

SUCCESS STORY ELEVEN

Afterschool Program Empowered to Focus on Health

DARE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT | DARE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

The afterschool program at this beachside school district has recently benefited from a wave of new resources, including the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's empowerME curriculum. The district took advantage of the program's "train the trainer" model and rolled out the eight-week curriculum last September with great success.

They celebrated the success of the program last October during the Lights On Afterschool event, where programs across the country take an opportunity to show their communities what they have to offer



for before and afterschool programs. Students and staff from Dare County showed the superintendent, school board members and parents how they had been "empowered" to live healthier lives. Students did yoga presentations, made granola and showed off their physical activity and fruit and vegetable logs. As part of the empowerME curriculum they had made posters that showed the barriers to being physically active, bumper stickers with healthy slogans and a collage with pictures of things they could do instead of being sedentary.

After the Lights On event there was so much enthusiasm for more physical activity that Afterschool Director Samantha Brown reached out to Michelle Owens, National Before and Afterschool Manager for the Healthy Schools Program to discuss what they could next to capitalize on this excitement.

Owens told Brown about the GO FAR program, a ten-week walking/running program with lessons on healthy eating which culminates in participation in a local 5K race. In March, half way through the ten-week program, students from across the district came together with their families to participate in the annual St. Patty's Parade, followed by a one-mile run. Brown said, "It was awesome to see 100+ Dare County elementary students running with moms, dads, grandmas, brothers and sisters."

Brown looks forward to everyone coming together again on April 17th for the Flying Pirate Outer Banks 5K race. They are planning a shorter final run for students under the age of eight. The Outer Banks Sporting Events and Outer Banks Running Club have become sponsors, purchasing new tennis shoes for children in need and serving as running coaches to the students.

Brown is thrilled about the community response to the program and she plans to offer the GO FAR program twice a year, which will complement the weekly yoga classes and empowerME activities offered through the afterschool program.

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They have used the Six Step Process to make lasting changes in their schools and they have received recognition from the Alliance (six silver awards, one bronze) and beyond (voted "Healthiest School in America" by Health magazine).

All of the schools in West Babylon offer only foods and beverages that are in compliance with the Alliance's Competitive Foods and Beverages Guidelines. They removed fryers from the kitchens and worked hard to come up with innovative recipes that incorporated more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. They have changed celebrations and school fundraisers and they have adopted an elective based physical education program so that students can select physical activities that they will enjoy. All of these changes have netted results: they have seen a decrease of .5% in student BMI across the district. It just goes to show that when a school "goes healthy," there is no turning back!