

Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center Partners with The New Haven Public School District to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Diabetes

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The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center (PRC), an organization that focuses on chronic disease prevention through community-based lifestyle interventions was recently awarded a 2-year \$80,000 grant from The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to address childhood obesity and diabetes prevention in New Haven. The PRC (www.yalegriffinprc.org) is one of 33 CDC-funded prevention research centers nationwide and represents an academic-community partnership dedicated both to methodologically robust research and to linkages with community organizations and State programs.

In partnership with the New Haven Public School District, the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center will implement two innovative nutrition and exercise programs for elementary school children. The programs, Nutrition Detectives and ABC For Fitness, were developed by the Center's director, Dr. David Katz, and provide fun, interactive methods to educate and engage elementary school children and facilitate adoption of healthier lifestyles. Both programs are designed to fit into the school day without taking time from the existing curricula.

Nutrition Detectives is designed to inform better food choices and more healthful eating through knowledge of food composition. The intent is to guide choices within food categories so that more nutritious items in any given food category are chosen instead of their less nutritious counterparts. The program teaches food label literacy and provides the skills to see past food marketing deceptions. The unique aspect of this project involves a peer educator model that will be used to teach the program, thereby enhancing community capacity. Undergraduate students from Yale College will be trained in the Nutrition Detectives curriculum and will share their knowledge by teaching students in three of the New Haven elementary schools.

ABC For Fitness (Activity Bouts in the Classroom) is designed to incorporate brief bouts of physical activity into the school day in addition to the time students spend in PE and recess. With ABC for Fitness, teachers lead multiple 5-minute activity sessions in their classrooms throughout each day; for instance, when switching focus from one subject to another they may instruct students to get up and run in place, do jumping jacks or dance. These short bursts of activity add up to at least 30 minutes of extra exercise each day and have shown to decrease disruptive behaviors during class time.

Both programs are currently being implemented with great enthusiasm and success in the Independence, MO school district through a 3-year grant funded by the Healthcare Foundation of Greater Kansas City. "We see that the programs are working, we have students asking for activity bursts in our classrooms and we have parents who bring in food cartons for our teachers to help them read the labels. Ultimately we are creating environments that provide both students and staff a place to learn and practice healthy lifestyle skills" says Jennifer Walker Director of Youth Development and Education for the

Independence School District.

"We are thrilled to have this opportunity, supported by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, to bring these programs to the New Haven community" said Dr. David Katz. "This project allows us to test the effectiveness of these programs developed by the PRC while taking into account the limitations set by legislative mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act. The PRC is committed to creating partnerships between research and community; this lets us develop and implement both these programs with the input and full participation of our community partners in New Haven."

For More Information Contact: Julie Katz, Research Scientist and Project Director, at the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center (julie.katz@yalegriffinprc.org or (203)-732-1368). Both copyrighted programs are available free of charge on the World Wide Web. To download program materials or learn more please go to www.davidkatzmd.com.

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