Connecting Communities and Schools to Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

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What contributes to Healthy?

Biology is destiny
• It’s what’s in your genes that counts
• Teaching people about health will change behavior

People and place
• Who you hang out with matters
• Opportunities to make healthy choices matter
• Everyday ways of thinking and doing determine choices
Schools: Making Food decisions in a Social Context

• Opportunities
• Challenges
School Wellness Teams

• Unfunded mandate
• Exist more in form than in fact
• Can be place to mobilize community support for healthy kids
• Requires capacity to be successful
• Readiness factors can be key to successful program implementation
The Case: Northeast Iowa
The Role of Appreciative Inquiry

- Collect data from successful School Wellness Teams
  - What is working
  - Why
  - How might it work better
Sample

• One positive experience with policy change
• Institutionalized the wellness team structure
  – so that administrators participate,
  – a regular meeting time is set,
  – the team has a membership list and plan of action
• Has engaged in an intervention
• Includes a diversity of participants
Procedure

• Select schools
• Train staff to do focus groups
• Analyze data for key factors
• Develop the readiness tool
• Test it
Readiness Factors

- Support from
  - administrators: building level and superintendent
  - Community leaders
  - Youth
  - Parents

- Effective, well-organized meetings

- Time taken to reflect on progress/success

- Reflects diverse representation
• Good use of outside support
• Coaching from people within community to develop community change skills
• Team members’ personal interests connect with the work of the Team
• Clear focus or vision that is shared
• Communicates regularly with the school community
• External funding
• School community understands that wellness is a priority
• Feel comfortable enough to experiment
• Non team members are comfortable working with the team
Scorecard

• Communication
• Composition
• Goals
• Activities
Addressing Readiness opportunities can lead to the virtuous cycle of change
What we learned

• Wellness team readiness
  – Test, revise
• Use AI to investigate other readiness situations
• Using AI in the focus groups encouraged the use of AI principles across the work
• Questions?
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