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Interactive Programming to Teach Students about Asthma through Music

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Focus groups and discussions with parents during adult asthma workshops revealed parent discomfort with their children's participation in physical activities, fearing that it would exacerbate their asthma. A lack of information about asthma can limit children's participation in school activities. The Children's Health Funds, Childhood Asthma Initiative (CAI) has created new and innovative programs to help dispel myths about asthma and empower families to take control of their child's asthma through management of environmental triggers.

Asthma and music workshops were created to help increase awareness about asthma characteristics and symptoms while encouraging students to participate in music and other recreational activities. The workshop had 2 components: CAI health educators taught the asthma component which provided information about asthma management. A professional quartet helped to familiarize the students with different instruments, genres of music, and breathing exercises. Workshop consisted of 4 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes.

In total 101 students in 3 NYC Public Schools completed the 4-session workshop, learning about asthma characteristics, symptoms, triggers, and medications and learning how to expand their lungs through controlled breathing exercises while playing a musical instrument.

Students enjoyed a jam session with the musicians during the 4th workshop session. Parents, students and teachers were invited. Students used posters to teach others about asthma. Child's ability to participate in sports and other recreational activities was reinforced. Participants were encouraged to join community asthma education activities. Over 150 "Family Asthma Guides" were distributed.

Subsequent asthma education workshops for teachers, parents, and school administrators were also conducted.

Learning Objectives:

- * Teach about innovative programs that can be incorporated into school activities
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- * Discuss misconceptions about asthmatic students' ability to participate in music, sports, and other recreational activities

Keywords: Asthma, School-Based Programs