

Session 6: Health Culture: School and Neighborhood

Learning Goals

Students will examine the health of their community, discuss obstacles to building healthy practices, and will write letters to their principal or local representative urging their attention to community health.

Materials

- Stick, or string and chairs
- Internet access, or printed Community Healthy Profiles
- Food and Exercise Logs (see Resources)

Warm Up

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Facilitator introduces today's theme, Healthy Schools and Neighborhoods. We have begun to observe how we make choices to develop a healthy self. Today we will examine the health of our school and neighborhood and begin working together to make them healthy places to learn and live.

Bend Together—Create a limbo stick about two feet from the ground, using a yardstick or piece of string tied between two chairs. Challenge students to move under the stick without touching it. Students may help each other but they may not touch the ground with body parts aside from their feet, or return to the other side after crossing under the stick (unless they're able to move back underneath, following the same rules). If anyone touches the stick or the ground with body parts aside from feet, the entire group must start again.

Debrief: Why Does This Matter?

Did everyone help in order for the team to succeed?

How did people feel who needed more help to cross under the stick than others?

How did people feel who helped more than others?

What would have happened if the group had not worked together?

Work Out

Estimated Time: 35 minutes

Context: How Does This Impact Me and Others?

Students will make health-related observations about their school and neighborhood, begin determining its needs and explore how they can work together to make schools and neighborhoods healthier.



Activity: What Can I Do?

- Ask students to spend a few minutes filling in their Food and Exercise Logs (see Resources).
- There are many neighborhoods and schools in our city, state, and in the world and they are all different. Because neighborhoods and schools are so different, they all need different things to make them healthy.
- Briefly, ask students to differentiate between “wants” and “needs.” What do students think communities need in order to be healthy? (Responses may include: access to safe places to exercise, proximity, cost and availability of healthy food options, etc.) What might an ideal healthy community contain?
- Now, students will examine their own community. Is it healthy or not?
- Students research the health of their community. In New York City, visit The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene website, where you can access your Community Health Profile: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/data/data.shtml#3>
In New Jersey or Pennsylvania, students can access information about their communities by visiting official state websites, <http://www.nj.gov/> and <http://www.state.pa.us/>
- What did students find out about their community? Discuss the barriers or challenges to being healthy in your community, as well as any factors that promote healthy behaviors. From the list of a healthy community’s needs, what is lacking?
- Next, walk with students around their school and ask them to pay close attention to places like their cafeteria (what kinds of foods are served for lunch?), vending machines (does our school have these? what is inside?), gymnasium (is it a place where students can safely exercise?), and playground (is it a clean, safe place for students to run and play?).
- Students discuss what their school needs in order to be healthy. (Examples may include: we need healthy lunch and snack options at school or a safe place to play and exercise.)
- Students should draft a letter to a local representative or to the school’s principal urging their attention to relevant, health-related issues.

Cool Down

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Reflection: What Is the Big Picture?

Sit in a circle and ask students each to name what they view as the most urgent health need in their school or larger community and one way that they can help to address that need.

Lesson Extensions

(Optional)

Reporters—Students will write an article for their school or local newspaper about the health of their school or home community. Students should focus on creating a compelling piece that will educate and inspire people to take action. Submit articles.