

Street Safety Promotion for Brooklyn's Children

Process of Creating Change

The "Walk-to-School" program in Brooklyn focuses on street safety. We have found that while many kids walk to school, in many Brooklyn neighborhoods their experience is influenced by considerable safety concerns. Safety issues include both crime and traffic related dangers. Parents' comfort with allowing their children to walk, and play outdoors is low due to these dangers. Thus, the goal of increasing physical activity that is part of efforts to address the obesity epidemic is linked with establishing safe routes to school.

Recognizing that the challenges of increasing safety can only be met through a concerted effort by the stakeholders involved, we begin program planning by organizing meetings with school administrators and parent associations to discuss safety in the schools' neighborhoods. We also distribute surveys, in English and Spanish, to parents to gauge their most pressing concerns. These activities help us plan Walk-to-School "kickoff" events for the children.

At P.S. 91 and P.S. 297, 75% of parents surveyed cited crime as a concern, and 63% were worried about traffic safety. At P.S. 194, 60% of parents were worried about crime, 30% were concerned with traffic safety, and 52% with speeding cars in particular. At P.S. 131, 71% of parents surveyed were concerned with traffic safety, citing speeding and inadequate traffic lights. These findings are consistently echoed by concerns raised at parent meetings, and indicate the need for a variety of improvements, including easing traffic patterns at certain crosswalks, improving lighting around school buildings, educating kids about stranger danger and pedestrian safety, and strengthening the neighborhood safety network for kids who must walk unaccompanied. For example, at a recent PTA meeting at P.S. 256, parents agreed that to address safety concerns, it will be necessary to work together as one voice. However, they also expressed reservations regarding allowing one's children to walk with a parent volunteer who is a stranger to the family. From this, we gathered a need for networking events among the parents as a precursor to establishing a volunteer network. Thus, the parent surveys and

conversations themselves serve as an awareness raising tool to support and sustain community-level changes. As well, we have provided workshops for parents on nutrition, childhood obesity and the importance of physical activity.

In addition, we were successful in getting P.S. 81 accepted to participate in the City Safe Routes to School 2007 Pilot Program conducted by the Active Living Resource Center. We are now taking part in this national initiative to promote urban participation in Safe Routes to School.



Evidence of Change

Children indicated increased understanding of safe pedestrian practices and the importance of physical activity at our Walk-to-School events. School staff and parents expressed a need for such programming and enthusiasm for becoming involved. We have been able to engage various partners to address physical activity and safety. Follow-up

surveys will be conducted to quantify these changes.

Costs Incurred

Direct costs were approximately \$1,300 for incentives for the kids, printing, and supplies, and \$150 for a nutritionist.

Other Money Leveraged

Collaboration with colleagues at the NYC Safe Kids Coalition, the Active Living Resource Center, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Brooklyn Safety City helps us pool resources.

Lessons Learned

- ▲ Working with relevant stakeholders in the community generates awareness of the issues, and is likely to be the key to long-term, sustainable change.

Type of Change: Policies and practices
Risk Factor: Lack of physical activity and childhood obesity
Location: Partnering public schools, Brooklyn, NY
Reach and Impact: 300 children, parents, and teachers participated in the program in 6 months

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New York State Department of Health
Healthy Heart Program