

Stakeholder Group Summit Outcomes and Plans

Healthcare Stakeholder Group

Roland Goertz, Stakeholder Leader

Pre-Summit Stakeholder Group Assumption Targets and Proposed Activities

Will address assumptions 1–8

- Launch a prenatal and postnatal information and education project
- Develop and implement the national “Reach Out and Read” program, which encourages parental and child involvement
- Implement a health and wellness program at targeted schools
- Encourage and provide support toward students’ consideration of health career options

Summit Report in Brief

Who attended?

Attendees included representatives from the Brazos Area Health Education Center, Texas Workforce Commission, Hillcrest, Planned Parenthood, Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR), Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD), Baylor students, WISD, Waco-McLennan County Public Health District, Family Health Center, Communities in Schools of the Heart of Texas, and the Community Health Action Partners.

What the stakeholder group considered

We reviewed input received before the summit concerning existing programs and success stories throughout the country that could be modeled. Further, we discussed our ability to connect ideas with existing community efforts and to envision future projects through collaboration with partners.

We agreed that health and wellness education is a vital key, given that well children can focus better on academics.

What will be our success?

We would consider it a success if we could improve the health of all children, lower rates of obesity among children, and see improved literacy.

Discussion

The Healthcare Stakeholder Group agreed that healthcare issues begin before birth and are important all through one’s life. The impact of healthcare on children and their preparation and subsequent ability to learn is formidable.

The group took feedback on several projects that were suggested and noted many that already exist. It was urged that an inventory of programs be made and that duplication of services be addressed. Among those discussed were the following:

Reach Out and Read

Noting that healthcare providers are dealing with students and their parents on a daily basis, the group discussed ways in which reading could be encouraged on hospital floors and in waiting rooms. Volunteers providing story times was discussed as an approach.

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Health and Wellness Pilot—A Wellness Campus

A more concerted effort could be mounted to fill in the blanks in health and wellness information. While more people now recognize that a good night's sleep and good nutrition can assist test taking, emphasis needs to be placed on understanding the broader application to the learning process. Many current fragmented programs need to be brought together and considered as a whole when addressing issues of health and wellness in the schools.

Urban Gardening

Along with the many benefits of teaching gardening, students who participate in such activities would increase their knowledge of good nutrition and would most likely eat the fruits of their labor. The activity of gardening would promote physical fitness, foster new lifelong hobbies, and quite possibly encourage family togetherness. Community gatherings, such as dinners, could be organized around the harvests.

"It's incredibly exciting to me to believe we are going to have all facets of what make up this community come together at a single point in time and try to agree—and agree—on what projects we believe will work."

– Dr. Roland Goertz, CEO
Family Health Center

Health Career Clubs

Building on existing programs, the group considered expanding and strengthening outreach to students who have not given thought to their career choices. With very good employment potential, better-than-average wages, and a wide variety of careers within the healthcare field, providing wider orientation and recruitment activities and experiences is a top priority.

Additional input noted that more attention should be given to programs that teach parents about good nutrition, that baseline data should be collected to track progress of new and existing programs, and that children should be provided opportunities to take the lead with activities promoting the health and wellness of other children.

First-Year Action Items and Assumption Targets

- Urban gardening

Targets for this action item include supporting a gardening club that WISD students can participate in at a local community garden. Eventual targets also include supporting gardens at the schools themselves.

- Parent and child health education, especially nutrition and fitness

Targets for this action item include offering health presentations to children and families in several venues, such as in the classroom, during parent nights, and at local food banks.

- Health career clubs at WISD high schools

Targets for this action item include the creation of health and wellness clubs at WISD high schools and using these clubs as vehicles for promoting health-related careers.

Long-Range Proposals

In the long term, the group would like to see the incorporation of fresh fruits and vegetables (especially those grown by the children themselves through the urban gardening initiatives) into student lunches and breakfasts and a "utopian style" health and wellness pilot school program (including a total immersion into healthy living for students and their families).

Other Ideas Being Considered

The group is also interested in a concerted outreach to mothers while they are still pregnant, to teach them the importance of education and health for their children and families. This would involve a consortium of many community programs and organizations whose collective goal would be to reach most mothers in our community while reducing duplication of services.