

Championing Physical Activity

How Tumwater School District is Creating the Healthiest Next Generation



The Healthiest Next Generation Initiative

The goal of the Healthiest Next Generation Initiative is to help all children maintain a healthy weight, enjoy active lives and eat well by creating healthy early learning settings, schools and communities.

Join partner organizations, the Departments of Health and Early Learning and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in elevating local success statewide.

This story is an example of what one school district is doing to create the healthiest next generation in Washington.

QUICK FACTS

Tumwater School District:

Over 6,000 students
in 10 schools

Legislative Districts:

22 and 35

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Photo courtesy of Black Hills High School

Opportunity

How can a school district improve their physical education (PE) program? That was the question. Greg Bert, Physical Education Coordinator at Black Hills High School (BHHS) in the Tumwater School District, wanted to answer. "Our class could be their last chance to receive instruction in quality physical education to learn how to have an active lifestyle," said Bert.

At Bert's urging, in 2011 the District successfully applied for and was awarded a three-year \$1.1 million Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education to initiate, expand and improve PE for students in grades K-12.

Action

The PEP grant meant improvements across the District, including:

- Aligning K-12 curriculum maps so student knowledge builds from year to year. A curriculum map outlines what is being taught at each grade level.
- Starting a new program for the District's youngest learners (kindergarten through second grade) called Early Learner Fitness (ELF). This program connects math, reading and writing skills through physical activity.
- Purchasing state-of-the-art equipment, including Spin® Bicycles, and integrating technology to help students monitor their physical activity and heart rate.

The grant also required an evaluation which led the District to become one of the few in the state to report students' Body Mass Index (BMI). Parents and guardians can opt-out of this reporting; however, most families opt-in.

To align the curriculum maps, the District created the PE Leadership Team of elementary, middle and high school PE teachers that met quarterly. All 120 of the K-2 teachers learned to deliver the ELF curriculum while developing motor skills and fitness.

Impact

With the launch of ELF, the District became a pioneer in the country for fitness among young students. "Now elementary students are able to talk about their body systems in a way that they could not before," said Tanya Greenfield, PEP Grant Coordinator.

Another outcome is an increase in students' knowledge and skills about living a healthier life. "We can very clearly see that students' cognitive understanding of fitness and nutrition was stronger at the end of the grant," said Sue Anderson, BHHS Assistant Principal. "And this puts them on the path for lifelong health."

With the grant complete, the District is considering how best to sustain the progress.

To learn more about the Healthiest Next Generation Initiative, visit: www.doh.wa.gov/healthiestnextgen or join us at hashtag #HealthiestNextGen