



School Environment Project

Project Information Sheet

Project overview

- Ten San Luis Valley elementary schools are participating in this community-based participatory research project designed to increase physical activity and healthy eating.
- The intervention involves each school going through a strategic planning process after forming a task force comprised of 6-8 individuals (e.g., school nurse, foodservice manager, physical education teacher, administrator, classroom teacher, parents, and other health professionals, such as school-based health center staff). The planning process is intended to change school environments and policies in order to increase opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating among students. Examples include: providing equipment and activities during recess, reversing recess and lunch, and creating a policy about foods allowed on campus.
- In fall 2005, schools were randomized to either Intervention Mapping (IM) or School Health Index (SHI). Schools assigned to the SHI were provided with the tool and a brief orientation on how to complete it. Schools in the IM condition met up to ten times with PRC staff during the school year to collaborate on a comprehensive planning process. Each IM task force planned to make 4-6 environmental and policy changes. In fall 2006, taskforces are meeting with PRC staff to complete the program planning and implementation phase.

Primary Research Questions

- Does a community-based participatory research planning process based on IM lead to better outcomes than a self-assessment tool and planning guide called the SHI? Better outcomes are defined as: better intervention implementation, more environmental/policy changes, better choice of what changes to make, more behavior change resulting from environmental/policy changes, higher degree of implementation and awareness for staff, increased community capacity, increased amount of school-initiated grant writing/funding acquisition.
- Can an adapted version of Intervention Mapping be used as a community-based participatory research tool?

Evaluation Plan

- To capture school-level changes related to physical activity and nutrition, schools are completing the School Environment and Policy Survey annually. A random sample of 45 elementary schools throughout rural, low income Colorado is serving as a comparison group and is also being asked to complete the survey.
- To assess the impact of environment and policy changes on student behavior, physical activity levels in PE (using SOFIT) and recess (SOPLAY) and food consumption in the lunchroom (using digital plate waste) are being collected in the 10 SLV schools.
- To assess whether IM can be adapted as a CBPR tool, key informant interviews are being conducted with 4 members of each IM school taskforce. A paper and pen survey is planned for all taskforce members.

Time line

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| 2003-2004: | Conduct pilot test of intervention at elementary school in Denver
Convene a Steering Committee comprised of SLV school leaders and PRC staff and meet regularly |
| 2004-2005: | Conduct second pilot test of intervention at Boys and Girls Club in Alamosa
Recruit SLV schools to participate in project, finalize data collection methods and tools |
| 2005-2006: | Collect School Environment and Policy Survey in SLV and statewide; collect baseline student level data in SLV; begin Intervention Mapping process in half of SLV schools and School Health Index in other half |
| 2006-2007: | Complete the Intervention Mapping process by end of 2006; collect School Environment and Policy Survey in SLV and statewide; collect key informant interview data on IM taskforce members |
| 2006-2009: | Collect and analyze data, write manuscripts, disseminate findings to community |

Role of community in choosing and shaping this project

The RMPRC met with its Community Advisory Board in January 2003 to choose a core project for its next 5 year funding cycle (2004-2009). The CAB wanted the RMPRC's research efforts in schools to have sustainable, lasting effects and suggested that the PRC shift from a health curriculum strategy to an environmental change strategy. In addition, while they recognized the value of community-wide strategic planning, they strongly recommended that Intervention Mapping be applied more narrowly (i.e., in one sector of the broader community such as schools).

In May 2003, RMPRC staff spoke with principals, superintendents, and other school staff to see if there was interest in pursuing this type of research project. The response was overwhelmingly positive. A steering committee comprised of school representatives and leaders throughout the Valley was convened March 2004 to oversee all aspects of the research project.

Steering Committee

The steering committee provides oversight and direction to the project. Members meet regularly to make decisions pertaining to the research questions, hypotheses, and design; overall study timeline; school recruitment strategies; methods for assembling school level taskforces; methods for conducting the strategic planning process at each school; evaluation of the study; analysis of results; and communication/dissemination of findings.

Members:

Elaine Belansky	Lead Investigator, RMPRC
Rachel Brown	Counselor at Bill Metz, Monte Vista
Robert Chavez	Project Manager, RMPRC
Vivian Gallegos	Public Health Nurse, San Luis
Marcella Garcia	Principal at Guadalupe Elementary, Antonito
Michelle Hashbarger	Principal at Moffat Elementary, Moffat
Carol Keith	Food Service Director for Sargent Schools
Mark Lara	Food Service Director for N. Conejos County
Jerry LeBlanc	Principal at Del Norte Elementary, Del Norte
John Naranjo	PE Teacher at Marsh, Monte Vista
Julie Schrader	School Nurse, Del Norte
John Tillman	Director of Superintendents, San Luis Valley

Project Team:

Elaine Belansky	Lead Investigator for Project
Robert Chavez	Study Coordinator
Lori Crane	RMPRC Evaluation Core Director
John Kittelson	UCHSC PMB Associate Professor, Biostatistician
Julie Marshall	RMPRC Principal Investigator
Sharon Scarbro	Data Analyst

Consultants:

Garry Auld	Nutrition and policy expert, Colorado State University
Nick Cutforth	Qualitative researcher; expertise in PE and community-based research, Univ Denver
Deanna Hoelscher	Interventionist with expertise in school food service, University of Texas
Kandiss Horsch	Community Educator assisting with creating IM Facilitator Manual
Guy Parcel	Intervention Mapping expert, University of Texas

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For more information about this project, please contact Elaine Belansky at 303/315-0861 or elaine.belansky@uchsc.edu or Robert Chavez at 719/589-5801 or robert.chavez@uchsc.edu.