

# Working to Ensure Physical Activity for ALL Youth in Rochester City School District

Common Ground Health



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Common Ground Health, via the Healthi Kids Coalition (Healthi Kids), is working to make sure that children of all abilities in the Rochester City School District (RCSD) can participate in high-quality physical activities during the school day.

### Schools as the Hub

Children spend most of their day at school, underlining the important role schools have in supporting physical activity. Experts recommend that schools take a more comprehensive approach to include physical activity opportunities before, during, and after school. Following this model, known as the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP), schools use all opportunities for students to be physically active, meet physical activity recommendations, and gain knowledge and skills to be active for a lifetime.

CSPAP also calls for teachers and other school staff to have skills to ensure inclusive physical activity—in which all kids, regardless of ability, are included, encouraged, and challenged equally during activity time. But it is difficult for even the most well-trained physical education teachers to manage and engage all kids; classroom teachers and other school staff struggle even more.

Teachers across the RCSD were no exception, and prior to Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) grant interventions, physical activity breaks were not happening for entire classrooms because teachers lacked the skills needed to manage and promote physical activity for children of all abilities.



District staff participate in a hands-on inclusive physical activity workshop

### Partnerships for Change in Rochester

School programs and infrastructure are dictated by the district wellness policy. The RCSD Wellness Task Force, parents, and Healthi Kids saw the district wellness policy as an opportunity for change, and in 2017, passed a policy stating that physical activity and recess be made available to all students, including those with disabilities, special health care needs, and in alternative educational settings.

Healthi Kids knew that schools would need support and as a first step towards policy implementation, it partnered with Lynn Clemmons, a physical education instructor at School 29, to draft a plan that included professional development for school staff and partners across RCSD. In May 2018, Healthi Kids used CHSC grant money to hire Rochester Accessible Adventures and The University of Rochester's Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities to train more than 40 district school staff on inclusive physical activity.

The training taught members of the schools' educational community skills to work with students of all abilities. Participants engaged in a day of discussion and hands-on learning about including people with disabilities in the professional and personal realm. They took part in demonstrations of inclusive classroom, recess, and gymnasium games. Staff were also taught to identify students as individuals first; not as problems that they happen to have.

*"The support has been so helpful. It's the first time I've seen momentum towards adopting inclusive physical activity beyond PE classes."*  
*Gym teacher at School 29*

## Inclusion – A Win-Win for All

Healthi Kids and its partners are expanding the inclusion model and its training, which participants rated highly, to additional schools in the district. Meanwhile, an inclusion team will continue to support implementation of physical activity that includes, encourages, and challenges kids of all abilities.



### To learn more

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## Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

*The places where we live, learn, work, and play all contribute to our ability to become and stay healthy. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2015-2020) New York State Department of Health-funded initiative, is helping build stronger, healthier communities.*