

CDC'S DIVISION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH SUCCESS STORIES

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Students Increase Physical Activity and Writing Skills in Northeastern Connecticut

SUMMARY

Through the HealthQuest WriteSteps School Walking Initiative, more than 4,400 students in 9 schools begin their day with a 10-minute walk and academic discussion. With the increased opportunity for physical fitness, northeastern Connecticut teachers have noted a decrease in the number of disciplinary referrals, improvement in writing scores, and an increased percentage of students passing the physical fitness test.



CHALLENGE

Childhood obesity is a growing epidemic in Connecticut. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Connecticut has a 25.9% childhood obesity rate. Northeastern Connecticut's 41 schools serve as academic homes to more than 17,000 students. Because schools are increasing instructional time in math, English, and science in an attempt to improve standards-based test scores, physical education classes, recess, and

physical activity breaks are shortened or taken away. According to CDC's 2010 report, *The Association Between School Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance*, "There is substantial evidence that physical activity can help improve academic achievement, including grades and standardized test scores." Public health partners are working to increase physical activity to improve overall student health and academic performance.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Walking provides immeasurable health benefits and is one of the few physical activities that you can do for life. Allowing students to have multiple opportunities for physical activity during their school day not only instills a healthy lifetime behavior, but is shown to improve academic performance. Join the movement to become a healthier school by implementing the HealthQuest WriteSteps School Walking Initiative.

"Healthy learners achieving academic excellence...that's the vision, and every time a school adopts the HealthQuest WriteSteps School Walking Initiative as their school policy, we're one step closer to bringing the vision to life."

- Susan Starkey, Director of Health

SOLUTION

In 2009 HealthQuest Northeast Connecticut, a public health collaborative of the Northeast District Department of Health, worked with national walking expert