Healthy Buddies

TARGET AUDIENCE
This program is for students who are in kindergarten through 7th grade.

SUMMARY
The Healthy Buddies™ program is a peer-led education program that is designed to promote health and wellness in youth.

EVIDENCE
Results of a randomized trial demonstrate significant improvements in healthy-living knowledge, self-esteem, and self-reported food intake and significant decreases in waist circumference (WC) in younger students compared to students in a control group. Older students did not show any decreases in WC, and they showed a decrease in average daily step counts compared to older control students. In general, intervention effects were significantly greater among overweight or obese students compared to healthy-weight students. A pilot study demonstrated that intervention students experienced significant increases in healthy-living knowledge, behavior, and attitudes and had attenuated increases in systolic blood pressure compared to control. Older, but not younger intervention students, experienced smaller increases in weight and body mass index compared to control students.

COMPONENTS
The Healthy Buddies program focuses on physical activity, nutrition awareness, and healthy body image. Older buddies receive healthy-living lessons from their teachers, become peer mentors, and then deliver the lessons to younger buddies. The program address the following three components:

- Go Move! - Classroom lessons teach the importance of being physically active every day and the importance of relaxation and restful sleep. Buddy pairs spend two sessions each week participating in theme-based, structured, vigorous physical activity (i.e., circuit stations called Fitness Loops).
- Go Fuel! - Students learn why we eat; how the body uses fuel to maintain energy balance; and how to distinguish between nutritious and unhealthy, nutrient-poor foods.
- Go Feel Good! - Students learn to appreciate themselves based on their values and feelings of self-worth rather than focusing on their appearance and learn to respect others. Body image and eating disorders are addressed through discussions on healthy growth and development and media literacy. Youth also learn how to set goals for living a healthy lifestyle and the importance of sleep and relaxation.

The peer-led structure of the program is designed to encourage development of social skills and self-esteem. Lessons emphasize how to be a positive buddy, what healthy living is, what challenges to healthy living arise, and how to overcome those challenges. Buddy lessons are delivered using presentations, games, and art activities.

PREVIOUS USE
The Healthy Buddies program was developed in British Columbia and was piloted in two schools from 2002 to 2004. In the 2007 / 2008 school year, 40 elementary schools across 5 regions in British Columbia received funding to implement the program. The extent to which the program has been used since then is unknown.
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TRAINING

Teachers and older students, called older buddies, facilitate this program. Though no formal training is required, teachers receive a classroom bin, which includes all lesson materials, and they should familiarize themselves with these materials prior to program implementation. Older buddies learn group work skills before they begin working with the younger students.

CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations for implementing this program include recruiting older students to become the peer mentors; acquiring buy-in from teachers, school administration, and older buddies; finding time within regular classroom curricula to hold lessons and activities; allowing teachers time to familiarize themselves with program materials; giving older buddies instruction in group work skills; and understanding some materials will need to be purchased.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

IMPLEMENTATION

If you are interested in implementing Healthy Buddies, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

TIME

During the school year, 21 lessons are delivered. The weekly time commitment is about 45 minutes for teachers, 3 hours for older buddies, and 2 hours for younger buddies; these time estimates include 45-minute lessons and two 30-minute Fitness Loops.

COST

Each pair of buddy teachers, one classroom teacher and one older student, shares one Classroom Bin that is $690. Each school requires one Fitness Loop Bin, which costs $665. Game boxes cost $59 to $185 each. Program resources can be ordered from the program website www.healthybuddies.ca/getinvolved.htm. Some program materials are available for free on the website.

EVALUATION PLAN

To move Healthy Buddies to the Effective category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence at least one external evaluation must be conducted that demonstrates sustained, positive outcomes. This study must be conducted independently of the program developer.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

CONTACT

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program. Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact Healthy Buddies by phone 604-875-2345 Ext.5120, email info@healthybuddies.ca, or visit www.healthybuddies.ca/contact.htm

SOURCE

www.healthybuddies.ca/