

nrg Powered by Choice at George A. Smith Middle School

School Profile

George A. Smith Middle School
Solanco School District
Grades Offered: 6 - 8
County: Lancaster
Total Student Population: 467 students
nrg Advisor: Sue Myers, School Nurse

Building Momentum

In 2007, nrg Advisor and school nurse, Sue Myers attended the nrg Summit with teen students from Smith Middle School. The summit ignited the teens' interest in the campaign's primary issue – changing environments to support students' choices to eat healthier and be more active.

Given the student's passion for wanting to change their school environment, Smith Middle School's Student Senate took a leading role in promoting the nrg Powered by Choice campaign in their school. To get started they ordered an nrg Back to School Pack to get the materials they needed to engage the student body in its efforts.

Campaign Implementation

Student Senate members, with the help of nrg advisor Sue Myers, met with the school food service manager to assess the school environment for opportunities to improve healthy eating and physical activity. Through their meeting the students identified three primary concerns with the school food service program:

- 45 minute lunch periods were too long
- Needed increased access to fruits/vegetables
- Needed breakfast program



nrg teen leaders from Smith Middle School pose for a picture following an nrg Assembly.

Once the Student Senate identified the key concerns they wanted to change about their school food service program, the Student Senate began promoting the nrg Powered by Choice campaign throughout their school by writing articles for the student newspaper and wearing nrg Powered by Choice t-shirts.



The nrg Powered by Choice campaign is funded by Highmark Healthy High 5, a children's health promotion initiative of the Highmark Foundation, created to change behavior in young people ages 6-18 and improve eating habits and physical activity.

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They also began creating a buzz about the changes they wanted to make to the school lunch program through morning announcements that promoted fruit/vegetable lunch promotions, and hosting a school wellness fair. The teens even contributed to the community through a canned-food dodgeball tournament.

After the Student Senate felt they had the student body's attention about the campaign and the changes they hoped to make, the teen leaders worked with school administration to change the lunch period schedule to allow 25 minutes for lunch and 20 minutes for physical activity.

In addition, they wrote and were awarded a Highmark Healthy School Challenge Grant, which enabled them to partner with a local produce distributor to offer fresh fruits and vegetables twice a week at lunch. They also had incentivized taste-testings where members of the student body could enter a raffle to win various promotional items, including a Nintendo Wii.

As a result of the Student Senate's efforts, the school food service program also began offering a "grab and go" breakfast. On average, 60-70 students per day participate (approximately 20% of the school population).

In addition to making changes to the school's food service program, the the Student Senate decided to also hold a fundraiser to purchase new physical education equipment. Through a "Be a Teacher for a Day" fundraiser, they raised \$600 to purchase Dance Dance Revolution (DDR). With the purchased DDR system, the Student Senate then hosted a dance competition that was open to the entire student body, reaching 456 students (reaching almost 100% of the student population).



Smith Middle School student demonstrates some boxing moves with health rapper, Sterlen Barr.

The purchased DDR system is now used as part of the school's physical education curriculum and students are able to rotate through the 2 TV, 20 pad system during PE class. The students can also utilize the system as part of the 20 minutes of activity available during lunch.

If all these changes weren't ambitious enough, members of the Student Senate wanted to encourage younger students to begin eating more fruits and vegetables as well and worked with a local elementary school to host a healthy snacking event.

Empowering Teens

Out of the Student Senate emerged one key teen leader who became the "champion" of nrg Powered by Choice efforts in his school and beyond. The teen leader, eager to change his school's lunch offerings, began regularly addressing his school administration. His determination paid off when meetings were set with his state representative and Pennsylvania Congressman Todd R. Platts and Senator Robert P. Casey in Washington D. C. to discuss healthy school lunch options.