



School Wellness Councils: If You've Seen One, You've Seen One.

School Wellness Councils are collaborative efforts to improve school policies so that they better promote student, staff, and community health. They work on a variety of important issues – from improving food options in the cafeteria, to making fresh water available to all students, to increasing physical activity during the school day, to encouraging active transportation to campus, and much more. Beyond their shared commitment to wellness, School Wellness Councils vary greatly: they have different members, set different goals, use different strategies, and even go by different names! The four schools described here are at various stages in the evolution of their Wellness Councils. Each provides valuable ideas that can help other schools and school-based health centers (SBHCs) invest their communities in building healthy campuses where all students can thrive.

For more on what these Wellness Councils focused on and achieved, see two other sets of case studies: *Changing the School Food Environment One Healthy Meal at a Time* and *Youth Leadership for Wellness: Policy Advocacy That Works for Schools and Students*.

Laying the Foundation: West Oakland Middle School (WOMS)

With its brand new SBHC opening soon, the time is right for an increased focus on school wellness at WOMS. With a new principal and almost all new teaching staff, essential groundwork must be laid before establishing a School Wellness Council. To this end, SBHC leaders are actively cultivating an interest in health and wellness among students, parents, teachers, and administrators – empowering future champions by introducing them to the challenges faced by their community and the opportunities for making meaningful, lasting change. Students are engaged in gardening and cooking activities, as well as in a leadership group charged with promoting healthy habits across campus. The SBHC Family Resource Coordinator has organized a Family Coalition, and families are attending a regular cooking club in ever greater numbers. Teachers and administrators are deepening their understanding of the connection between health and learning. There is a growing sense of collaborative commitment to health and wellness, and the SBHC is leading the way. Soon, the WOMS community will be ready for the next step: establishing a School Wellness Council.



About these Case Studies. These case studies highlight the contributions that SBHCs and their partners have made to the Bechtel Oakland Wellness Champion Initiative, which aims to reduce obesity among Oakland youth by creating school environments that promote healthy eating, physical activity, and wellness. This Initiative serves as a model for implementing wellness policies at the school level. To learn more, contact the California School Health Center Association's Technical Assistance Director Samantha Blackburn at (510) 268-1038 or sblackburn@schoolhealthcenters.org. You may also wish to visit www.schoolhealthcenters.org.

Developing Diverse Champions: Oakland Technical High School (Tech)

For years, the leaders of Tech's Health Academy and its SBHC, the TechniClinic, have worked together to advance a broad vision for adolescent health on their campus. Over the past few years, their collaboration has expanded to include many other stakeholders – including students, teachers, administrators, custodians, and cafeteria staff. In their role as Wellness Champions, Health Academy and TechniClinic leaders recruited new adults to the Health & Wellness Committee through one-on-one conversations and staff meeting presentations. Simultaneously, surveys conducted by Health Academy students sparked interest in the effort among both their peers and a broader group of school staff. The Committee now meets approximately every three months: invitations are sent well in advance to the growing list of members – and the principal herself almost always attends.



Letting Youth Lead: Fremont High School

Although leaders at Fremont High School and its SBHC, the Tiger Clinic, have long worked to promote student health, the school's Wellness Committee was established in 2011, with the explicit goal of supporting wellness through systematic policy change. The Fremont Wellness Committee has a unique charge: rather than driving change itself, its adult members serve as a sounding board and champion for the efforts of the Youth Wellness Advisory Board, which serves as the "engine" – an engine that generates ideas, solicits feedback, revises plans, gathers support, and, when possible, supports policy implementation. The Wellness Committee is a fluid group, with four yearly meetings ranging in size from 15 to 50 people. Every adult on campus, and many external partners, are invited, and past attendees include teachers, custodians, family members, and even an Oakland school board member. The meetings are not task-oriented: instead, attendees celebrate successes, respond to student proposals, and commit to advancing school wellness. In the first six months of the 2011-2012 school year, the inherent flexibility of Fremont's Wellness Committee has proven useful: as the campus's three small schools are combined into one larger school, the Wellness Committee has adapted its structure, joining School Site Council visioning meetings and integrating its work into broader efforts to advance student success. By doing so, the Committee has reached an even wider audience.

Engaging External Allies: Oakland High School

Oakland High School's SBHC, Shop 55, has an Advisory Board that takes a school-wide approach to improving student wellness and school environment. Unlike an earlier incarnation of the Board, which brought together students, parents, teachers, and campus-based service providers, the current Advisory Board is



comprised of mostly of external partners. Members include employees of Alameda County's health care services and public health departments, an elected official from the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, leaders from local non-profits – and the Oakland High School principal. The Advisory Board helps guide Shop 55's long-term direction. Typically, it is most involved in the early stages of new endeavors, such as the school's recently opened Public Health Academy, as well as in broader strategy conversations, such as those on improving student wellness. As appropriate, other campus partners are invited to attend the Advisory Board's meetings, and by June 2012, youth leaders will present the results of ongoing research projects and advocacy efforts. By bringing together a core group of committed and engaged stakeholders, the Advisory Board sparks new ideas for Shop 55 and Oakland High School, forges meaningful, useful connections between the campus and the community, and demonstrates the power of effective partner collaboration.