

# Encouraging Staff Wellness Programs to Promote School Success

Roosevelt Middle School – Oakland, CA

2013

## WHY FOCUS ON STAFF WELLNESS?

As part of its mission to create a thriving, vibrant school, Roosevelt Middle School prioritized addressing teacher stress by building camaraderie and a strong team sense among the staff. Roosevelt Middle School took a holistic approach to stress-reduction, championing wellness efforts that promote overall health for school staff. This approach fit well with Roosevelt's principal's philosophy that fulfilled staff do their best work, and that schools need to create spaces for staff that encourage collaborative thinking and relaxation outside of the classroom to ensure success.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 693 students
- 99.86% of students qualify for free/reduced-price meals

### Ethnicity:

- 42% Asian
- 36% Hispanic/Latino
- 18% African American
- 4% Other

## ACTION STEPS

Roosevelt Wellness Champions and the School Wellness Council identified the need for a staff Wellness Center as key to elevating staff morale and fostering well-being. Creating a Wellness Center out of the space once occupied by the newly relocated school health clinic was a low cost way to provide a comfortable place for staff to relax, connect with co-workers, catch up on work, or access on-site wellness experts and health information. Healthy food and physical activity opportunities were also identified as areas for improvement and the Wellness Council took a few small steps that had a big impact. They swapped out weekly donuts for staff-prepared healthy breakfasts such as fruit and granola, and encouraged physical activity with a regular Zumba class taught by an instructor paid through a mini-grant from OUSD. The Wellness Council encourages socializing



outside of school by coordinating get-togethers and outdoor activities for staff that promote bonding and physical activity. These staff wellness activities were conducted during the 2012-2013 school year and plans are underway to continue addressing staff wellness over the coming years.

## CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

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School leadership buy-in was crucial to ensuring the success of Roosevelt's staff wellness activities. While leadership was initially hesitant to approve the Wellness Center due to concerns that the space might not contribute to teacher productivity, the Wellness Council successfully advocated for the space as a venue to encourage creative thinking and staff well-being. Now, all staff, including the vice principal, regularly use the Wellness Center and benefit from the space and interaction with their peers.

## IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Roosevelt's staff wellness efforts have had tangible impacts for staff and students. The principal noted that staff is more cohesive, positive, and less stressed since the Wellness Council efforts began. The Principal also noted that test scores have gone up, student absenteeism has decreased and there have been fewer student suspensions – achievements to which the staff wellness efforts have contributed.

*“Wellness activities make this a community school; there has been a shift among students and staff for the campus to be more positive.”*

## ADVICE FOR OTHER SCHOOLS

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The Roosevelt Wellness Champions suggest that staff wellness efforts focus on making wellness activities fun and engaging for everyone to garner buy-in from leadership and staff. One Wellness Champion noted that “being creative and keeping wellness activities from feeling like extra work” is critical to the success of a staff wellness initiative given how busy the school day can get. Additionally, schools should know that it does not require a lot of work or money to make a difference; something as simple as a nice space for staff gatherings and regular social activities can go a long way towards team building and an increased sense of well-being among staff.

### For More Information:

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The Oakland Unified School District Wellness Champion Program is funded by Kaiser Permanente and the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation.

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