



Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative



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Fighting for Air

Success Stories



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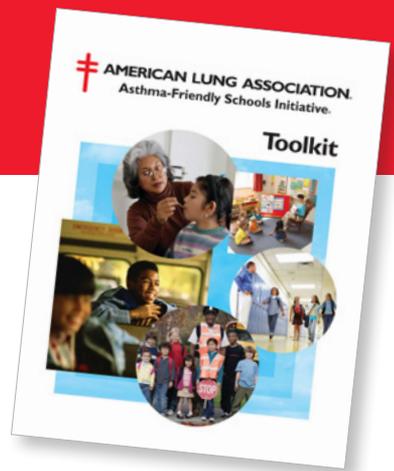
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Key Findings

The purpose of this publication is to showcase the work of the *Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative* (AFSI) collaboratives that have been supported by the American Lung Association. These stories can help guide school administrators, board members and staff, as well as parents and community partners, as they implement the AFSI approach.



In the United States, nearly seven million children live with asthma, which accounted for 14.4 million lost school days in 2008. Schools must address asthma issues to keep students with asthma healthy, in school and ready to learn. The scope of asthma in America drives coalitions and individuals to work creatively to overcome barriers and to establish asthma-friendly school environments.

For the last four years, the AFSI collaboratives have partnered with school districts to focus on safeguarding students and staff from potential hazards and reducing health risks within the schools. These groups were charged with focusing on at least three of the following long-term outcomes:

- Asthma action plans for all students with asthma
- Asthma rescue inhalers carried and self-administered by all students with asthma
- Education for all school personnel on asthma basics and emergency response
- Full participation in physical education and physical activity, when students with asthma are able, is encouraged
- A full-time registered nurse onsite all day, every day
- Tobacco-free policies in schools consistent with CDC guidelines
- Success stories shared with stakeholders and decision-makers
- Appropriate policies that affect asthma in the school environment, consistent with CDC guidelines, developed, adopted and implemented

AFSI projects range in focus and size for the school or district engaged, yet all experiences lay the foundation of success for program expansion and capacity-building. These stories provide concrete examples of strategies that other community and school collaboratives can replicate and emulate.

Nursing Focus Spurs Dramatic Increase of Asthma Action Plans

Kansas City, Kansas



Problem Overview

The Turner School District estimates there are 688 students with asthma, based on self-reported asthma rates identified through a student survey. The survey results do not reveal how many of those children have medication prescribed for asthma; however, 21% of the students who reported having asthma also indicated they have an asthma action plan. The asthma action plan data do not align with the school nurses' experience. During the 2008-2009 school year, school nurses had only 12 asthma action plans (1.7%) on file at the six regular education buildings and two (6.9%) on file at the Early Learning Center. The district was committed to addressing the discrepancy by increasing the use of asthma action plans for students with asthma and having those plans on file at the schools. In accordance with the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute's recommended use of asthma action plans, recruiting doctor and parent participation was critical.

Program/Activity Description

A district-wide asthma action plan was created by a sub-committee of the AFSI coalition. This document incorporated an authorization form to administer asthma medications. Any child whose asthma medication was brought to the school nurse for administration was required to have a completed asthma action plan on file. In addition, nurses created a permission form, to be signed by parents, that allows them to communicate directly with a child's doctor. Coalition members alerted area clinics and physicians about the new district-wide asthma action plan. Nurses were then able to either fax asthma action plans directly to a physician or send it to parents for them to share with their child's physician. Requiring asthma action plans for all students who brought asthma medication into school and communicating their importance to parents and physicians helped to increase the number of asthma action plans on file in schools.

Program/Activity Outcomes

As a result of this collaborative work, the school district has made significant progress—an almost 400% increase in the number of asthma action plans on file (from 12 to 58 plans), and the district nurses are focused on obtaining more plans. The Early Learning Center's results are even more dramatic, with an 800% increase for a total of 55% of students with asthma having an asthma action plan on file.



Healthy Learners Model Transforms Rural District

St. Francis, Minnesota

Problem Overview

Partners for Asthma Action worked with the St. Francis School District to gather baseline data from elementary and secondary school parents who identified that their children had asthma. Results of the parent questionnaire revealed that only 65% of parents have notified the school health office that their child had asthma, while 42% of parents reported that they were not notified by the school nurse each time their child had an asthma episode. Nearly half (43%) of the parents reported that asthma impacts their child's attendance at school. The need for an asthma management system, including parent-school communication, became a clear priority.

Program/Activity Description

In partnership with the American Lung Association in Minnesota, the district began implementing the Healthy Learners Model, a comprehensive asthma management approach, in 2007. Developed in Minneapolis Public Schools, this program laid the groundwork for the district to address asthma in its three elementary schools, junior high, high school, and an alternative learning center. The model:

- Defines expectations and core components of school nursing to include asthma case finding, nursing care and delegated procedures, care coordination, and student asthma education and counseling
- Standardizes school health office asthma procedures and forms
- Provides asthma education to students, parents, faculty and staff
- Provides monthly school nurse asthma training
- Establishes nurse mentoring to enhance asthma care and support challenging cases
- Establishes asthma-specific communication with primary care providers and parents

Program/Activity Outcomes

St. Francis' efforts have impacted health services, student health and interscholastic athletics. Previously, the district had no asthma management system. During the initiative's third year, school staff contacted parents and health care providers about students' asthma 100 times. During that same year, 57 students with asthma received comprehensive asthma education. Nurses witnessed dramatic changes, including that of a student who previously stayed home with any asthma symptoms due to the family's distrust of the district. With increased communication between the district, primary care provider and family, the student has attended asthma education, has minimal asthma flare-ups and is academically more successful. Asthma management training is now an established element of annual teacher and staff trainings, as well as a requirement for interscholastic coaches.

Increasing Asthma Education for High-Risk Kids

Santa Rosa, California



Problem Overview

Students attending the R.L. Stevens Elementary School (Wright Elementary School District) and Lincoln Elementary School (Santa Rosa City Schools) live in the areas with the highest rates of emergency room visits for asthma in Sonoma County. The vast majority of students are low-income, Hispanic and English learners. Both of these schools had no previous comprehensive asthma education or policy intervention. The ratio of school nurses to students in Sonoma County is dismal—an average of one full-time nurse to 4,000 students.

Program/Activity Description

The Sonoma County Asthma Coalition focused its work in these two schools on student asthma education, environmental trigger reduction, policies regarding asthma management, school health curriculum, physical education curriculum, and indoor air quality (IAQ). The coalition partnered with a junior college Community Health Worker training program to recruit and train two *Open Airways For Schools* (OAS) volunteer facilitators. They completed OAS sessions at the two elementary schools and developed and delivered an asthma education presentation to all 5th grade classes at both schools, as well as providing Asthma 101 presentations to all teachers and staff. Coalition members continue to provide resources to schools to improve overall asthma management plans and trainings to reduce IAQ triggers.

Program/Activity Outcomes

OAS pre/post test evaluations confirm that the coalition met its goal: 50-75% of students known to have asthma demonstrated an increased understanding of how to manage their asthma. Administrators highlight that staff better understand how to manage asthma and how to deal with environmental triggers, and that students greatly benefit from focused education. Two vignettes illustrate immediate impact. Pedro, an 11 year-old with severe asthma, had missed many hours of class time due to asthma-related nurse visits and had been rushed to the emergency room during a recess. While the school nurse identified Pedro as the student most in need of OAS, he was resistant. He finally attended the last three classes, becoming the most engaged OAS student. Remarkably, after completing OAS, Pedro missed no class time due to nurse visits. At R.L. Stevens Elementary School, the principal now understands how environmental triggers, such as air fresheners, can affect students with asthma and has become more focused on IAQ. Coalition members are leveraging these experiences to create district-wide asthma-friendly IAQ policies.



Success in Partnerships and Sustainability

Evansville-Vanderburgh, Indiana

Problem Overview

Prior to implementing AFSI, the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC) bore a large asthma burden. The elementary schools reported approximately 1,700 students diagnosed with asthma. EVSC only has a part-time nurse who rotates through multiple schools each week. In addition, 51% of students receive free or reduced lunch assistance. These conditions pointed to the need for managed asthma care in school for children who may not receive it elsewhere.

Program/Activity Description

EVSC convened a School-Community Council to address the needs of students with asthma and their families. Community partners were recruited to provide resources and networking opportunities to address all areas of health and learning. The Council meets monthly and is devoted to providing asthma and allergy education, programming and events for the school community. EVSC improved community relationships to sustain AFSI work being coordinated by the Council. A relationship with St. Mary's Hospital is key to AFSI's sustainability within the school district. The partnership began in 1996 and has grown. St. Mary's Foundation joined the School-Community Council's subcommittees related to asthma activities, collaborated on community events and sponsored programs. The in-kind collaboration includes a dedicated registered respiratory therapist (RRT) who fills a gap in care for students with asthma. The RRT is an invaluable asset, who provides asthma education, is highly involved in the execution of asthma camp and participates in the Council's activities and planning.

Program/Activity Outcomes

The community support in funding, personnel, networking and other resources solidifies the asthma team's role in providing education, support and management resources to EVSC families. In the past three years, EVSC has provided asthma camp for more than 250 children, some of whom have not been able to afford it. The RRT has educated students in asthma management and has reached more than 100 staff and coaches through in-service education. The school is developing a coordinated approach with local primary care providers to promote the use of asthma action plans to ensure that 100% of students with asthma have a plan on file in school. EVSC and the School-Community Council are committed to the sustainability of the school asthma education and management programs through a collaboration that benefits the shared goals of the partners involved.

Contractual Partnerships for Sustainable Asthma Education

Bay Shore, New York



Problem Overview

A needs assessment overwhelmingly showed a need for comprehensive asthma education in the Bay Shore Union Free School District. Key findings showed that the majority of staff (90-95%) were not aware of district-wide asthma policies regarding medications in school and emergency procedures for children having asthma attacks. Staff did not feel there was adequate asthma education for faculty, students or parents. The district's asthma-friendly schools project began in 2006 with goals to implement district-wide strategies for asthma, develop an action plan for improving student health and provide asthma education.

Program /Activity Description

The Asthma Coalition of Long Island (ACLI) created a partnership with St. Joseph's College's RN to BSN program that requires students to complete a Community Health course that includes a structured, evidence-based intervention. College faculty, school district and ACLI staff created a contractual arrangement that allowed student nurses to work within the district. In the first year, student nurses were trained to implement *Open Airways For Schools* (OAS), an education program for children with asthma, in five elementary schools. The next year, St. Joseph's students presented a tobacco prevention education program to more than 1,200 students in three schools, and implemented OAS in two other schools. Student nurses also participated in the Annual Community Summit, assisting with asthma screenings and family education. During the same two years, ACLI members presented Asthma 101 training sessions to staff throughout the district.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Over two years, 14 student nurses taught OAS to approximately 100 students, and more than 600 faculty and staff participated in Asthma 101 trainings. In the year following the OAS implementation, the percentage of students with asthma having medication at school increased from 32% to 51%. Nearly 100% of faculty who attended Asthma 101 training felt they knew those who were most at risk for asthma, what happens during an asthma episode, how to identify asthma symptoms and triggers, and the proper response to an asthma episode. The partnership enabled ACLI to provide the Bay Shore Union Free School District with the programming for sustainable, successful school asthma management.



Establishing Asthma Buddies for Maximum Impact

Henrietta, New York

Problem Overview

Many of Rush Henrietta Central School District's high school students with asthma, who may or may not have experienced *Open Airways For Schools* (OAS) during elementary school, had little to no formal asthma education since the program. The district's AFSI coalition was unable to identify an age-appropriate program for teens. Concurrently, the district was interested in creating a program for first graders, since OAS targets students beginning in the second grade. Creating a program that would help reach both first graders and high school students became the objective.

Program/Activity Description

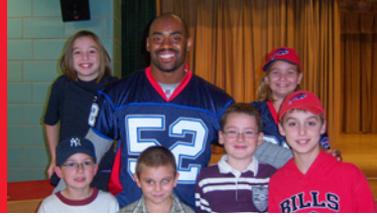
Asthma Buddies is a two-pronged program in which high school students with asthma first meet with their school nurse teacher and school social worker to talk about their asthma experiences. Second, the students work together to create and implement an asthma education experience for elementary students with asthma. In spring 2009, students in grades 10-12 worked with students in grades one, two and five during two 40-minute sessions. Activities included: a group icebreaker, read-aloud of ABC's of Asthma, Quest for the Code online game (with older and younger students partnered), and an art/psychomotor reinforcement activity. In the art project, younger and older students partnered to complete body tracings of each other on which each wrote or drew about their asthma triggers and symptoms, feelings about asthma attacks and personal strengths and talents.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Asthma Buddies was a unique approach that helped the district reach one of its AFSI outcomes, that students and their families will have an increase in knowledge about asthma and self-management skills. The project gave older students a "refresher" experience while elementary students loved interacting with the older students and were able to talk about their asthma. The experience illustrated that an asthma education program created and implemented by teens with adult guidance can be effective and rewarding for both the teens and younger students. This was a pilot program that the district plans to expand by adding another school every year for four years.

Parent Voices Propels District Asthma Education

Henrietta, New York



Problem Overview

The Rush Henrietta School District staff and its asthma coalition, the Regional Community Asthma Network (RCAN), conducted a needs assessment to evaluate the types of asthma awareness and education programs offered within the district as a first step in implementing AFSI. Based on focus groups conducted during the first year of AFSI planning, the coalition identified a need to increase parent involvement for those whose children have asthma.

Program/Activity Description

To bring parent and family asthma education to life, RCAN and Rush Henrietta created a tightly focused Parent Asthma Advisory Council composed of parents of students with asthma, an RCAN staff member, district school nurse teachers and community volunteers. The mission of the Council was to work toward improved asthma management in the district, an optimal educational experience for all students with asthma, and improved school-to-parent communication. Championed by two school nurse teachers, the Council initiated activities that were all enthusiastically received. Council members created a flyer about asthma for kindergarten registration; produced a video of a mother, son, and school nurse teacher dealing with asthma issues; and held an Asthma/Allergy Family Fair for their community. The fair became a centerpiece for AFSI and the parent council. An appearance and motivational talk by the Buffalo Bills' Chris Draft helped draw hundreds to the event. The fair involved community providers and vendors; raised asthma awareness throughout the community through media coverage; and provided a range of asthma activities such as peak flow and spacer demonstrations, kid games and activities, and a poster contest focused on messages about asthma, allergies and secondhand smoke. Funding was provided, in part, by the district's tobacco grant to prevent youth smoking.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Parents of children with asthma now feel more included in the district. The Parent Asthma Advisory Council has helped to strengthen the home-school partnership, increased the parents' and childrens' knowledge of asthma, and created tools available online for the entire community (www.rhnet.org). Parents now have a voice and are more engaged in their child's asthma management in school. The Council has significantly impacted the district by raising awareness, promoting prevention and intervention strategies, and empowering children with asthma to take an active role in their disease management.



Empowering Parents

Charlotte, North Carolina

Problem Overview

The Mecklenburg County Asthma Coalition (MCAC) conducted an in-depth needs assessment in 2007 under its AFSI grant. Based on the results, MCAC decided to focus on increasing the capacity of parents of students with asthma to help them understand and effectively participate in managing their child's asthma. During the process, MCAC discovered the potential benefits of expanding the coalition board to include parents of children with asthma, whose unique insights would deepen the coalition's understanding of needs and strategies. Parents had previously struggled to find a voice among the group of professionals committed to helping children and their families.

Program/Activity Description

MCAC developed Parent Asthma Education Classes and offered them throughout the community during the 2007-2008 school year. In 2009, MCAC created an Asthma Education Night, which the coalition quickly expanded to several more classes over a course of a year. Taught by a nurse, the free class teaches parents: the scope of asthma, common symptoms and potential triggers, difference between quick relief and controller medications, how to manage an asthma episode, how to respond to an asthma emergency, and the importance of an asthma action plan. The success of the parent education events changed the profile of MCAC's board. What began as a program to provide information to parents turned into an educational lesson for MCAC. Board members, all health professionals, were awakened to parents' passion for the outcome of their child's health, which led to the coalition recruiting and adding parents to their board.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Parents, as both involved MCAC board members and the focus of education initiatives, have deepened the work of the coalition. Before the parents joined, the entire board was health professionals with a shared perspective. Parents now add the invaluable perspective of the audience to whom the coalition is providing programs. They help review the materials and the curriculum to provide feedback on whether parents will understand them. They share insights into the role of MCAC in the public perspective and provide personal experiences on issues such as medication regimens and working with their child's medical providers.

Fly A Flag For Clean Air!

Perry Township—Indianapolis, Indiana



Problem Overview

A 2007 needs assessment conducted at the start of the AFSI project showed that approximately 8 - 11% of children in Perry Township were diagnosed with asthma. The assessment findings showed that a comprehensive plan was needed to increase awareness of outdoor air quality issues as well as exercise-induced asthma, which would also benefit those students with undiagnosed asthma in the district. Particle pollution and ozone air pollution (smog) can trigger asthma episodes and can be dangerous to everyone. Smog and fine particles can exacerbate asthma, cause increased emergency room visits and hospitalization rates, and result in long-term health problems.

Program/Activity Description

Under a grant from the WellPoint Foundation, the American Lung Association in Indiana and its long-time asthma partner, Anthem, implemented the *Fly A Flag For Clean Air* (FLAG) program in 50 schools throughout the state to educate students about outdoor air quality. Each school received a set of flags in four colors (green, yellow, orange, red) that corresponds with the EPA's air quality index (AQI). The experience at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School exemplifies the program's outreach, with a highly engaged team of adult and student participants. A fourth grade classroom became the school's air quality ambassadors. They checked EPA's daily AQI, provided the information to the office for daily announcements, and raised the appropriate colored flag outside. Based on the flag color posted, the school takes precautions on days where air quality may impact student health.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Approximately 580 children participated in the FLAG program at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School. The entire school participated in program activities and lessons, including knowing and understanding air quality levels, suggesting and participating in alternate activities for bad air quality days, and answering questions when asked by teachers. The FLAG program promotes a sense of acceptance and understanding among children who have classmates with asthma and instills a sense of responsibility in the ambassadors. The work at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School resulted in media coverage on television news and in the Indianapolis Star, increasing the outreach of AQI and asthma messages. Success there and at other elementary schools is being leveraged to expand the program to three more Perry Township schools and other schools throughout Indiana.



Modified Physical Education Supports Students with Asthma

Los Angeles, California

Problem Overview

During the AFSI needs assessment process, more than 30 Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) stakeholders engaged in a meaningful discussion regarding areas in which asthma management could be strengthened within the district. Seventy-five percent of respondents stated that *professional development on asthma management for staff members is not in place* or only *partially in place* within LAUSD. Respondents specifically ranked the Physical Education (PE) Department as lacking asthma education opportunities. In fact, 95% of respondents stated that PE teachers *do not have a clear understanding* or *only have a partial understanding* of what students with asthma can do to prevent an attack.

Program/Activity Description

To address areas of need within LAUSD, its Asthma Case Management Program enthusiastically partnered with the American Lung Association's (ALA) AFSI coalition, which included collaboration among Blue Cross, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, and LAUSD employees from school mental health, dropout prevention and nursing. The AFSI project was further funded by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and Blue Cross. The collaborative group focused on the results of the needs assessment—specifically, to increase education and training for the PE department. The LAUSD PE Department eagerly incorporated asthma education as part of grant-funded professional development training for PE Standards. The goal was to train the PE Department chairs and provide them with resources with which they could train teachers. ALA and LAUSD designed a narrated PowerPoint presentation for the PE Department chairs, which incorporated understanding local air quality, accessing the SCAQMD's Air Quality Index, and providing linkages to LAUSD asthma resources.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Timing, funding, and a spirit of collaboration culminated in focused training for 800 PE teachers in LAUSD. Evaluations indicated a substantial improvement in asthma knowledge and attitudes: 23% increase in the number of PE teachers who felt very comfortable identifying asthma triggers, and 24% increase in the number of PE teachers who felt very comfortable with what they should do during an asthma episode. The project is continuing with SCAQMD funding. The next training series will be more interactive, based on a series of realistic scenarios that allow teachers to share best practices on how to modify PE activities when necessary.

Creative Athletics Partnerships for a High-Needs District

Hempstead, New York



Problem Overview

An asthma needs assessment conducted for Hempstead School District personnel found that the majority of staff (85-95%) either did not know or thought there was no emergency protocol for students with asthma or access to medications in school. In addition, they did not think physical education instructors were aware of individual needs of children with asthma. Staff education clearly was needed.

Program/Activity Description

The Asthma Coalition of Long Island (ACLI) has a long-standing relationship with the Hempstead High School Based Health Center, where staff implemented a range of AFSI health services strategies. School administrators and staff of the school-based health center have worked together to address the needs of students with asthma. ACLI leveraged its relationship with the high school's health center to address the ability of students with asthma to participate in physical education. Health Center staff of the school-based health center recruited the Director of Athletics and Physical Education to join their efforts. The Director quickly championed the AFSI physical activity strategies, steered ACLI throughout the district's administrative mazes, and created a partnership with Adelphi University. ACLI members and school administrators worked together to create a presentation on the burden of asthma targeted to principals and recruited them to help conduct needs assessments in their respective schools. With support from Adelphi students, a student assessment survey was also created to gauge Hempstead students' attitudes and health behaviors related to physical fitness, obesity and asthma. ACLI was also able to present its *Asthma Preparedness for Coaches* program to 25 district physical education teachers.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Concentrating on the new asthma strategies through the Athletic Department was a unique and efficient pathway to a comprehensive AFSI approach throughout the district. Led by a passionate champion within the district, the ACLI formed partnerships that were outside its traditional approach and established a presence in the district to lay the foundation for long-term work to reduce the burden of asthma. The district has established an asthma management policy; reduced absenteeism by 50% for high school students with asthma; trained its physical education instructors about working to increase physical activity for students with asthma; expanded its partnership with Adelphi University to include asthma as a key component; and engaged its teachers and more than 100 high school students in broader support asthma programs.



Getting Started with AFSI

Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative

The American Lung Association's *Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative* (AFSI) is a community-based, coalition-driven approach to asthma management in schools. AFSI was created to provide support and tools for community-school collaboratives as they build comprehensive plans that address asthma-management and indoor air quality in schools. By implementing AFSI strategies, communities and schools are ensuring the overall wellbeing of students by reducing environmental triggers as well as offering educational programs for faculty, staff and students that, in turn, impact asthma management and reduce the risk of health-related emergencies associated with asthma.

AFSI Toolkit

The AFSI Toolkit is a comprehensive guide that provides tangible support, tools and information to help coalitions working with schools to plan and implement sustainable programs through a coordinated school health approach. The Toolkit allows local school districts and communities to determine the best programs to adopt based on local needs and available resources. The AFSI Toolkit is available for free online at www.lungusa.org/afsitoolkit and includes the framework needed for communities to create an asthma-friendly school environment at low to no-cost for school districts.

American Lung Association

For more information on how to get American Lung Association's *Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative* (AFSI) started in your community, please contact 1-800-Lung-USA (1-800-548-8252), email your questions to info@lungusa.org, or check out the AFSI webpage at www.LungUSA.org/afsi.

The American Lung Association's *Open Airways For Schools* (OAS) program is the gold standard of school-based asthma education for children ages 8-11. OAS can be implemented as a component of AFSI. To learn more, visit www.LungUSA.org or email questions to info@lungusa.org.



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