

'Leadership, Mentorship, and Fun' Describes the nrg Powered by Choice Campaign at Yough Middle School

When asked to describe what the nrg Powered by Choice campaign meant to their school, six Yough Middle School students replied, "Friendship, leadership, unity, cooperation, learning, and fun!"

According to nrg advisor and Health and Physical Education Teacher, Karen Ruddon, "Yough Middle School initially became involved with the campaign because we wanted to increase physical activity at our school."

From that initial idea, the campaign served as the impetus for a successful leadership and mentoring program – one that would improve relationships between fifth and eighth grade students and create an easier transition into high school.

Eighth grade students who previously demonstrated exceptional leadership skills were asked to serve as mentors or "health coaches" to their younger fifth grade classmates. Not only did it offer eighth grade students the opportunity to possess a leadership position within the school, but it also provided an additional avenue for students to interact with their peers.

As the crux of the program, fifth and eighth graders at Yough Middle School utilized the nrg Ultimate Frisbee kit, a free resource available through the nrg Powered by Choice campaign, to plan a four-day Ultimate Frisbee tournament.

Starting at the beginning of the school year in September, the students met monthly to plan the May tournament. They worked together to organize the four-day event and decide upon tournament guidelines. In the end, eight teams – one representing each fifth grade homeroom – participated and included students of all physical activity levels.

The event was supported by music, art, and computer teachers who were gracious enough to agree to give up some of their class time to the event. Eighth graders served as spectators at the tournament.

The tournament proved successful on many levels. Not only did students enjoy the event, but following the tournament, Ultimate Frisbee continues to pop up as a reoccurring theme during recess. The tournament supported the school's wellness policy and helped students meet the required physical activity time needed.

Most importantly, students were taught how to be leaders and serve as a role model to their peers. "I saw them (the students) grow so much through this experience, remarked Ruddon. "We hope to begin a tradition and continue the program on a yearly basis."

The nrg Powered by Choice campaign is a program of the Center for Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital.



The 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. For more information, visit www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org.