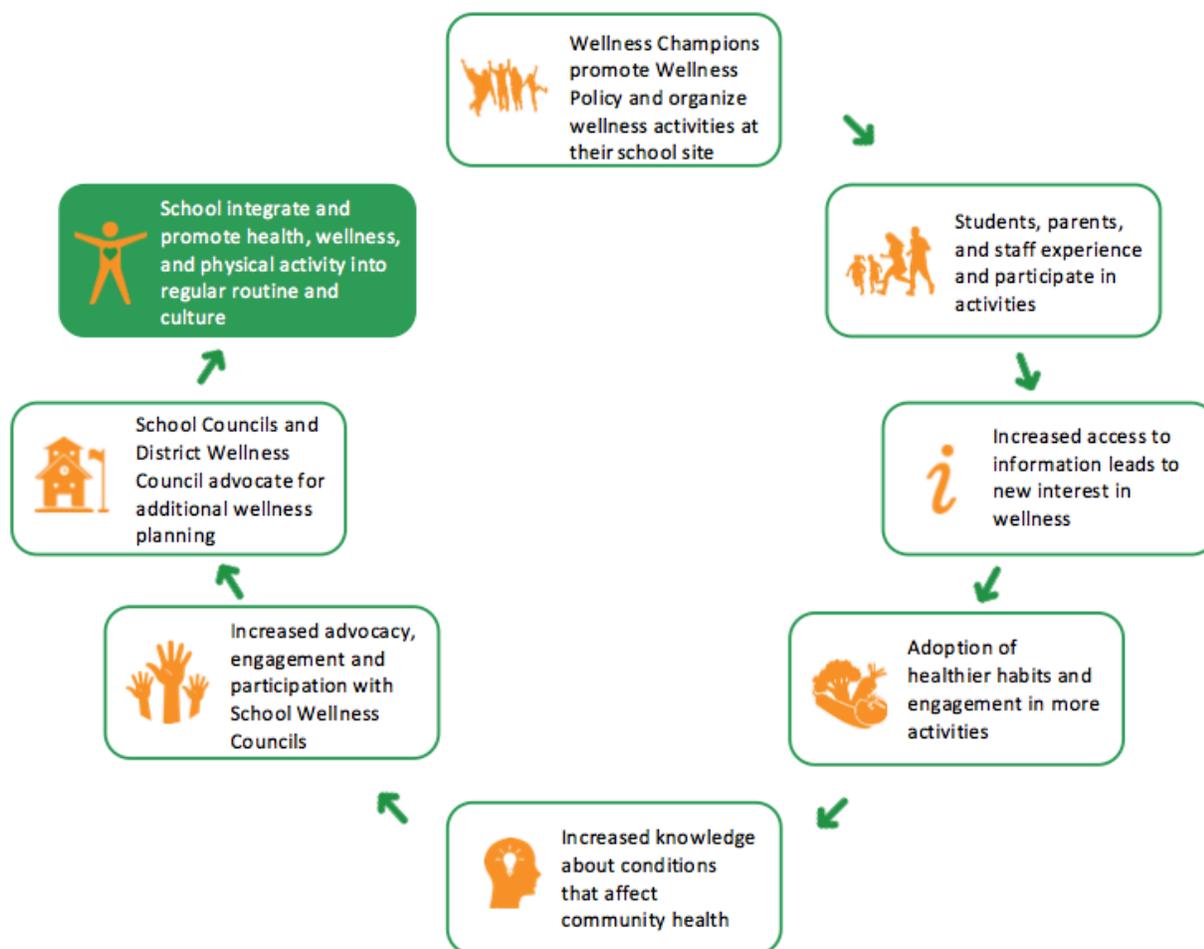
2. The Case for School and School District Investment in Wellness

2.1. Theory of Change

By aiming to address the academic and non-academic needs of students, the Community Schools movement places schools and districts as central actors in promoting the health and wellness of students, families and staff. The adoption of school and district wellness policies is seen as a best practice in promoting activities that support health and wellness, while changing the systems, policies and conditions that detract from health. Many school districts struggle with how to operationalize, implement and enforce provisions included in their wellness policy. Funds may not be available to support wellness activities. Some school districts afford school sites a high level of autonomy; in Oakland for example, school sites have authority over budget planning, school site planning, and staff selection. In a large district like Oakland's, tasking a few full time staff with wellness activities for many school sites did not seem viable. The Wellness Program was designed to promote long-term changes at school sites using the following approach:

- *De-Centralized Approach:* Champion for wellness must be embedded at the school site and have flexibility to select the ways in which they promote wellness.
- *Experiential Learning:* When students, family and staff have positive experiences with health and wellness, they become more interested in it. The Wellness Program’s after school nutrition/cooking wellness learning community and Wellness Champion program, particularly the garden education, Harvest of the Month and fresh produce market focus area activities embody this value of providing school communities with positive experiences.
- *Youth and Community Development:* The Wellness Program is based on the belief that all stakeholders can play an important role in promoting health and wellness when activities engage and develop their strengths and assets.
- *Long Term Change:* While the Wellness Program looks at short term data to understand what is changing when it comes to the health of staff and students, the Program is informed by a public health model and aims to support long term and sustainable changes to the systems, conditions and policies that impact health.

The visual below depicts the theory of change for the Wellness Program. A more comprehensive logic model is included in the appendix.



2.2. The Health and Wellness of Students in Oakland Schools

The Wellness Program reflects OUSD’s vision of becoming a full service community schools district, which was originally articulated in 2009 and most recently in the 2015-20 Pathways to Excellence Strategic Plan. The Program also aims to review and respond to a clear need for system efforts to promote health in all settings. This section provides a snapshot of the overall health and wellness of Oakland students based on the most recently available California Healthy Kids Survey. An analysis of California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data was conducted to understand the overall health of students in Oakland schools.ⁱ This analysis compares schools with Wellness Champions to those without. For each of the metrics on physical activity and nutrition below, data was analyzed to see how many schools had a student body population achieving each benchmark. The purpose of this analysis is descriptive and is not intended to attribute Wellness Program activities to short term changes in student health. The total number of schools included in this analysis is included below. The Wellness Program will continue to monitor changes in these indicators over time.

Table 2. Number of OUSD Schools in CHKS Analysis, By Level and Wellness

		2014-2015
Elementary Schools		54
	Wellness	36
	Other	18
Middle Schools		20
	Wellness	7
	Other	13
High Schools		15
	Wellness	7
	Other	8

Physical Activity

Benchmark: Over 50% of students at the school exercise or engage in physical activity at least 5 times a week.ⁱⁱ

School Performance: Elementary schools with Wellness Champions are more likely to meet the benchmark than other schools, with nearly 72% of Wellness elementary schools hitting this benchmark, compared to 55% of other schools. High schools are not meeting this benchmark in Oakland.

Table 3. Percent of Schools Meeting Physical Activity Benchmark

	Elementary	Middle	High
Wellness School	72%	14%	0%
Other Schools	55%	23%	0%

Sugary Beverages

Benchmark: Less than 50% of students at the school drank one or more sugary beverages, like soda or sports drinks, in one day.

School Performance: Middle schools with Wellness Champions are more likely to meet the benchmark than other schools, with 29% of Wellness schools hitting this benchmark, compared to 15% of other schools. However, this is not the case at the Elementary and High school level.

Table 4. Percent of Schools Meeting Sugary Beverages Benchmark

	Elementary	Middle	High
Wellness School	31%	29%	0%
Other Schools	44%	15%	20%

Vegetable Consumption

Benchmark: More than 50% of students at the school ate 2 or more vegetables in one day.

School Performance: Almost all elementary schools in Oakland were meeting the benchmark in 2014-2015, and Wellness middle and high schools performed better than other schools.

Table 5. Percent of Schools Meeting Vegetable Consumption Benchmark

	Elementary	Middle	High
Wellness School	97%	43%	14%
Other Schools	100%	15%	0%

Fruit Consumption

Benchmark: More than 50% of students at the school ate 2 or more fruits in one day.

School Performance: Similar to the trend for vegetable consumption, all elementary schools met this benchmark, and middle schools with Wellness were far more likely to have their students eating 2 or more fruits a day than other schools.

Table 6. Percent of Schools Meeting Fruit Consumption Benchmark

	Elementary	Middle	High
Wellness School	100%	43%	14%
Other Schools	100%	8%	20%

Breakfast Consumption

Benchmark: Less than 10% of students at the school did not eat breakfast.

School Performance: Only one-third of elementary schools have less than 10% of their student body skipping breakfast. No middle or high schools are reaching this benchmark. High school students are most likely to report that they skipped breakfast.

Table 7. Percent of Schools Meeting Breakfast Benchmark

	Elementary	Middle	High
Wellness School	33%	0%	0%
Other Schools	33%	0%	0%

3. Wellness Program Contributions

Using a decentralized, school-by-school model, the Wellness Program deploys several strategic programs and supports to improve the culture of wellness at school sites and the District overall. By integrating health and wellness into several areas of school life, the Wellness Program creates access to resources and activities that support improvements in the health of students, families, and staff.

3.1 Wellness Champions & Wellness Councils

In the 2014-2015 school year, over half of all of OUSD's schools had at least one or more Wellness Champions on site. Most Wellness Champions were at elementary schools. Every school with a Wellness Champion also had a school site Wellness Council. Sixty-two percent of Wellness Champions convene and facilitate at least one meeting of their Wellness Council every quarter. School Wellness Councils are an opportunity for Wellness Champions to convene teachers, parents, students, and other school staff members to leverage and promote wellness activities and principles, and to inform the District Wellness Council about school-level successes, challenges, or needs. This decentralized approach allows for authentic programming that is responsive to the needs and preferences of each student body and the resources available at each school.

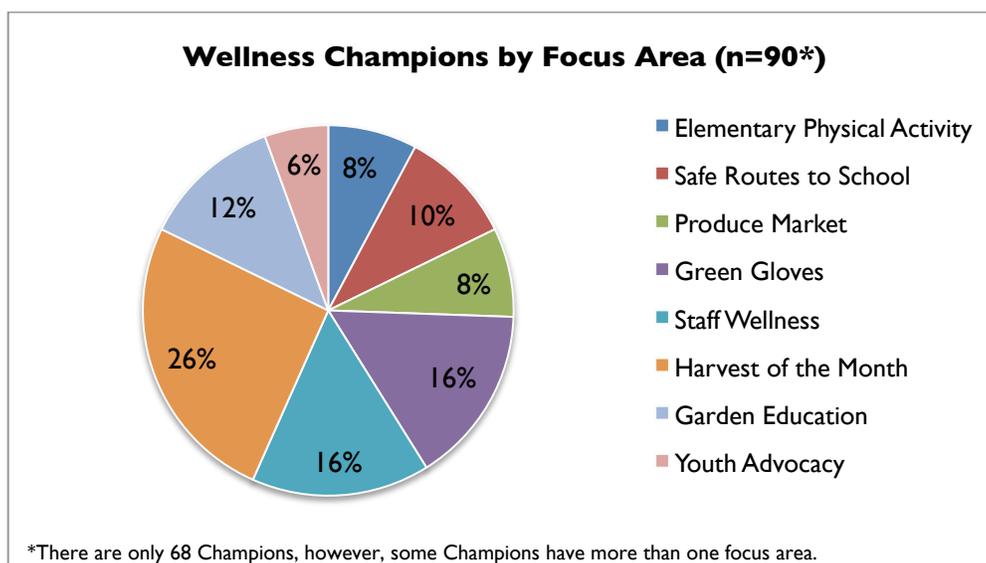
Table 8. Number of Wellness Champions in Schools

	#	% of all schools
Wellness Champions	75	--
Total Schools with Wellness Champions	50*	56%
Elementary Schools with Wellness Champions	36	67%
Middle Schools with Wellness Champions	7	35%
High Schools with Wellness Champions	7	47%

*This analysis includes a few additional schools due to changes in the number of Wellness Champions over the school year.

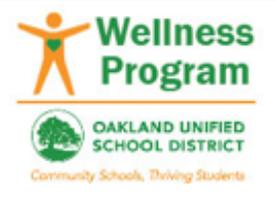
3.2 Focus Areas

Schools select one or more Focus Areas for Wellness Champions to implement and shepherd at their school. There are eight Focus Areas to pick from: Elementary Physical Activity, Safe Routes to School, Produce Market, Green Gloves, Staff Wellness, Harvest of the Month, Garden Education, and Youth Advocacy. A plurality of Wellness Champions (26%) participates in the Harvest of the Month Focus Area at their school, followed by the Green Gloves (16%) and Staff Wellness (16%) Focus Areas.



Focus Area activities are intended to implement key, actionable elements of the Wellness Policy to contribute to a culture of health and wellness at the school. Key highlights of Wellness Champions' activities in their focus areas include:ⁱⁱⁱ

Wellness Champion Focus Areas & Sample Activities

<p>Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 75% monitor PE activity and equipment ✓ Over 50% report physical activity breaks happen in <u>all</u> classrooms 	<p>Safe Routes to School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 89% organized a Golden Sneaker Contest in the school year ✓ 56% organized a Walk and Roll to School Day 	<p>Staff Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 70% educate staff about how to incorporate healthy foods and activities in fundraising activities ✓ 86% promoted Kaiser Permanente's Thrive Across America campaign
<p>Youth Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 67% conducted a youth survey around wellness interests and needs ✓ 100% supported youth-led wellness advocacy campaigns ✓ 50% report that youth leaders meet weekly to discuss wellness activities 		<p>Garden Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 88% implement school garden education programs for students ✓ 24% report that students are in the garden every day ✓ 18% report over 100 students are in the garden during these times
<p>Produce Market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 100% of Wellness Champions in this focus area promote weekly produce markets for families, students, and staff at their schools. 	<p>Green Gloves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 67% started and/or managed a cafeteria waste-sorting program 	<p>Harvest of the Month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 100% of Wellness Champions in this focus area conduct monthly taste tests of fresh vegetables and fruits, facilitate Rethink Your Drink interventions, and provide nutrition education.

3.3 Outcomes

Student, Parents, & Staff

Wellness Champions report an increased interest and awareness of healthy eating, food justice, and exercise among students as the primary outcome of their Wellness activities. Several Champions report that students now ask them whether or not their meals or beverages are considered healthy or nutritious. School garden programs are also very popular; 84% of elementary schools and all middle/high schools report having school gardens.^{iv}

“I have absolutely seen a difference in the school environment. Students are choosing healthier foods, staying away from sugary drinks, and being more active.”

“Students ask if items brought from home for lunch meet nutrition guidelines.”

“Children are checking in with me to see which drinks are okay and which have less sugar.”

“Youth are more open to participating in wellness activities, such as a bike blender event.”

“Students are more aware of and interested in new vegetables.”

Wellness Champions are reporting a high level of interest from teachers and other school staff about healthy fundraising, and that there is less resistance from students and parents about having healthier food choices at events. Over 80% of champions communicate healthy fundraising guidelines and consult on specific fundraisers to identify alternatives to selling unhealthy food.

School, District, & Community

Nearly 43% of Wellness Champions report that they started a new wellness activity at their school, and another 34% successfully advocated for the incorporation of wellness into other school activities. Wellness Champions also reported a high level of support for Wellness activities from school administration (47%), teachers and other school staff (44%), students (44%) and parents (16%).

“Staff consult with me about refreshments and party foods.”

“Our school was extremely successful in ending unhealthy food sales as a form of fundraising this year.”

“I see more parents bringing healthy snacks to classroom events (fruits and vegetables).”

Other the course of the year, Wellness Champions reported an increase in the support received from teachers and students. Creating early experiences for students and school staff to get engaged in Wellness activities allows for greater support and cooperation for future activities, and improves the overall culture of the school and district. Champions also report that staff wellness activities have led to increased camaraderie and the perception that staff are cared for and appreciated.

Although one in three Champions report that Wellness Council interests are included in school site planning conversations, a similar proportion (35%) report that Wellness Council interests are rarely mentioned during school site planning. Stakeholders in the administration and staff may become more receptive to wellness activities over the school year, however there is an opportunity for the Program to expand support for Champions participating in school site planning activities.

4. Lessons Learned

As the Wellness Program has evolved, key lessons learned, successes, and challenges have emerged that inform the program model and strategies. Wellness Champions are the primary agents for implementing the Wellness Program throughout the school district. The following lessons learned should be considered in the continuous growth and improvement of the Wellness Program.

Highly Committed Workforce: Wellness Champions are highly committed to supporting the health of students and the greater school community. Ninety-two percent of Wellness Champions report that

they promote multiple areas of the Wellness Policy, even if it is not in their “focus area.” While stipends make Wellness Champions feel valued for their work, some reported that the stipends are insufficient to support the number of requested and required activities. The high level of reporting requirements and accountability was described as stifling to Wellness Champions, taking time away from doing the actual work. While grant funding received by the Wellness Program requires some of this reporting, conversations with Champions suggested that they are not aware of those stipulations or pressures. Identifying ways to decrease or streamline the number of accountability measures and refocusing on leveraging Wellness Champion interest, care and enthusiasm for the health of their school community will foster a community empowerment approach to change.

Increased Awareness and Interest among Students: Students are becoming advocates and leaders for the health of their peers, families, and school community. Wellness Champions and the Afterschool Learning Community are successfully engaging students in interactive and informative education and activities that increase their interest and awareness of healthy behaviors. Youth Wellness Leaders programming highlights the potential for students to become leaders for change in their school community. Youth Wellness Leaders feel a sense of responsibility for helping their school community and environments. Leaders take up advocacy campaigns that respond to the needs of the student body. At Fremont High School, advocacy campaigns focus on bringing more fruits and vegetables to the corner store by school and improving the quality of food provided at the cafeteria.

Additional Support for School Wellness Councils: Although each school has a Lead Wellness Champion to manage its School Wellness Council, many Lead Champions find the Council difficult to organize, schedule, and maintain over the school year. Some Champions were not comfortable with recruiting participants, and others were not able to keep participants active throughout the school year. However, they recognized that Councils were important to affect collective change at school. Many Champions leveraged existing, well-known convening bodies at the school instead of organizing their own meetings. Wellness Councils are seen as an important aspect of change, and the Wellness Program is developing resources to support these continuing efforts at school sites.

Impact in the Classroom: Wellness Champions feel that they can have the greatest impact in their classroom where they can integrate wellness activities into their curriculum every day. This is easier in elementary school when they are with their students throughout the day. Wellness programming for students and for their parents becomes harder at middle and high schools.

Disseminating Information: Wellness Champions that were new to the program did not feel fully prepared to implement all of the activities within their focus area. Champions felt that they needed more information about what is expected from Wellness Champions within each focus area, prior to signing up as a focus area lead. Wellness Champions also shared that there needed to be more promotion of the program among staff so that there were more people aware of the program and willing to apply. Champions felt most effective when they could partner with other Champions at the school to implement activities.

Principal Engagement: Wellness Champions feel most effective when their school principal supports their efforts and is engaged in wellness programming either by helping promotion of the program or by providing resources that help implement the program. Principals have a high turnover rate, so Wellness Champions are often operating in a school environment that shifts in its support for wellness programming. There is a need for improved principal education and engagement about the Wellness Policy and Program—either from the School District or through support provided to Wellness Champions to become leaders in engaging and interesting their principal in wellness efforts.

Lack of Interest in Health Education: According to Wellness Champions, creating opportunities for different choices and experiences was more effective at producing interest in health and wellness than traditional health education. Students responded particularly well to interactive, hands-on experiences such as gardening and cooking. Staff had negative reactions to the Kaiser “Maintain, Don’t Gain” challenge that provided information about low-fat or low-calorie substitute ingredients during the holiday season. Staff felt these staff health education efforts were patronizing and uncomfortable in the workplace. However, Champions did express interest in other wellness activities that bring staff members together in activity, such as walking challenges, 5Ks, or other peer bonding experiences.

Engage Families: There is an opportunity to expand the engagement of families in experiences that raise their interest in health and wellness. Wellness Champions and After School providers noted the opportunity to provide activities that families and children complete together (i.e. joint cooking), which leads to increased parent interest, empowerment, and participation in wellness activities. Parents are interested in opportunities to promote their kid’s health and wellbeing. Youth and parents are most interested when it is their idea, with the support of Wellness Champions.

**Wellness Program
Parent Engagement Events
2014-2015**

Wellness Freshival

- October 2014 at OUSD headquarters
- Attending: 50 parents
- *Purpose:* To provide parents with an interactive overview of the revised Wellness Policy.

Winter Wellness Workshop

- February 2015 at East Oakland Pride Elementary School
- Attending: 75 parents
- *Purpose:* To talk to parents about bully prevention and other activities that improves children’s wellness, such as healthy snacks and meals.

5. Quality of Program Support

Wellness Champions rated technical assistance provided by program staff very highly. The top five areas of technical assistance were email updates, reminders, and information; calendar invitations; focus area trainings; information on the Wellness Policy; and All Wellness Champion trainings.

Table 9. Wellness Champion Ratings for District Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance Area	Rated “Very helpful”
Email Updates, Reminders, and Information	85%
Calendar Invitations	75%
Focus Area Trainings	69%
Information on Wellness Policy	57%
All Wellness Champion Trainings	54%

Wellness Champions reported needing additional support to use the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Tool (16%), as well as support around talking to/presenting to families (15%), other staff (9%) and school leadership (9%).

Technical Assistance and support provided by the District were described as helpful, responsive, and of the highest quality. Wellness Champions are excited about the work and care deeply about the health of students, families and communities. Wellness Champions who participated in the focus group encouraged the school district to continue to tap into this enthusiasm.

6. Conclusion

This report examined the model, contributions, and lessons learned from the Oakland Unified School District Wellness Program. The Wellness Program is responsible for implementing the District Wellness Policy and achieves this mandate by convening a District-wide Wellness Council, engaging staff members at school sites to serve as Wellness Champions, and providing technical assistance and program support to efforts that promote wellness across the District. This evaluation found that the Wellness Program is making positive contributions towards creating a culture of health at schools and the school district. As of 2015, there are 75 Wellness Champions operating at 45 sites. District staff are highly satisfied with the technical assistance provided by the Wellness Program. Opportunities to strengthen the program include more intentional engagement of principals, family engagement, and additional support in convening site level wellness councils.

*This evaluation and report were sponsored by:
Kaiser Permanente Community Benefits.*



Citations

ⁱ For the analysis of elementary school benchmarks for Sugary Beverages, Vegetables, and Fruits, the sample size of “other” elementary schools is small (n=12 in 2012-2013, and n=18 in 2014-2015) compared to the Wellness schools (n=41 in 2012-2013, and n=36 in 2014-2015), which are inclusive of schools that have Wellness Champions and/or Harvest of the Month (HOM) programming. The benchmark analysis for physical activity and breakfast consumption for elementary schools only includes school with Wellness Champions, and not schools with HOM programming. In addition, middle and high schools do not have HOM programming.

ⁱⁱ The benchmark is 30 minutes of activity per day for 5 days for elementary students, and 60 minutes of activity per day for 5 days for middle and high school students.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wellness Champion Activity Log, Third Quarterly Survey for March 1- May 29

^{iv} Wellness Champion Activity Log, Third Quarterly Survey for March 1- May 29