

# Health Happens in Schools: School Site Wellness - School Climate, Food Justice and Physical Activity

## CONVENING SUMMARY

### Background

The California Endowment (TCE) is working to help schools create a supportive environment that promotes academic achievement and life success by addressing the physical, social and emotional needs of all children. Health and academic achievement are interconnected. Access to food and nutrition, physical activity, positive school climate, and school wellness centers are all efforts that embody TCE's Health Happens in Schools initiative. In an effort to create spaces for learning and collaboration among the three Los Angeles Building Healthy Communities (BHC) sites- Boyle Heights, Long Beach and South LA around health in schools, TCE sponsored a Health Happens in Schools Convening in October 2012. The half day convening brought together over 70 participants across the three BHC sites, who participated in panel discussions, peer learning opportunities and group discussions to identify collective areas of synergy and next steps. Participants ranged from school district representatives, community based organizations, parents, service providers and teachers. The convening covered three critical issues as it relates to school site wellness: school climate, nutrition and physical activity. The notes below include the highlights and key outcomes of the convening.



### Panel 1- School Climate:

Panelist provided insight on how school staff, community, and community based organizations (CBOs) can help foster a positive school culture utilizing strategies around restorative justice, alternative discipline and truancy policies and positive incentives. Panelist shared successes and challenges faced in helping secure a district-wide "Discipline Foundation Policy", based on "School-Wide Positive Behavior Support". The advancement of School Climate policy work was unique and successful as a result of local partnership between schools and CBOs pushing issues to the state level. This created opportunities for local and state partnerships to work together and advance school climate policy forward.

**Over 700,000 California students were suspended and roughly 21,000 expelled last year.<sup>1</sup>**

### Major Take Away:

- *Schools along with administrator's partnering with community based organization groups helped generate multiple approaches to developing prevention and intervention discipline polices.*
- *Restorative Justice is about building capacity of students and school community to address discipline issues in a positive way.*

- *School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) has been shown to have a positive impact with students and has been incorporated within LAUSD's strategic plan to ensure a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for all youth that's implemented through the Office of Operations.*



**Panel 2- Physical Activity & Food Justice:**

The panelist focused on access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities for the entire family and also discussed the critical role of different stakeholders in ensuring school based health initiatives are implemented. Panelist that spoke on School Nutrition campaigns shared local/statewide opportunities that included: breakfast in the classroom and incorporating health impacts to help determine school food

menus. In addition, panelist spoke about shared use/joint use and discussed the various models taking place locally and statewide involving building parent capacity and partnerships between schools.

**Communities with lower incomes, higher poverty rates, and higher proportions of racial/ethnic minorities—those most at risk to be sedentary and overweight—also have the fewest community-level physical activity-related opportunities.<sup>2</sup>**

**Major Take Away:**

- *Challenges remain to push food issues in the forefront of policy including: fewer days of instructional time, lack of child care and limited afternoon slots, adjusting to student food preference, competition from fundraisers that sell unhealthy foods, vending machines and mobile vending machines that sell unhealthy foods.*
- *Building capacity within the community and working closely with the parents, families, teachers, administrators and district leadership is important to identify the needs of the school community.*
- *Shared use/joint use is one strategy that schools have utilized for many years to provide safe space for physical activities.*
- *There are opportunities at the state level to highlight local level practices and policies that improve community-school partnership.*

**World Café Breakout Session Notes**

The World Café Breakout session allowed attendees representing the different geographic, organizational and focus areas to discuss the presentations and how the information shared relates to the work currently taking place in their BHC communities. It also allowed the groups to discuss and strategize some potential activities and actions around areas of alignment. Some initial findings from the conversations were an interest from participants to continue to maintain connections between the different BHC communities, school districts, and community based organizations beyond the convening. There was also a sense of wanting to have accountability from the schools and the community groups to move topics forward either through advocacy or policies around school climate, nutrition and physical



activities. Participants expressed interest in identifying key community partners that can champion and carry the work. Concerns remain that with limited resources, coordinated efforts needs to take place to prevent duplication of activities helping maximize efforts and properly utilize existing resources.

### Collective Next Steps

The Health Happens in School convening is part of a greater initiative under TCE's Health Happens Here campaign. The larger vision is for schools to be seen as health promoting centers of the community that can support social mobility, and provide access to needed social services. During the convening a challenge was made for the participants to continue and move the dialogue forward so that messages and recommendations gathered from the convening results into action.

Specifically, attendees discussed:

- *Developing shared communication systems across sites.*
- *Creating a potential speaker series on topics highlighted at the convening and related topics*
- *Convening a Town Hall with deeper engagement to allow parents and youth engage as advocates.*
- *Establishing equity as a framework for all of our work.*
- *Organizing a call or in-person conversation within the next few months to continue and move the dialogue forward.*



The convening ended with spoken word from a local artist, who shared his experiences about growing up in the Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles Community. He reminded the group of the struggles the community faces with crime, violence, and an unhealthy environment and why community work needs to continue to make a change for the better.

### Beyond the Convening

The Health Happens in School Convening is simply the first step in on-going collective efforts to make our communities healthier. TCE plans to further the dialogues started at the convening through a Learning Community that will explore more in depth the topics of school climate, school wellness, community schools and emerging policy opportunities taking place locally and statewide.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sacbee.com/2011/11/07/4037312/database-see-expulsion-suspension.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.banpac.org/pdfs/event\\_pdfs/2009/joint\\_use\\_public\\_facilities\\_manal\\_aboelata\\_03\\_25\\_09.pdf](http://www.banpac.org/pdfs/event_pdfs/2009/joint_use_public_facilities_manal_aboelata_03_25_09.pdf)

---

*This report was authored by: Alliance for a Better Community*

*In Partnership with:*

**Peace Over Violence** (BHC South Angeles)

**The Children's Clinic** (BHC Long Beach)

**Weingart YMCA of East Los Angeles** (BHC Boyle Heights)

