



Students Taking Charge

Boston Public Schools

2011-2012



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Students Taking Charge

2011-2012

Students Taking Charge (STC) is a youth-centered program that encourages young people lead change to address the schools wellness environment. The program provides an important avenue for the Boston Public Schools to connect with and promote youth voice.

Through the STC program, students have an opportunity to collaborate and develop both leadership and advocacy skills by learning how to make sustainable, systematic, environmental, and policy change in their schools. During the process, they are able to gain more knowledge about health issues, and engage the school community in wellness efforts.

The centralization of the program aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coordinated School Health Model. It offers a unique opportunity for the District to coordinate services and distribute best practices between schools equitably and efficiently.

During the 2011-2012 school year, five Boston Public High Schools participated in the STC program. Each STC group chose a specific project to improve the health and wellness of their school community.

In addition to working on chosen project at each school, students participating in the STC program also shared best practices and develop leadership skills at the 2012 Boston Youth Summit.

The efforts of these young people and their facilitators, with support from their headmasters and Action for Healthy Kids, enabled incredible changes toward healthier school environments. This project booklet is a compilation of the progress made by our student leaders.

Thank you, readers, for your dedication to the health and wellness of students across Boston. We appreciate your participation as we work together to actively promote the health and wellness of all Boston Public School students to advance both their healthy development and readiness to learn.



East Boston High School

Students Taking Charge for a Healthier School Environment

The Need

East Boston High School STC students identified a need for increased student body awareness of health and physical activity. The East Boston High School STC group surveyed students and staff to target their school's needs. They found that students felt that there was a lack of access to healthful foods throughout the school day.



The Action Plan

In order to address this need, the East Boston students implemented a variety of programs and activities to promote healthier lifestyles in their school community. Students worked with the cafeteria manager to secure a salad bar cart. Working with cafeteria staff, students learned about food safety and other regulations.

In addition to a salad bar cart, the student group also decided to use healthy fundraisers as an alternative to selling candy bars. The student group now provides workshops to student groups in the area in order to raise funds for student council.

A Healthy Lifestyle film competition was implemented in order to address the information gap regarding the importance of health and physical activity. Students created short films that were shown in the cafeteria in the form of public service announcements (PSAs). In addition, the student group collaborated with the film department in order to design a classroom project in which students designed materials for mock companies that targeted healthier lifestyles.

Finally, a field day was carried out at the end of the school year to promote healthy lifestyle choices. It featured a variety of promotions, including healthful foods, physical activity, and tobacco.



Current Status and Future Impact

The East Boston STC group will continue planning and implementing workshops for local middle schools. In addition, the film department has included the healthy PSAs into the curriculum, and the student group is working to make this an annual event. In the future, the group plans to continue working toward improving the health of the entire student body by promoting workshops and annual wellness days.



Fenway and Boston Arts Academy High Schools

Healthful Choices Food Cart

The Need

The STC group at Fenway and Boston Arts Academy High Schools felt that students needed access to healthier snack foods during breaks between classes. The high school also needed a creative way to raise funds for student extracurricular groups.

The Action Plan

The STC students assessed student need, and decided that there was little access to healthful snacks for the student body.

In order to address the access issue, Fenway conducted student taste tests and surveys to identify, and therefore sell, the most popular healthful options. With the feedback they obtained, they were able to choose foods that students enjoyed and were willing to buy.



A list of healthful snacks was created to help guide and inventory the cart's supply of options. Popular items included fresh strawberries and watermelon, granola bars, and 100% juices.

Current Status and Future Impact

The students at Fenway and Boston Arts Academy were excited to access the healthful snack cart. They are currently working with the school to identify solutions for food storage and for sustainability for the coming school years, and working with the district to identify the healthiest options for snacks and beverages.



Currently, the students are planning for sustainability by continuing to conduct taste tests, and regularly introducing interesting and exotic fresh fruits to be sold. In addition to leadership skill development, this project has taught students about market research, effective food service, and business management.



Josiah Quincy Upper School

Field Days

The Need

After surveying fellow students, the STC group discovered that students were interested in becoming more involved in sports and alternative physical activities.

The Action Plan

The STC group at Josiah Quincy Upper School took note of the needs identified in their survey, and worked to identify opportunities for physical activity promotion. The STC group coordinated with school administration to create a sports field day. The goal of the field day was to educate students on when different sports are offered throughout the school year and other sports that students can engage in outside of school. The field day events built strong relationships across the student body, and helped students understand the importance of daily physical activity.



A field day was completed in the fall with the high school students in the Boston Common. The event had various stations that featured sports needing increased participation from the student body.



The fall field day was so successful that the group was asked to coordinate a field day for the Josiah Quincy Middle School in the spring. This popular event was successful in exposing students to physical activities available to them through school.

Current Status and Future Impact

To ensure sustainability for the STC group's efforts, students are engaged with the school Wellness Council. They have written a proposal to incorporate annual field days for both high school and middle school's wellness action plans and wellness policies. In addition, sophomore students were recruited to join and help plan the spring field day in order to sustain the group's membership for the coming years.



Tech Boston

Healthful Food Competitions

The Need



STC students at Tech Boston recognized the need to demonstrate to students that healthful food can be both appealing and tasty. Students needed a promotional tool to engage students in healthful eating, through cooking.

The Action Plan

Students coordinated with school staff and cafeteria staff to plan a “CHOPPED” contest among students. The contest incorporated healthful ingredients, and challenged students to use the ingredients to craft a signature, tasty dish.

Various teachers volunteered their time to judge the contest. Taste tests were planned to allow all students the opportunity to try foods from the contest. The group grew their own herbs for use during the competition, and followed the District’s competitive foods policy to determine the ingredients for healthful food choices.



Current Status and Future Impact

The food contest has allowed future plans to develop for a food science elective to be implemented into the school curriculum. The food science elective class would be available to upper classmen, and would feature the content of a healthful diet, food safety, and various other topics surrounding appreciation, nutrition, and science of food. .



BPS Health and Wellness Youth Summit 2011-2012

Students and their facilitators participating in the Students Taking Charge program shared best practices and developed leadership skills at the 2012 Boston Youth Summit.



Students from each school discussed their accomplishments made possible through their funded STC action plans, while learning about policy, systems, and environment change. This was a great way for students to learn about other wellness-related projects across the district, and facilitate collaboration across schools for future action.

Interactive workshops and discussion groups provided students with new ideas to continue advocating for change and spur new student leaders to continue creating change toward healthier environments in their schools. Students kept moving throughout the day with a special movement break lead by Brandy Cruthird, founder and owner of Body By Brandy Fitness Studio.



The Summit was supported by the BPS Health and Wellness Department, with workshops led by Health Resources in Action.

