

Developing and Implementing a School Wellness Plan at Buttonwillow School through
Community Partnerships

A Proposal Submitted to the Graduate Student Center
California State University, Bakersfield

By

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TITLE OF THE PROJECT

Developing and Implementing a School Wellness Plan at Buttonwillow School through Community Partnerships

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSED ACTIVITY

Project Description: Buttonwillow School is the only public school managed by Buttonwillow Union School District (BUSD) and serves over 370 students, ranging in class levels pre-school to 8th grade. Buttonwillow School is located 26 miles west of Bakersfield, CA with limited resources attainable by community members in an area where agricultural work is its leading employment. For the 2016-2017 academic year, Buttonwillow School's underrepresented minority enrollment was 92% of Hispanic or Latino descent. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) report in 2015, the top five leading causes of death among the Hispanic community are cancer, heart disease, unintentional injuries, stroke, and diabetes. Top risk factors include obesity and cigarette smoking. To improve health literacy, Kern Family Health Care (KFHC) offers funding to help schools and community partners implement school wellness policy and related strategies that promote school and community health. KFHC believes school health programs that align with a school district's school wellness policy can help children stay healthy, prevent future chronic diseases, and improve academic performance. Buttonwillow School is in the process of developing a school wellness committee (SWC) and school wellness plan (SWP) through a collaborate effort made possible by KFHC's School Wellness Grant for the 2017-2018 school year. Through this wellness grant, KFHC places an intern at a school site to provide administrative assistance to school wellness policy implementation with a length of service from August 14, 2017 to July 15, 2018. The collaborate effort is in conjunction with Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS), California State University, Bakersfield's Department of Kinesiology (CSUB Kinesiology), KFHC, and BUSD. Per Buttonwillow School's wellness grant work plan, it will aim to achieve six objectives: 1) establish a new SWC and new SWP, 2) increase physical activity during the school day, 3) implement new mindfulness curriculum and activities, 4) create an after-school garden club, 5) increase family engagement in health and wellness, and 6) establish a fit trail. The inaugural SWC includes members from Buttonwillow School, KCSOS, CSUB Kinesiology, KFHC, parents, students, and myself.

As the Health Education Promoter, I will function as a liaison between the school, community partners, and KFHC to:

- Become familiar with the BUSD's school wellness policy.
- Work with BUSD to assess the school's wellness program, factors that impact top school health issues, and the school's progress in implementing the school wellness policy.
- Assist with organizing and facilitating SWC meetings with staff, district, parents, and community partners to obtain feedback on ways to update the school wellness policy and share assessment findings. Work with the school wellness committee to update the school district's school wellness policy.
- Assist with organizing and facilitating regular SWC meetings to develop a school wellness program that includes a comprehensive work or action plan for implementing the school district's wellness policy and promoting school and community health.

Regular SWC meetings will also cover updates on progress on implementing the school wellness program action plan.

- Assist with organizing separate meetings with the school staff, residents, and community partners to plan and implement specific projects and activities that pertain to the school wellness program action plan.
- Plan and facilitate regular health education workshops for parents and community partners.
- Work with BUSD to integrate workshops revolving math, reading, and AVID during Buttonwillow Family Nights with wellness activities.
- Provide weekly email updates or summaries on the school wellness program to the assigned KFHC Member Health Educator and faculty mentor. Meet in person or by phone at least once a month to discuss program progress and challenges with the KFHC Member Health Educator and at least once a month with the faculty mentor.

Proposed Activity: Through an internship position made possible by KFHC from August 14, 2017 to July 15, 2018, I will fulfill the role of a Health Education Promoter to be at roundtable discussions to implement the six-wellness objectives. I will commit to 4-8 hours per week to my internship to aid in activities such as:

(Objective 1: establish a new SWC and SWP)

- Recruit SWC
- Develop and implement a SWP focused on district policies and school environment

(Objective 2: increase physical activity during the school day)

- Aid in re-launching the Read & Ride program
- Implement incentive program to engage students
- Aid in training teachers to become advocates
- Help track steps using FitBit

(Objective 3: implement new mindfulness curriculum and activities)

- Aid in training teachers and staff in mindfulness
- Aid in including yoga & meditation in physical education with dedicated time weekly

(Objective 4: create an after-school garden club)

- Recruit students and parents to take ownership of school garden
- Use standards aligned nutrition curriculum
- Create a wellness incentive program
- Use veggies and fruit grown in the garden for family food demos

(Objective 5: increase family engagement in health and wellness)

- Aid in monthly food demos and fitness evenings with families and community members
- Work with BUSD to integrate workshops revolving math, reading, and AVID

(Objective 6: establish a fit trail)

- Aid in installing 10 station fit-trail

EXPECTED OUTCOMES & DELIVERABLES:

Outcomes: My community engagement at Buttonwillow School will contribute to the development and implementation of a school wellness committee and school wellness plan. Collaborations made with KCSOS, CSUB Kinesiology, KFHC, parents, and students will increase physical activity, and other healthy behaviors in the community. Per my internship position's role, the projected outcomes will also include:

- Clarity and cohesion from SWC by creating vision, goals & steps to a healthier school environment (*objective 1*)
- Increasing student physical activity by 10% (*objective 2*)
- Teachers will engage students using meditation, breathing exercises, short walks, and yoga (*objective 3*)
- The school garden will be a learning tool to engage students in nutrition education (*objective 4*)
- Families will be more engaged and knowledgeable of health and wellness (*objective 5*)
- Families will have increased access to unique physical activities at BUSD (*objective 6*)

Deliverables: My community engagement at Buttonwillow School will contribute to the establishment a school wellness plan. This project will also help me better understand my focus in developing a thesis paper for the Masters of Public Administration program, if approval from all community partners involved is given.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

Small school districts face fiscal and personnel challenges that limit them in advancing wellness plans and policies. Small rural school districts in agriculture environment face additional challenges in parent & community involvement, community project initiatives, volunteer participation, and access to health education that is relevant to the Hispanic or Latino culture. Through my role of a Health Education Promoter, I will be involved in community outreach events, dispersing information via flyers, website, social media, and inviting family members and community members to Buttonwillow Family Nights with the ultimate goal of introducing the community to wellness education and increase family engagement in health and wellness activities. Other information in regards to mathematics, reading, the AVID program, and resources will also be dispersed to give community members access to new educational information. The ultimate goal is to promote school and community health in an effort to prevent future chronic diseases and improve academic performance.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

If approval from all community partners involved is given, I will seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this project as it will be used for my master thesis paper. The population will include students and staff members from Buttonwillow School. Since students are not adults, I will provide an informed consent form to be sent to their parents/guardians for any type of institutional research feedback that is requested. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality.

References

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