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*Health and Fitness for Accelerated
Learning Magnet Program*

Lessons Learned Report

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June 6, 2013

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Background

The ***Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning Magnet Program*** began in two Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) in the fall of 2009. The JCPS Data Management, Planning, and Program Evaluation Department provides an annual program evaluation designed to analyze the effects of the health magnet program on several indicators, and provide the data required to measure program effectiveness. The overall goal of the Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning program is:

“To build infrastructures within both schools that enables and sustains wellness improvement.”

The overall objectives are to:

- Improve health status and behaviors
- Provide physical and nutritional tools to improve student behavior and learning

An evaluation report for 2012 was written and distributed to all key stakeholders. A portion of the analysis compared key outcomes from the Health Magnet schools, the Health Promotion Schools of Excellence Program (HPSE), and the Physical Education Program (PEP) schools. The HPSE schools adhere to a model based on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) model of Comprehensive School Health (CSH). This program has been implemented in JCPS schools for 20 years and resided in 44 JCPS schools during the 2012-2013 school year. The 7 PEP schools implemented an expanded version of the HPSE program for the last 3 years using funding from the Carol M. White federal grant program. The comparison presented in the evaluation report showed that the elementary HPSE and PEP schools outperformed the Health Magnet schools in 2012 on the following pre-post indicators: Body Mass Index (BMI) improvements, attainment of Physical Best assessment walk/run standards, and Y5210 student survey data. Those were the only common outcome measures between the programs. Because these measures were considered indicators for the overall program objectives listed above, and the remaining outcome measures associated with the Health Magnet schools in large part did not meet expectations, the Humana Foundation requested a further comparison of the three programs.

Lessons Learned

This report provides lessons learned derived from common framing features of the Health Magnet schools, HPSE program, and PEP program. The lessons learned are based on program evaluation data and post-hoc interviews with JCPS personnel.

Lessons Learned Site Selection, Planning, and Professional Development:

- (1) Schools selected for themes should be required to demonstrated interest, commitment, and capacity for all staff,
- (2) Selected schools should have facilities which lend themselves to the theme or can be easily modified (e.g., neither school had a full sized gymnasium),

- (3) A thorough needs assessment ensures program decisions are data-based,
- (4) Regular, high quality professional development is critical to successful program implementation,
- (5) Program leadership should reside at the district level at the onset.

Lessons Learned Program Management:

- (1) New programs need a strong district champion,
- (2) Expertise and consistent leadership are needed to launch and grow new programs,
- (3) Collaboration between district entities with similar objectives should be a priority,
- (4) New programs need alignment with a research-based framework,
- (5) More staff does not always equate to better outcomes.

Lessons Learned Programming:

- (1) Center-piece programming such as the Y5210 must be implemented on a large scale and with high fidelity; otherwise key program components will not be delivered to students (e.g., goal setting),
- (2) After-school activities should be designed to impact outcome measures in focus, duration, and intensity level.

Lessons Learned Continuous Improvement:

- (1) Ensure that Advisory Board members have the expertise and practical knowledge of school settings to provide meaningful suggestions for program,
- (2) Encourage joint planning between schools,
- (3) Provide school leadership and teachers with relevant data on a regular basis,
- (4) Ask school staff for input on a regular basis.

Conclusions

Examination of lessons learned for program initiatives is an important part of the continuous improvement process. The ***Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning Magnet Program*** has had many successes. The program has been very popular with parents and students. Parents and staff have been provided wellness programming; students have access to a Wii fitness room, major facility upgrades, and have been provided unique opportunities for after-school enrichment opportunities related to physical activity and nutrition. There are changes in store for the 2013-2014 school year that reflect some of the above lessons learned. While Rangeland will remain a

JCPS Health Magnet school, Wellington will be the only Health Magnet program with sponsorship from the Humana Foundation. Program management now formally lies with the school principal with support from district personnel on an on-going basis. This will allow for better collaboration with the HPSE staff and coordination between school-based stakeholders such as the school nurse and FRYSC (i.e., closer to CSH model).