

# An Interdisciplinary, Technology-Based Approach to Increasing Knowledge of Adolescent Obesity



HARLEM Children's Health PROJECT



Sally Thompson MSN, CPNP, Carla Triplett PsyD, Sarah Wessler MA

## The Harlem Children's Health Project

The Harlem Children's Health Project (HCHP) is a unique school-based health center (SBHC) located in Harlem, New York City which offers comprehensive health services to students in a charter middle school. HCHP offers:

### Full Medical Services

- Evaluation and treatment of chronic illness such as asthma and obesity by a full time pediatric nurse practitioner
- Comprehensive physical examinations
- Immunizations
- Reproductive health care

### Oral Health

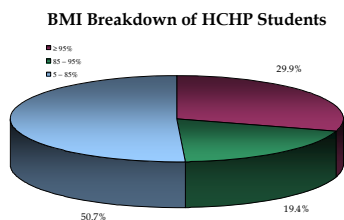
- Preventive and restorative pediatric dental services

### Mental Health

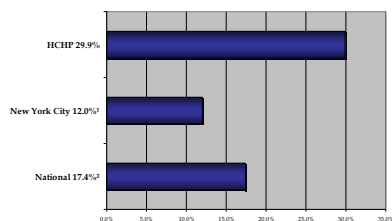
- Assessment and treatment provided by a licensed psychologist.
- Crisis intervention, case management, individual, group, and family therapy.

### Health Education

- Classroom presentations and workshops
- High tech learning laboratory



### Comparative Data of Adolescents with BMI ≥ 95%



1. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/dph/dph-harlem-obesity.pdf>  
 2. <http://www.cdc.gov/print.do?url=http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/index.htm>

## An Interdisciplinary Approach

- In our SBHC, 29% of adolescents are obese (BMI ≥ 95%) and at risk of related health morbidities – almost twice the rate of the national average.
- An interdisciplinary approach has been modeled to address these issues
- Medical
- Mental Health
- Health Education Technology
- Designed to increase students' knowledge-base about nutrition, physical activity and obesity.

## Program Tools

### Screening Tool Sample Questions

1. Do you think that you are healthy?  
Yes No
2. Would you be interested in participating in a group that discusses health and nutrition?  
Yes No
3. Does your mood ever affect what you eat?  
Yes No
4. Do you ever feel guilty about what you eat?  
Yes No
5. Are you happy with the way your body looks?  
Yes No
6. Do you think physical activity or some type of exercise is important?  
Yes No

### Pre and Post Test Sample Questions

What is a calorie?  
 a. naturally occurring substances in food that make us fat  
 b. a way to measure energy in food  
 c. something that clogs your arteries  
 d. a unit of body fat measurement

About many calories does an average teenager need a day?  
 a. 2000  
 b. 1000  
 c. 3000  
 d. It doesn't matter, as long as you don't eat any fast food

What does it mean to be healthy?  
 a. Eating fruits and vegetables every day  
 b. Exercising and playing sports  
 c. Feeling good about yourself  
 d. All of the above



## Goals

- Use technology in order to increase students' knowledge of nutrition, physical activity and obesity
- Address mental health issues related to obesity (e.g. self-esteem)
- Present information about nutrition and wellness in developmentally appropriate way
- Assess students' level of understanding before and after education interventions through pre and post testing

## Program Strengths and Limitations

1. **The number of students involved in the program is limited.** This allows us to individualize session discussion and methods of instruction to the particular needs of the group.
2. **Participants in the program are self selected.** Participants have moved beyond the pre-contemplative phase in the stages of change model and are motivated and enthusiastic.
3. **The length of the program is short.** A shorter program allows for more participants to cycle through the program.
4. **The program is resource intensive and requires the efforts of many health care professionals.** The involvement of a nurse practitioner, psychologist and health technology educator enables us to create a truly comprehensive program.
5. **The program is open to all students regardless of BMI or health risk.** Including students who do not show current signs of risk allows us to potentially prevent problems from occurring in the future.
6. **Limited family involvement.**