



## Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition

# The Healthy Scoop

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## High Five: Celebrating Ten-Year Success of the Healthy Schools Coalition

*Breakfast Address by Rosemary Reilly-Chammat, Ed.D, long-time member of the Healthy Schools Coalition and Manager of Adolescent Health, Division of Community, Family Health and Equity, RI Department of Health.*

Our 100-member Healthy Schools Coalition is united by three goal areas:

- 1) **PE and physical activity:** Programs that emphasize life-long fitness provide an durable foundation for healthy living. Physical activity during the school day has also been shown to improve academic performance.
- 2) **Nutrition:** Schools are an important place to offer nutritious choices; nutrition is an essential part of the fabric of the school.
- 3) **Staff development:** Two thirds of all adult deaths can be attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. The primary causes of these diseases have preventable risk factors including poor eating habits, inadequate physical activity and being overweight.

**Why a Coalition?** Especially in times of limited resources, coalitions can be a valuable and effective change agent. Coalitions enable diverse stakeholders to come together around what we deem important so that change is not driven by external forces. Coalitions allow individuals and organizations to bring their strengths and concerns to the table and collaborate on meaningful goals based on available resources. Coalitions provide support to get to a new way of thinking and acting that addresses the common good.

**The Challenge:** Solutions will require a long-term commitment to changing the culture regarding nutrition and physical activity in our communities. Health Department data supports this contention:

- ◆ 33% of children in the 2010 WIC program had BMI's above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- ◆ In 2009, 18.9 % of middle school students in RI were obese. 10.4% of RI high school students were obese and 16.7% of high school students were overweight. 2007 data indicate that 62% of RI adults were overweight or obese.
- ◆ From 1991 to 2007, the percentage of overweight Rhode Island adults rose from 33% to 39% and the percent of obese adults has more than doubled from 10 % to 22%.

**Achievements:** Healthy Schools Coalition has enabled RI to make positive inroads in nutrition, physical education, and staff wellness at all levels. Through our collective actions, RI is a front runner in providing nutritious foods in school. Over the past 10 years, the Healthy Schools Coalition has:

- ◆ Nurtured a cooperative relationship between stakeholders
- ◆ supported relationships among small businesses and large service providers that produce healthy foods, to both benefit local economies and make healthy school choices economically sound
- ◆ accelerated farm to school connections in every district. In 2009 there were 28 locally grown

fruits and vegetables served in schools, a 6-fold increase since 2006

- ◆ Strived to reduce our food-related carbon footprint
- ◆ developed the RI Nutrition Requirements that surpass national standards
- ◆ supported changes in food nutrition programs that addressed food insecurity
- ◆ provided hundreds of nutrition education programs for students in all school districts, particularly those in low income communities.
- ◆ established district health and wellness subcommittees in every district to build on community assets and talents. Committees include parents, students and community members
- ◆ provided curriculum materials and 7 state professional development sessions; provided support for school administrators and assessment of PE programs
- ◆ promoted physical activity for students in classroom activity breaks and after-school programs
- ◆ supported academic achievement and shared research data and best practices
- ◆ promoted staff wellness, not only because adults are role models, but also to help people manage stressors that are a natural part of the rewards and challenges of working in education
- ◆ Established an annual forum – this breakfast—to reflect on and celebrate our successes!

***That is a LOT in 10 years!  
Give a high-five!***

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**Next Issue: HELPING KIDS BECOME PHYSICALLY ACTIVE FOR LIFE. Please submit articles and announcements about PE and PA to LKeeney@uri.edu.**

### **Breakfast in the Classroom:**

*Excerpted from a presentation at Coalition Breakfast by Susan Chin, principal of Veazie Street School :*

Numerous research reports show that students perform better throughout the school day if they have eaten a nutritious breakfast. It is essential that we be able to offer our students an opportunity for a nutritious breakfast.

In 2010, the Superintendent offered breakfast in the classroom to a handful of elementary schools with the intention of district-wide implementation in 2011. Veazie Street School piloted the program.

Working in partnership with Sodexo, and with the support of Kids First, we created a program that began October 2010. It was so successful in the first three months that it was instituted in all 21 elementary schools in Providence by mid-April 2011.

In the past, we took a half hour before the beginning of the school day for breakfast. Approximately 40% of students participated in that program. Breakfast in the classroom program raised participation rate to over 90% daily.

#### *Planning:*

There were three initial key areas we had to address: delivery of breakfast, a seamless start to the school day, and clean-up. Next we had to address acceptance by staff and teachers. We had to challenge the perception of teachers that we had brought another thing of questionable value they had to do.

To help change that perception, a community of teachers helped build and implement the program; teachers themselves began saying that the children were more focused, that they settled into routine more quickly and that there was no lost instructional time.

So all these benefits proved to teachers that it was a great program.

We also had to make sure our families understood that the breakfast being served met or surpassed the Rhode Island Nutrition Requirements, that there was no loss of instructional time, and that breakfast was optional.

#### *Summary of Successes:*

- ◆ Higher participation rates, over 90% participation
- ◆ Students are more focused and experience less late morning slump
- ◆ Greater sense of community
- ◆ Seamless start to the day: children come in, sit down, and have breakfast with their friends for a few minutes. This happens while the teacher is taking attendance, collecting lunch money, and doing administrative home room duties that normally occur at that time

All in all, there were no negatives to this effort. I highly encourage any administrator who has not implemented a Breakfast in the Classroom program to try one.

### **Thanks Dorothy!**

**Participants at the Coalition for Healthy Kids Annual Breakfast heartily applauded the leadership over the last nine years of Dorothy**

**Brayley.** Hosts Deb Ranaldi and Solange Morrisette noted, *“Without her vision, guidance, and perseverance, we would likely not exist as an organization nor would we in the state of RI be thriving in the way we are today. The children, families and communities of RI have been fortunate to have had Dorothy at the helm over the past nine years. As a result, RI has become a role model for the rest of the country in child nutrition and physical well being. Dorothy will remain an inspiration to the coalition and a valuable resource as we move forward.”* THANK YOU!!

## **Pawtucket Receives Annual RI Healthy Schools Coalition Annual Award of Honor**

Each year the Healthy Schools Coalition presents an award of honor to a school district that best exemplifies a drive to innovation in the areas of nutrition, staff development and physical education. This year the award went to the Pawtucket Schools Department for the following:

- ◆ Ten awards from the US Healthier Schools Challenge for meeting specific nutrition, PE and nutrition education standards. (Fewer than 1% of the nation’s schools have won.)
- ◆ An invitation to a reception with Michelle Obama.
- ◆ All employees received USDA awards of excellence
- ◆ Third highest consumption of local fruits and vegetables in RI
- ◆ High incidence of scratch cooking
- ◆ First district to incorporate local honey into menus
- ◆ Award to put more fresh fruits and vegetables into the day
- ◆ “Local lunch days” with all menu items from RI
- ◆ Participation in “Get Up and Go” physical activity program offered before school for year 5.
- ◆ One school has partnered with the NFL and the National Dairy Council to offer football Fridays
- ◆ Received a \$10,000 physical fitness grant for a school physical fitness center
- ◆ Pawtucket also encourages participation in Shape Up RI. There are after school exercise classes including Yoga and Zoomba and a Biggest Loser competition.

**Congratulations  
Pawtucket!**