

McKenzie County Second Graders are On the Move to Better Health

The Situation

Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years. Some researchers consider children to be “overfed” but “undernourished.” Obese children are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, with 70 percent showing at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Obesity also increases the risk for diabetes, stroke, cancer and osteoarthritis.

Extension Response

On the Move Junior is a five-week, school-based program for second graders. It is based on MyPlate, the current icon for good nutrition. The curriculum aims to increase physical activity, fruits, vegetables, dairy foods, whole grains and proteins through story books and activities. Parents receive newsletters and participate in goal setting and other family-based activities.

Impacts

Fifth graders in McKenzie County schools of Watford City, Alexander and East Fairview participated in the program. Teacher surveys indicated the following as a result of the program:

- 100 percent reported students were eating more fruit at lunch
- 50 percent reported students were trying new foods
- 67 percent reported students eating more vegetables
- 50 percent stated that children were asking questions about food
- 83 percent of teachers incorporated the energizers used in the program into their curriculum.

Feedback

Parent survey comments on the program were that their child liked the following the best about On the Move Junior:

- “She liked learning about what foods are essential for a healthy body. She’s also been way more interested in what she eats.”
- “To be able to tell us what she learned and tell us what foods were good for her and why.”
- “He liked talking about what he was learning about each week and it made him ask me more questions so we were able to have discussions about healthy eating.”
- “He liked being able to come home and applying what he learned at school in the kitchen.”
- “That they get to exercise to a story. It’s really fun!”

Public Value Statement

Improving health behaviors can increase quality of life and save millions of dollars in collective health-care costs for North Dakotans throughout their lifetimes.

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