

Family Health and Fitness Night

*Discovery School #67
Buffalo, New York*

The Parent Involvement Action Team at the Discovery School wanted to find a way to teach students about good nutrition and the positive results of regular exercise. So, they created Family Health and Fitness Night and brought in community partners to conduct physical fitness activities and distribute healthy snacks to pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students and their families.

Participants rotated through several stations, including cheerleading, tae kwon do, and yoga. The physical education department, which had conducted a similar successful activity at another school, set up a variety of activities to test speed, flexibility, endurance, and agility. Families could also walk around a one-mile track.

After the families finished their strenuous workouts, they could sample healthy foods, including milk and low-fat ice cream, served by the cafeteria staff and action team members. The school nurse displayed the updated food pyramid and a chart listing the amount of sugar in certain foods. The highlight of the evening came when the Buffalo Police Athletic League (PAL) distributed bicycle helmets to all of the students.

Participants filled out surveys that asked them to list reasons to eat healthy and exercise, and to share healthy activities all families could use. The action team used these surveys to evaluate the event, which many families indicated they would like the school to repeat.

The action team publicized the fitness night through the school newsletter, classroom

newsletters, and invitations with tear-offs, which organizers used to estimate attendance. The \$150 cost was picked up by the school PTO.

Recruiting area organizations was the biggest challenge the team faced. They contacted several dance, cheerleading, and tae kwon do groups, but some were reluctant to commit. The action team had to convince them that supporting Family Health and Fitness Night would benefit their businesses. In addition to PAL, participating organizations included a local yoga instructor and cheerleading and tae kwon do groups.

Even with a good turnout of nearly 150 students and adults, the action team would like to increase attendance next year. After the event, one parent told an organizer that she planned to make walking a part of her family's summer exercise routine—a new habit the team would like more families to adopt.

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