HEALTHY EATING BY DESIGN: A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN, MULTI-STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ADDRESS THE CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT EPIDEMIC IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

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LEARNING OUTCOME

To describe and understand how the Healthy Eating by Design (HEbD) pilot project is addressing the epidemic of childhood overweight through the implementation of a multi-strategic, integrated community action model.

ACTIVE LIVING BY DESIGN & THE 5P STRATEGIES

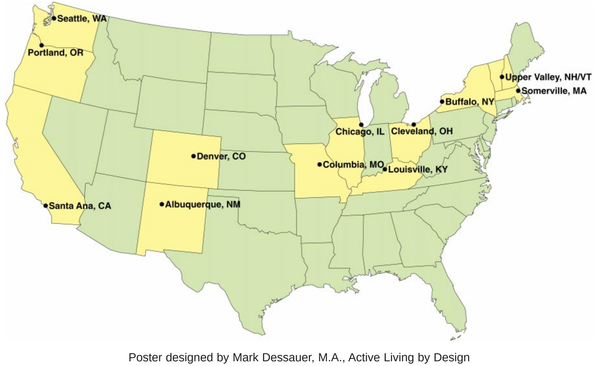
Active Living by Design (ALbD) supports communities to increase routine physical activity and healthy eating through community design.

ALbD has identified five strategies that address partnerships and the ecologic influences on physical activity and healthy eating: preparation, promotions, programs, policy and physical projects. Scientific support of the effectiveness of these strategies can be found in various studies, many of which were summarized by the U.S. Task Force on Community Preventive Services, which recommends physical activity interventions with informational, behavioral, environmental and policy approaches.[3] These interventions include community-wide campaigns, tailored behavior change programs, point-of-decision prompts, school-based physical education and enhanced access to places for physical activity in combination with informational outreach activities. ALbD has adapted these strategies as the intervention framework for the HEbD pilot project.

[3]Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Recommendations to increase physical activity in communities. Am J Prev Med 2002;22(4S):67–72.

HEbD COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (CPs)

HEbD is a pilot project that seeks to increase access to healthy foods for children in low-income communities and schools within 12 existing ALbD communities.



Poster designed by Mark Dessauer, M.A., Active Living by Design

HEbD 5P STRATEGIES

Preparation: *Getting Ready*

Multidisciplinary Partnerships

- the deliberate process of preparing for action
- includes developing and maintaining a community partnership to work collectively
- entails collecting relevant data to inform program planning and pursuing financial and other resources
- not limited to the early stages of a healthy eating initiative

Promotions: *Communicating*

Increase Understanding

- the means by which the project connects with the public
- includes specific messages about the benefits of healthy eating and the importance of community environments in promoting healthy living
- involves continous evaluation of strategies to ensure that they truly connect with the intended audiences and are well-integrated with the other 5P strategies

Programs: *Increasing Opportunities for Healthy Eating*

- organized, ongoing activities that engage individuals in healthy eating, either directly or indirectly
- provides direct access to healthy eating opportunities
- increases social support for healthy eating

Policy: *Influencing Public Decisions*

Mobilize/Empower Communities/Schools

Establish Relationships with Policy Makers

- involves establishing policies and guidelines for making affordable choices for healthy eating
- key to institutionalizing health-supportive environments
- includes efforts focused on advocacy, relationship building with policy makers and advocates, presentations to policy boards and influencing employer or school policies

Physical Projects: *Creating Supportive Environments*

- involves strategies to directly impact environments
- includes increasing the number of places/venues for healthy eating, as well as removing barriers to access to healthy foods

5P STRATEGY EXAMPLES FROM THE HEbD CPs

Preparation: *Getting Ready*

Partnership development and sustainability

Data gathering and analyses

Evaluation of master plans, food environments, policies and standard practices

Training for local advocates

Generation of financial and in-kind resources

By approaching active living and healthy eating in novel, yet integrated ways, the **Louisville, Kentucky** HEbD partnership has increased its capacity in partnership development, and generating of resources and support for their work. The partnership has successfully secured more than $240,000 in grants and funding related to their active living and healthy eating projects including a $30,000 Sewer District grant and other in-kind donations to enhance a half-acre community garden.

In **Cleveland, Ohio**, School Wellness Teams have been developed in three local elementary schools. These teams will take the lead in their respective schools to assess the food environment, promote healthy eating messages and behaviors to students and their families, and advocate for policy changes regarding party foods and snacks available in schools.

Preparation: *Assessment*

Validation of assumptions that guide work

Methods/resources: surveys, focus groups, existing data sources, key informant/stakeholder interviews, policy reviews and analysis, direct observation

Promotions: *Communicating*

Community/school wide campaigns

Educating/informing editorial and advisory boards, elected officials, community organizations

Editorials, articles, features and television coverage about healthy eating topics

Community/school events

Point-of-decision prompts

Students at T.T. Minor Elementary School in **Seattle, Washington** are exposed to innovative, unique and culturally relevant initiatives including a healthy eating map to highlight local healthy food choices, and a healthy eating DVD/video targeted to elementary school children.

The Union Square Farmers Market in **Somerville, Massachusetts** serves a multi-cultural population represented by at least seven different languages. In response, the HEbD partnership has developed adequate signage and educational materials to increase access to healthy foods that are also economically appropriate.

Programs: *Increasing Opportunities for Healthy Eating*

Curricula/educational programs for healthy eating

Healthy food instruction programs

Social support for healthy eating

Programs to provide healthy foods

Incentive programs for healthy options

Children and parents living at Romano Circle Public Housing in the **Upper Valley** region of **Vermont** and **New Hampshire** are given regular opportunities to visit area farms and farmers markets, learn healthy ways to prepare fresh produce and receive coupons to pick fresh produce to take home.

Through the **Albuquerque, New Mexico** HEbD project, all students at Valle Vista Elementary School receive locally grown fresh fruit snacks twice a week. This Fresh Snacks program will serve as a model that can be replicated in other schools throughout the Albuquerque Public School System.

Policy: *Influencing Public Decisions*

Increase access to healthy food

Discontinue/limit offering unhealthy food

Increase availability of affordable choices for healthy eating

Establish community/neighborhood requirements for having accessible food providers

Advocate for funding to support healthy eating initiatives

Community action teams comprised of residents from two low-income apartment complexes in **Santa Ana, California** are testing a grassroots approach to educate vending and produce truck operators about bringing healthier items into the neighborhood, and also identifying and publicizing a bus route to the local farmers market.

The **Portland, Oregon** HEbD partnership is integrating their work with the Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council to create sustainable improvements in access to healthy foods. This work includes developing a process and tools for integrating healthy food access issues into local planning and policy making decisions.

Philips Elementary School in **Denver, Colorado** achieved a 46% increase in the number of third grade students who rated proficient or advanced in reading, which was a significant improvement over the previous year. The principal of the school attributes at least part of this increase in reading scores to HEbD policy initiatives that offered students recess before lunch.

Physical Projects: *Creating Supportive Environments*

Food gardens

Equipment for preparing, cooking and storing healthy foods

Accessible food providers

Materials with information to access to healthy food providers

Signs, labels and other educational materials for healthy food/beverage options

In **Buffalo, New York**, the importance of balancing healthy eating and active living is a key message that is reinforced through a student project to design a Health Walk route and cafeteria mural that illustrates the connections between healthy eating and active living.

In **Columbia, Missouri**, a local artist is working with students and staff at West Boulevard Elementary School to paint a mural and redecorate the school cafeteria with a bright and cheerful healthy eating theme to encourage students to choose healthy foods.

In **Chicago, Illinois**, children and families in a low-income neighborhood are engaged in healthy eating through a family cooperative gardens program. Nearly three-quarters of the HEbD projects include some type of food garden.

SEATTLE: SCHOOL-BASED HEbD PROJECT

The "Eat Better, Feel Better Project" at T.T. Minor Elementary School in Seattle assists children and families in making healthy food choices by strengthening nutrition policies, expanding opportunities for nutrition education and focusing on physical improvements in the school cafeteria and garden. Students' families and parents are engaged through activities designed to bridge the school and home environments, including Family Nights that offer opportunities to sample healthy and culturally appropriate recipes, and healthy eating and nutrition education. Culturally relevant initiatives are incorporated into every aspect of Seattle's project to serve the ethnically diverse profile of the students at T.T. Minor Elementary School. Innovative project activities include the development of a healthy eating map to highlight local healthy food choices, incorporation of ethnic cuisine into the school lunch menu and creation of a healthy eating DVD/video targeted to elementary school children. T.T. Minor students are enjoying the salad bar that has been added to the school meal program, as well as nutrition and gardening education through the Food Sense Change curriculum. The "Eat Better, Feel Better Project" also provides support for policy and practice improvements aimed at helping staff members create a school environment that supports healthy eating. A nutrition education and support program is offered to T.T. Minor staff members who serve as role models to the students. The Seattle HEbD partnership is led by Feet First, a nonprofit pedestrian advocacy organization, and partners from the Department of Public Health-Seattle and King County, Seattle Public Schools, University of Washington, Seattle Nutrition Action Consortium and Food Sense Change.

LOUISVILLE: COMMUNITY-BASED HEbD PROJECT

A chef with a passion for helping children in low-income communities and a landscaper with a vivid vision of urban gardening are just two ingredients of Louisville's multi-talented group of HEbD partners. ACTIVE Louisville's healthy eating initiative combines school- and community-based approaches to improving access to healthy foods in its three target neighborhoods, with a special emphasis on a nine-block project area in the Smoketown neighborhood. Through this initiative, the local chef is teaching neighborhood children and families how to prepare healthy foods in a series of cooking classes offered at the Presbyterian Community Center (PCC), Smoketown Farmers Market, and Meyzeek Middle School's truancy program. Neighborhood women participating in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program have a chance to practice their healthy cooking skills at home as the project provides vouchers to purchase fruits and vegetables from the farmers market. The healthy eating program also organizes monthly shopping trips and food demonstrations for residents of a high-rise public housing development. These healthy eating activities and messages for neighborhood children and families are enhanced by work on a community garden that will be used as an outdoor classroom for neighborhood schools and summer youth camps. To ensure the sustainability of these initiatives, ACTIVE Louisville is working to secure long-term resources by creating a sustainability strategy and developing wellness policies at neighborhood schools and the PCC. The partnership also recognizes the importance of role modeling lifestyles that incorporate both active living and healthy eating and has developed its own organizational policies for healthy food options served at partnership meetings. The partnership has integrated active living and healthy eating mesages for promotional strategies in the community. ACTIVE Louisville is a diverse partnership led by the Louisville Metro Housing Authority. It includes the Transit Authority of River City, Healthy Hometown Movement of the Mayor's Office, Metro Health Department, PCC, Meyzeek Middle School, Jefferson County Cooperative Extension Service, Community Farm Alliance, and a respected local chef.