

Auburn School District Commits to Fit

Issue

The City of Auburn in King County, Washington is home to 70,180 people, including 15,054 children under age 15.¹ Over one out of four middle and high school students in the Auburn School District are at an unhealthy weight.² Students with an unhealthy weight are more at risk for health problems like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. Being obese, not getting enough physical activity, and not eating breakfast are all associated with getting lower grades in school.³

Intervention

The Auburn School District serves 14,970 students, making it a key place to help students improve their health. So when Auburn High School teacher Lori Jacobs learned about a proposal from Public Health Seattle-King County to address childhood obesity, she jumped on it. The Commit to Fit Public Relations Campaign was born. Led by 40 students in the Distributive Education Club of America (DECA) under the direction of Jacobs (DECA advisor), Commit to Fit galvanized the students and staff in the Auburn School District to eat healthy, be active, and make healthy choices. Students presented at elementary and middle school assemblies, organized recess activities, hosted a breakfast for principals, developed a marketing campaign with posters and t-shirts, and created food service signs to inform students and staff about Commit to Fit. They trained students and staff about how to take charge of their eating and activity choices, and created a way to track these changes online.

Impact

The program engaged the entire Auburn School District to make positive changes.

- Over 6,000 students and school staff registered on the Commit to Fit website to track their healthy lifestyle changes. This represents 40 percent of the students and staff in the district.
- Auburn High School created an afterschool physical activity program that now has 100 participants.
- DECA students promoted healthier options in the Auburn High School store resulting in a 25 percent increase in sales.
- Ben Talbert, the principal of Rainier Middle School, got so inspired by the project he started biking to work, drinking water instead of soda, and eating lunch with students in the cafeteria.

Commit to Fit was originally funded through the Communities Putting Prevention to Work federal stimulus grant, which precedes the Prevention and Public Health Fund. Although formal funding for the project ended in 2012, the awareness and interest that Commit to Fit created continues today. Auburn High School's student-led project Trojans Taking Charge continues to explore new ways to engage students and staff to eat healthy, be active, and Commit to Fit.

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Auburn population: 70,180

Public Health–Seattle & King County

Seattle, Washington
www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health.aspx

Data sources:

- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census
- ² Auburn School District Health Profile, Healthy Youth Survey, 2012
- ³ Dilley, J. (2009) *Research Review: School-Based Health Interventions and Academic Achievement*. Washington State Board of Health, Washington State Department of Health, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

