Parent Feedback Shapes Revised BMI Letter in Schools

PA PTA Conference
April 18, 2015
Objectives

• Overview of Penn State Hershey PRO Wellness Center
• Background information and purpose
• Study synopsis
• Launch
• Next steps
• Questions
Overview
Penn State Hershey PRO Wellness Center

• Champions for bringing healthy choices to life
• Reduce incidence of childhood obesity
  – Programming, partnerships, interventions
  – Schools, communities, like-minded organizations

www.pennstatehershey.org/PROwellness
Mission

• We are committed to educating and inspiring youth and their families to eat well, engage in regular physical activity, and become champions for bringing healthy choices to life.
Mission Cont.

- Our approach of Prevention, Research and Outreach provides schools and communities with educational programs, technical assistance, collaborative partnerships and access to proven wellness interventions.
Signature Events

- Apple Crunch
- Walk to School Day
- Go for the Greens
- Move It Outside
Expertise

What we do:
• Project management
• School-based intervention delivery
• Program assessment and evaluation
• Marketing, communications, and graphic design
• Community outreach
• Networking
Our Work

• Schools
• Families/Communities
• Worksites
Our Biggest Audience

• Schools
  – Over 225 Healthy Champion schools
  – 81 schools (15 Districts) as part of the Department of Health “1305” program
  – 103 schools for Highmark Foundation’s Creating Healthy Schools program
Why Schools?

• 95% of all US children attend school.
• School-aged children spend almost half of their waking hours in school.
• Schools are efficient systems for reaching children and youth.
• Healthier students are better learners.
Background Information: The BMI Parent Notification Letter
BMI Parent Notification Letters

• In 2005, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) prompted the federal government to help design and guide BMI-measurement programs in schools.

• The program design was two-fold; surveillance and screening.

• In PA, work began in 2004, full implementation in 2006/2007 school year.
A Show of Hands

• How many parents do we have in the audience today?
• Do you recall seeing a BMI screening letter for your child?
Background

• Growth screening enables schools to:
  – Monitor growth and development patterns of students;
  – Notify parents/guardians of screening results; and
  – Recommend to share findings with the student’s health care provider.
Background

• School districts are required to submit aggregate BMI data through the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

• In Pennsylvania, approximately 33.32% of school-aged children measured overweight or obese.
BMI-for-Age Percentile

Growth Chart

Body mass index-for-age percentiles: Boys, 2 to 20 years

A 10-year-old boy with a BMI of 23 would be in the healthy weight category (5th percentile to less than 85th percentile) and an 11-year-old boy with a BMI of 25 would be in the overweight category (85th to less than the 95th percentile).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight Category</th>
<th>Percentile Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>Less than the 5th percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy weight</td>
<td>5th percentile to less than the 85th percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>85th to less than the 95th percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>Equal to or greater than the 95th percentile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 15-year-old boy with a BMI of 30 would be in the obese category (equal to or greater than the 95th percentile).

PENNSTATE HERSHEY PRO Wellness Center
Champions for bringing healthy choices to life.
Surveillance

- Identify % of students in each category.
- Detect trends over time.
- Monitor the outcomes of a school policy or practice aimed to improve student health.
Screening

• Provide parents with information
  – Results
  – Explanation
  – Resources
  – Plan
Without Screening

• No data that tracks trends over time
• Less funding for programs (no outcomes)
• Lack of support for healthy lifestyle programs
• Fewer conversations about healthy lifestyle choices
Study Synopsis
Improving the Letter

• The Objective
  – Develop and test an effective BMI screening letter that would lead parents to tools and resources for making healthy lifestyle changes for their children.
Study Overview

• Phase I
  – Qualitative study to revise letter

• Phase II
  – Quantitative study to evaluate letter
Dear Parent/Guardian:

On [insert screening date], [Child’s First Name] was weighed and measured in school and his/her BMI (Body Mass Index) was recorded. BMI-for-age percentile was calculated using your child’s BMI and comparing it to that of other children of the same age and sex. These measurements are used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems. Keep in mind, checking a child’s growth over time is more important than a one-time measurement and it is necessary for all children, regardless of BMI, to be active and eat healthy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Child’s First and Last Name]’s Results:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Child’s First Name]’s BMI-for-age percentile is XX%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than the 5th percentile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Child’s First Name]’s height is X ft. X in. and weight is XXX lbs.

If [Child’s First Name] is not in the healthy weight category, it is recommended that you schedule a visit with his/her health care provider and share these results.

What are the health risks of being overweight or obese?
- Increased risk of being overweight or obese as an adult.
- Increased risk for problems such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, high blood pressure and poor self-esteem.

Here are some suggestions for your family to reach and/or maintain a healthy weight.
- Get up, get moving and limit screen time.
- Serve water instead of drinks with added sugar.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day.
- For more tips visit [www.pennstatetestserv.org/PSOwellness](http://www.pennstatetestserv.org/PSOwellness)

For more information about BMI, visit [www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi) or contact the School Nurse.

Sincerely,

Name of School Nurse
Phone: (555) 555-5555

Pennsylvania requires schools to report BMI for all children in the same way they report vision and hearing screenings. BMI-for-age percentile shows how your child’s weight compares to that of other children of the same age and sex.
Results

- Increased intent to take action to assist overweight or obese children
Discussion

• Strengths
  – First attempt to use parent feedback to revise the BMI screening letter
  – The Result: An improved BMI screening letter tool for schools

• Limitations
  – Larger sample would have shown greater effects
Discussion Cont.

• Challenges
  – Attitudes about the BMI letters lead the public to miss the mark.

• BMI screening letters are:
  – an awareness tool; and
  – interfere with open discussions regarding healthy weight and chronic disease prevention.
Gaps

• School nurse availability
• Education of school nurses and pediatricians on how to counsel parents of overweight and obese children
• Improve knowledge about BMI for Age percentile
• Lack of ongoing conversations involving parents, children, and providers
Launch
BMI and YOU

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

www.pennstatehershey.org/BMIcheck
BMI Screening Letter Launch

Smart Talk

Smart Talk is a daily, live, interactive program featuring conversations with newsmakers and experts in a variety of fields and exploring a wide range of issues and ideas, including the economy, politics, health care, education, culture, and the environment. Smart Talk airs live every week day at 9 a.m. on WITF's 89.5 and 93.3.

Listen to Smart Talk live online from 9-10 a.m. weekdays and at 7 p.m. (Repeat of 9 a.m. program)

Host: Scott LaMar

Smart Talk: Could new BMI message help in fight against childhood obesity?

Written by Scott LaMar, Smart Talk Host/Executive Producer | Sep 8, 2014 2:20 PM

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SoundCloud

Smart Talk 9/9/14 A: Could new BMI message help in fight against ...
Healthy Champions Newsletter

Parent Feedback Shapes Revised Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening Letter

Studies show that school-based interventions have been unsuccessful in reducing childhood obesity prevalence, potentially due to the lack of follow-up with appropriate nutritional education programming for children who screen positive for overweight or obesity after the screenings take place.

In order to help fill this gap, the Center has developed and tested an effective BMI screening letter, based on parent feedback, that leads parents to tools and resources for making healthy lifestyle changes for their families. We hope you will recommend to your school that they use this letter when performing 2014/2015 school mandated health screenings.

Access our BMI Screening Letter

BMI and You

Pennsylvania requires that schools perform mandated health screenings each year for school aged children. One of these screenings measures height and weight to determine a child's BMI. There are many questions about BMI and BMI for Age. Take a look at our BMI and YOU video for answers to some common questions regarding BMI and BMI for Age.

BMI and You

The most common way to find out whether you're overweight or obese is to calculate your body mass index, or BMI. Learn why taking control and understanding your BMI is an important healthy choice: http://goo.gl/95Fpal

[VIDEO]
“I think the visual body chart is awesome! Thank you for your work in helping us make progress in the area of childhood obesity.”

Quaker Valley School District

“Thank you, we needed a better letter!”

Francis S. Grandinetti Elementary School

“The letter is very user friendly!”

Mahanoy Area School District

“Thank you for your efforts in promoting student health!”

Mechanicsburg Area School District

“I absolutely love the look of this letter! So much easier for parents to read and understand!!! Love it!!!!!”

Scranton School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
“I know that we usually do not have positive parent feedback from our current letter and I would love to see what we could do to improve the parent reception as well as any further actions they may take.”

Middlesex Elementary

“I would like to use this letter in screenings in schools statewide in conjunction with vision and hearing screenings.”

The State of Hawaii

“The Letter is wonderful. Please send me a copy.”

First Philadelphia Charter School
Results

- (266) Requests to access the letter
- (71) Requests representing multiple schools
- (45) Plan on using the letter
- (144) Plan on recommending the letter
- (77) Other

The PA PTA shared the BMI Letter information with all officers and its 60,000 person membership base
The Conversation

- Who is involved?
  - Child
  - Provider
  - Family

- How?
  - Over time
  - Listen to concerns
Next Steps

• Completing manuscripts to submit for publication
• In discussions with the PA Department of Health for their implementation of the new letter
• New Research: Develop and evaluate e-BMI, an online, interactive BMI parental notification letter intervention
• Launched the BMI letter in September 2014 to schools across PA
Acknowledgements

• Thank you PA PTA!
• Special thanks to the Highmark Foundation for their funding of this work
Resources

• Access the letter: www.pennstatehershey.org/BMIcheck
• Become a Healthy Champion
• Healthy eating resources
• Physical activity resources
• Grants
Stay Connected

Web: pennstatehershey.org/PROwellness
Email: PROwellness@hmc.psu.edu
Facebook: /pennstatehersheyPROwellness
Twitter: @PSH_PROwellness
Questions?