

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (HEPA)
+
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)



Camp Fire Lone Star

Dallas, Texas

900

Average number of students served during the school year

80%

Students from low-income families

Main funding sources:

- ▶ Fees
- ▶ Foundations
- ▶ Contributions

Empowering students to take charge of their health

Taking a comprehensive approach to wellness—which includes healthy eating and physical activity and extends to additional aspects of health, such as social and emotional skills and competencies—can provide the necessary supports to help healthy children grow into healthy adults. Afterschool and summer learning programs are well-situated to be a component of solutions that address the whole child. Children in quality programs have access to healthy snacks and meals, take part in physical activities, feel safe and supported by caring mentors, work collaboratively with peers, develop new skills, and gain confidence as they learn to set goals and make responsible decisions for themselves.

Overview

Students in the greater Dallas, Tex.-area are learning how to take control of their health in **Camp Fire Lone Star's** afterschool programs. Through its Camp Fire Wise Kids® health and wellness program, youth are being shown how to balance “energy in” and “energy out,” to be aware of their self-perception, and to take charge of their food and drink choices so they can feel good and empowered to make healthy choices.

A typical day for students

When students arrive at Camp Fire Lone Star's afterschool program, they first have time to work on their homework and receive tutoring help, if needed. Next, the Wise Kids® program transitions into fun, skill-building activities. Camp Fire takes a hands-on enrichment approach to learning through the “learn, do, play” model. In the “learn” section, themes such as energy balance and goal-setting are introduced, and students are encouraged to talk and ask questions. In the “do” portion of the programming, students work together in a group activity related to the topic, developing familiarity with the content. The last 30 minutes is devoted to play, bringing in physical activities or games that align with the topic of the day. For example, students learning how to identify the types of food in their diet might run a relay race, where they pour an estimated amount of sugar in test tubes for different food products, ultimately learning how much sugar each product contains.

Outcomes

In Camp Fire's 2017 Annual Report, 3 out of 4 youth reported an increase in their development of life skills, social skills, conflict resolution, confidence, empathy, inclusiveness, and sense of purpose through Camp Fire's programs. Youth also reported having positive relationships with adults in Camp Fire and felt that they were heard and understood.

Program characteristics

Founded on the pillars of social and emotional learning, Camp Fire's Thrive{ology} program framework shows children and teens how to: "1) Identify Their Sparks; 2) Develop a Growth Mindset; 3) Learn Goal Management; and 4) Take Time to Reflect." This research-based approach is embedded in Camp Fire Lone Star's Wise Kids® program, from each activity to staff-student interaction.

Wise Kids® repeatedly emphasizes the concept of balance with students as trained, caring staff help them work toward meeting personal goals. Youth learn how to create a plan to meet goals, identify challenges, and develop strategies to tackle those challenges.

Layered over the Thrive{ology} framework is the Texas Education Agency's Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills health and physical education standards, which are largely aligned with the National AfterSchool Association's healthy eating and physical activity (HEPA) standards.

Program history

Camp Fire was founded in 1910 to "guide young people on their journey to self-discovery" through outdoor learning experiences. Today, its 53 councils, including Camp Fire Lone Star, serve more than 184,000 youth and families across the U.S. In 2015, Camp Fire Lone Star went through an organizational restructuring to better leverage partnerships like the City of Dallas Parks and Recreation Department, and incorporate Thrive{ology} more deeply into all of its programs. Within the first year, Camp Fire Lone Star connected to 20 afterschool programs and served nearly 700 youth with its Wise Kids® program.

Recommendations

for empowering students to take charge of their health:

- ▶ Emphasize the concept of balance, rather than categorizing health choices as good or bad. When youth see that there are multiple approaches to a healthy lifestyle, it gives them a stronger sense of control over their lives.
- ▶ Give youth time for reflection, where they can share how they feel about what they have learned. This creates space to process what they learn and develop ownership over their health, bodies, and choices.



Challenges

National public health issues among children today are physical, and social, and emotional. The National Survey of Children's Health found that close to 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese, placing them at a higher likelihood for a number of health issues including asthma and high blood pressure. Additionally, 45 percent of children in the U.S. have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), which has been linked to negative health outcomes and behaviors.

There are linkages between children's physical and social and emotional health. While one does not automatically lead to the other, research has found that children who are obese are more likely to suffer from low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety, and studies have shown the association between ACEs and a higher likelihood of being overweight and obese.

Issues in childhood have long reaching effects. ACEs have been linked to negative health issues in adulthood, such as a higher likelihood of drug abuse and heart disease, and obesity in childhood has been associated with a higher likelihood of obesity in adulthood. At a national level, the estimated lifetime economic costs of ACEs are \$124 billion and obesity is \$150 billion.

Read [A Big-Picture Approach to Wellness: Afterschool Supporting Strong Bodies and Minds](#) to learn more.