



East Tennessee State University Team Up for Healthy Living Project Summary

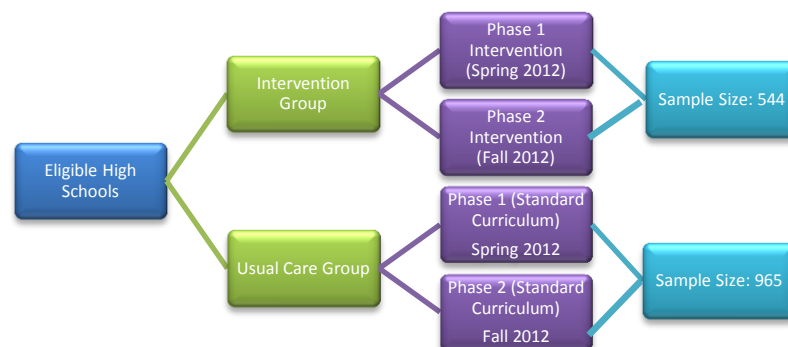


The Team Up for Healthy Living research project was developed by a team of researchers at ETSU led by the late Dr. Tiejian Wu in response to a growing concern over adolescent obesity in northeast Tennessee. Adolescence is widely recognized as a critical time for establishing healthy lifestyle patterns. By encouraging personal wellness, leadership and positive peer modeling at a young age, we may prevent the development of obesity and chronic diseases in adulthood.

To date, obesity prevention projects targeting high school students are limited. This project aims to conduct a cross-peer led education program in regional high schools using ETSU undergraduate students as peer educators. The peer education model is increasingly valued as a method for encouraging positive behavior change in this age group. Eventually, we hope to determine if this program is effective in improving health outcomes in the high school students, and to identify which factors contribute to the program's success.

Team Up for Healthy Living has two major components: 1) An eight-week intervention targeting students in Lifetime Wellness classes; and 2) Student assessments at baseline, three-months, and one year following the baseline assessment (see Timeline). Participating schools will be randomly picked to be a part of the intervention or to act as usual care schools. The usual care schools will continue with the standard Lifetime Wellness curriculum. Student assessments will take place at all participating schools (see figure 1).

Project Framework



Intervention sessions will be led by trained ETSU peer educators. These will take place during the regularly scheduled Lifetime Wellness classes for eight weeks during the spring semester (Phase 1) and fall semester (Phase 2); one series will occur in spring 2012, and another in fall 2012. The curriculum, which was designed and piloted by ETSU experts in the fields of nutrition, psychology, kinesiology and public health, will address the following topics: 1) Nutrition Awareness; 2) Eating Styles and Portion Control; 3) Active Living; 4) Effective Communication; 5) Weight bias; and 6) Leadership. The curriculum is highly interactive, involving weekly challenges, such as fruit and vegetable taste-tests, and opportunities for the students to discuss their perspectives on these topics.

Assessments will be used to determine students' body mass index (BMI), knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity, social support, their experiences with teasing about weight, and peer normative behaviors. A baseline assessment of these items will be compared to outcomes three months following the baseline data collection and one year following baseline. Additionally, students will have an opportunity to evaluate their peer educators. Data from these assessments will be used to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness and to guide future program development. The research project has been approved by the ETSU Institutional review Board. Passive parental consent and student assent will be obtained prior to program implementation.

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