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## MODELS FOR PRACTICE

### FOCUS AREA: NUTRITION AND OVERWEIGHT

**Program Name:** Physical Dimensions/Focus

**Location:** Wichita, Kansas

**Problem Addressed:** Lack of Physical Education in the Kansas Schools

**Healthy People 2010 Objective:** 19

**Web Address:** None

#### SNAPSHOT

Physical Focus is one of three physical activity programs integrated in Kansas schools. It is designed to provide middle school students with the ability and knowledge to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

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The overall purpose of both programs is to increase awareness and knowledge of the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle and how to actually live one.

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Physical Dimensions is another physical activity program integrated in Kansas high schools. The purpose of this program is to increase student awareness about living a healthy lifestyle, stress management, and in general, to help improve their decision-making skills about taking drugs, alcohol, or engaging in risky sexual activity.

Physical Focus covers three principal areas, as described below:

- Area 1: Healthy Heart develops the skills and knowledge for a health-enhancing level of fitness and regular habits of physical activity.
- Area 2: Team Power (Team Cardio) develops the students' ability to compete and cooperate together to achieve a common goal.
- Area 3: Life Adventures develops life-long goals of recreational and leisure skills.\*

Physical Dimensions is delivered through a one-year course, divided into nine weeks (three weeks per topic area). Each segment focuses on a particular health topic, achievements, and successful outcomes. One of the advantages of participating in Physical Dimensions is that it offers high school students the chance to be recognized with a certificate for completing the program.

#### THE MODEL

**Blueprint:** The following groups were responsible for integrating the Physical Dimensions/Focus programs in the Kansas school district: Kansas Health Foundation; Kansas State Department of Education; Kansas Public Schools (over 300); Kansas Association for Health, Physical Education,

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Recreation and Dance (KAHPERD); Wichita State University; Emporia State University; Fort Hays State University; Pittsburg State University; and Kansas University.

The Physical Dimensions/Focus project is a grant-funded operation, which is housed at Wichita State University, and is fully staffed with a full-time project director and on-site full-time administrative assistant. The secondary staff members are consultants who serve as part-time curriculum writers and curriculum trainers.

Physical Dimensions/Focus staff identified several problems focusing on physical education, such as low enrollment in elective physical education classes, one year physical education requirement for Kansas schools, high rates of students reporting that physical education was not enjoyable or beneficial to them, and physical education no longer being required in elementary and middle schools. The problems were identified through a series of surveys and interviews conducted by educators in the Kansas schools. From that point, the staff focused on disseminating letters, newsletters, and participating in conferences to promote services to all Kansas schools and physical education teachers.

**Making a Difference:** Physical Dimension/Focus started in 1995, but the models were not fully implemented until 2001. Presently, the two programs are still growing in the Kansas schools. The Physical Dimension/Focus project evaluates its outcomes by keeping a chart of those schools participating in the program and by students' achievement of the program curriculum.

**Beginnings:** Educators in participating Kansas schools made observations regarding the lack of physical activity in the Kansas schools. From the data that were collected, the acclaimed Hellison Model was used to model the two physical activity programs. Physical Dimensions/Focus was integrated in seven middle schools and five high schools to teach young people about the importance of exercising and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

**Challenges and Solutions:** The Kansas Health Foundation originally funded the program, and now the state universities support the program. The program disseminates information by sending out an annual newsletter to the stakeholders, issuing media releases, and organizing statewide conferences for educators.

Physical Dimensions/Focus received the National Health Information Gold Award for its promotional and educational video in 2000. The program has been highlighted in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *USA Today*, *Sports Illustrated*, and several of Kansas's newspapers, magazines, and television news programs.

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## **PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION**

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\* Harris, B.; Ermler, K.; and Mehrhof, J. *Physical Focus, Kansas Middle School Physical Activity and Health/ Wellness Curriculum*. Kansas Health Foundation, 1995.

