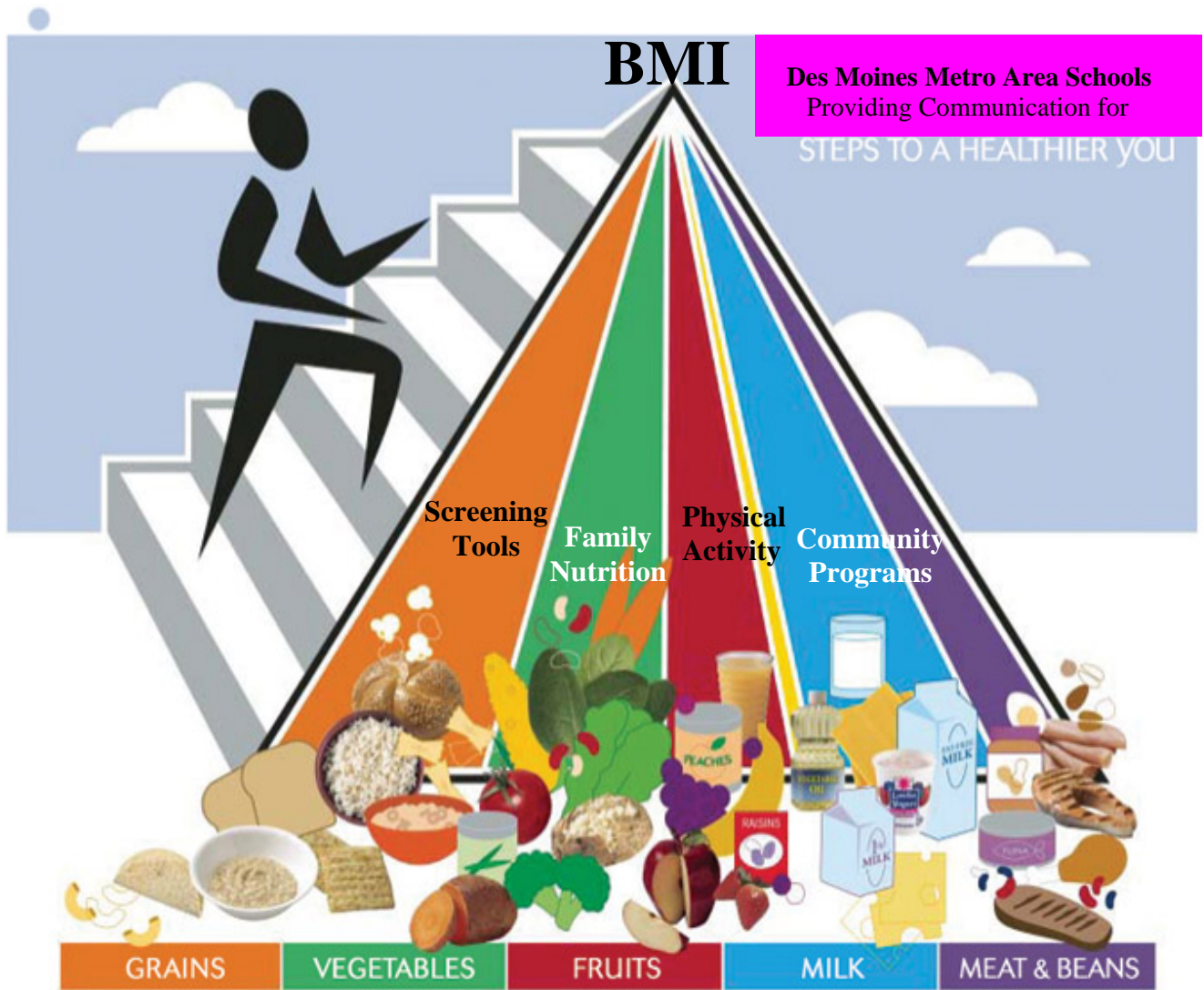


BMI Focus Group Final Report



Body Mass Index Focus Groups

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section provides an overview of the BMI focus group results with key outcomes of the research. A total of two focus group sessions were conducted which represented parents with elementary aged students from the Des Moines metro area schools. Group 1 had nine (9) parents from West Des Moines, Saydel, and S.E. Polk schools and Group 2 had ten (10) parents from the Des Moines Community School District. The focus group sessions were held on, Thursday, April 2, 2008 at Harvest Research Center located in Des Moines, Iowa.

The impetus for this research was to evaluate the various messages that best communicated with the parents as it relates to; health, nutrition, and Body Mass Index (BMI) and to determine the preferred method to receive this type of communication.

During the focus group process, we discussed pre-assigned collages of the top five favorite foods and top three activities of each parent and their elementary aged child. In addition, the parents completed several handouts related to the various family fitness programs, the number of times per week their family can actually commit to physical activities, and an evaluation on school nutrition.

The parents also evaluated two letters that could be used to notify them that their child had been screened and that their BMI levels varied from other children his or her age. Lastly, they reviewed a fitness gram and a family nutrition and physical activity screening tool.

The prevailing assessment of the research results indicates that the focus group participants viewed the information and programs being considered as a very valuable and educational tool. However, they did voice some concerns regarding the communication process.

There were indeed distinct differences, and some similarities, in how the groups perceived the information. For example, the first group's concerns were from the perspective that they, or their doctor, should make some of these decisions, not the schools. The second group had similar concerns, but theirs were more

related to trust; whether the results of the data could be used against them as grounds for neglect.

Both groups indicated that the two letters they evaluated conveyed different messages, especially as relates to; how they perceived the messages and the actions they should take as a result. For example, the letter from the Des Moines CSD, the parents indicated that the letter really isn't telling them anything other than, "their child is overweight and they had already conducted the screening and is informing them after the fact."

As a result, neither of the groups really liked the letter and stated that it was negative and if they received it in the mail they would be upset.

The letter they evaluated from the Crossroads Park Elementary school, the parents indicated that it was more informational and helpful; it had national statistics, explained what BMI was, and provided them with steps they can take to improve their child's health and nutrition.

Both groups stated that they really liked the "Fitness Gram" handout. They especially liked the charts, the description of what each item was and how it seem to be designed to meet the child's specific needs.

The groups, however, seem to have mixed views regarding the value of the "Family Nutrition and Physical Activity Screening Tool." Group 1 really liked the screening tool. They thought it was a good guide to use as a barometer to gauge how they are doing as a family. It also provided things they can do to improve in those areas.

In Group 2, some of the parents liked the screening tool and some didn't see the value in it. They indicated that, "It provides some good ideas, but now that I know this, am I really going to change my behavior because of it?"

On Handout 1, both groups rated "Parks & Recreation" activities as their # 1 choice, followed by second and third choices of; Cause Related Walks and YMCA Trim Kids in Group 1 and Community Programs and Cause Related Walks respectively, in Group 2.

In Handout 2, Group 1 results indicate that the number of days per week they can realistically commit as a family is two (at a local gym, fitness center or YMCA), preferably after dinner. Group 2 results indicate a tie between 2, 3, and 4 days per week they can commit, either at home or outdoor activities at parks, after dinner.

Regarding Handout 3 (School Nutrition), the parents in Group I rated the question, "*I trust the schools are working in the best interest of my child when they are performing the BMI screener*" very favorably, but rated it unfavorably

when asked, *"I support the idea of using a Body Mass Index screener at the schools."* Group 2 rated both of the questions favorably.

In summary, a majority of the parents stated that the topic of BMI is a very sensitive issue and understand the importance of the schools trying to get this issue under control. The data results from both groups seemed to indicate that, although they are concerned regarding their child's nutrition and BMI results, they are just as concern regarding how the results of that information is handled and communicated to external audiences.

Both groups had concerns regarding how the results are being communicated:

- 1). Are the schools informing the child before the parents are notified of the results and informing the parents before the BMI screenings are conducted?
- 2). How will the schools handle privacy, or the potential for other students singling out their child and calling them names, if the screening results are negative?
- 3). How will the schools communicate to the parents, and child, that this requires a "Lifestyle Change?"
- 4). How will the schools handle that a majority of the screening tools strictly focuses on BMI and not enough on eating disorders, which is becoming a national epidemic.

These were the four main points of emphasis that consistently surfaced from the focus group discussions. Therefore, in order for the programs (nutrition, fitness, BMI screenings) and letters to be effective, and successful, these issues have to be addressed.

In the next section of the report are the detailed results of each of the focus group sessions. The questions will be indicated first, followed by the participants' responses.

The "Discussion and Results" section will be followed by a "Recommendation" section which will provide recommended steps to take based on the results of the data.

DISCUSSION & RESULTS

Group I (Suburban Schools)

Q1 Have parents discuss their collages: Each of you brought some collages of foods and activities, I would now like to discuss why you selected those particular foods and activities for your collages? (These will be collected and information on choices will be tallied for the final report)

Answer: SEE RESULTS IN APPENDIX

Q2. What do you like about what the school is currently doing to promote health and wellness in your children? What can they do better?

Answer:

- Annual Track Meeting (Running, Competing)
- Nutrition Nuggets
- Ideas for parents regarding better activities to do - not only for kids, but family
- Health section on reading labels and understanding nutrition. Parents had to be involved because they had to sign it and turn it in.
- These nutrition activities are very positive because when my child is in the grocery store, I'm noticing they are reading the labels on items in the aisles. Therefore, it is paying off.
- Gets them involved in more long-term programs

Q3. What could parents and/or children do to improve nutrition and being more physically active in the home?

Answer:

- Set a good example. As a parent, if you are active yourself, your child at a younger age will be more inclined to be active.
- Eat healthy. By buying healthy, or healthier foods, the kids will eat the healthy foods. If the parents buy a lot of junk type foods that's what they will eat.
- We tend to eat quick prepared and process foods and it has an effect on my child.
- We need to have more vegetables and fruits accessible so they can get it themselves.
- My family made a pledge that we will not eat fast food at Mc Donald's for 3 weeks. In the meantime, we've saved money and are all eating healthier. In fact, we have extended it beyond the 3 weeks.
- Limit game time and get them to burn some energy

Impressions of Body Mass Index (BMI)

Q4. By show of hands, how many of you have heard of the term; Body Mass Index?

Answer: All had heard of BMI

Q5. First, those of you that have not heard of the term Body Mass Index, what do you think the term mean? Those that have heard of it, how would you describe it?

Answer:

- Calculates the weight and height
- Fat in body and sugar intake
- It rates the ratio of your body
- Provides a range that is healthy
- Charts your health that is appropriate for your age

Q6. What is your perception of schools screening children for Body Mass Index?

Answer: *Only 2 knew the schools screened for BMI*

- I didn't know the schools screened for BMI. If they do, they aren't publicizing it very well.
- No it is not okay. Kids are cruel.
- When the kids jump on the scale other kids are seeing this. If the results are negative they will be teased.
- Results should go directly to the parents similar to the grades w/o the kids even seeing the results.
- I would feel much better if they would help do something to fix it as opposed to just giving me the information and sending me on my merry way.

Q7. First, and foremost, do you even want to know about your child's Body Mass Index and would you feel comfortable discussing the topic of Body Mass Index with your child?

Answer: *All wanted to know and would feel comfortable discussing their child's BMI*

- Yes, I would feel comfortable. However, I'm not sure they would understand it, but I will tell them.
- We put too much focus on weight and not enough on our "health."
- You can be a little overweight and still be healthy. Someone underweight or within the range can still be healthy because it depends on your exercise and activities and what you put in your body.

Q8. Would you feel comfortable discussing the topic Body Mass Index with a school nurse or nutritionist representative at your child's school?

Answer: *Yes, all would feel comfortable*

Q9. How would you like to be notified that these **screenings** are going to take place? (*i.e. email, phone call, flyer, or letter*)

Answer:

- Bring notes home with the information so we can sign-off on it.
- Make sure the information is sealed.
- Emails are good

- Letters in the mail. Plus, notify us that it is going to be conducted before hand.

Q10. What information about your child would you like to receive resulting from the screening?

Answer:

- Suggestions on what to do if my child is out of range.
- Are they going to have counseling on going in schools on nutrition?
- Who to contact regarding the results.
- Bench marks for the child range and explanation in laymen terms regarding what the data is saying.
- If I reviewed something in the mail indicating that my child is over or under weight, I would began to wonder what am I doing wrong as a parent?
- If we as parents are involved in our child lives, we should already know the results – that our child is overweight. It shouldn't be a mystery. However, the school should provide us information to help educate us on it.
- I would want to be given a choice. I don't want the school to tell me, or my child, that they are over or under weight.

LETTER REVIEW RESULTS

Review of current notification options:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Letter from West Des Moines | Letter from DMPS |
| Current Fitness Gram | Family Nutrition and Physical Activity Screening Tool |

Q11. If you received this letter in the mail, first tell me if it's something that you fully understand and then give me your overall impression of the letter? (Repeat for the other options)

OPTION (Group may format their idea for a letter, comprised of ideas from all three options and insights)

Pink Letter (Des Moines Schools)

- I don't like it. It comes across as if they are singling out my child.
- It's borderline rude. Wording is not very good.
- They are telling me, they are not recommending or suggesting anything.
- I'd rather get a phone call than this letter. It states, "your child screening results varied from other children his or her age." Although there may be others, it makes it seem like my child is the only one receiving this letter.

- It could be worded better. For example, “A screening of your child’s height and weight has been conducted at school. Please share the results with your doctor.” And stop there!

Green Letter (Crossroads Park)

- I like it. It inclusive and inviting and tells you exactly what you need to do.
- It provides national statistics and give ranges to compare my child’s BMI against.
- It is educational, informative, provides information on eye screenings.
- It provides information on obesity and nothing on eating disorders.

Family Nutrition & Physical Activity Screening Tool

- It’s an eye opener. We do a lot of these things without realizing it.
- Makes me aware of things I can do to improve my health and nutrition.

Fitness Gram

- I’m a visual person and this information just jumps right out at me. It categorizes everything for you.
- I like that it charts and tracks your past fitness activities to your current. Therefore, it allows you to see the improvements.
- It categorizes the fitness activities and provides a description of each item and a healthy fitness zone of each.

Q12. What method of communication would you prefer? (Written progress report that goes out to **all** students, written notice only if your child has a finding that warrants further follow-up, or alternate means of communication besides written notices, i.e. email or verbally at conferences, phone call, etc. ?

Answer:

- All items just mentioned are good ways to communicate to parents.
- As long as it’s going to all students.
- Parents must receive a letter via mail. Otherwise, parents talk and the worst thing that can happen is when you are out and you have know idea what they are talking about. If you received the letter, you are informed and prepared to have an intelligent conversation.

Q13. Would you want to receive information about programs that can help to address your child’s growth concerns? Why, or Why Not?

Answer: *Majority indicated NO*

- No. My doctor and I would discuss that.
- No. It could be that the child has been screened and just going through a growth spurt and I receive a letter from the school scaring the dickens out of me. It’s best left to my doctor.

Impact on student and or parents regarding Screening

Q14. Because this may be a sensitive issue to some parents, what steps can the school take to dispel the possible perception that a parent or child may feel they are being singled out if the Body Mass Index screener indicates that their child is overweight or too thin?

Answer:

- Send notifications ahead of time prior to conducting the screening.
- By sending it ahead, it gives me the choice as a parent to opt out if I so choose.
- I would probably be fine with receiving the pink sheet if it was addressed to me prior to conducting the BMI screening.
- Information has to be confidential and sealed. I don't even want my child to be able to read it before I receive it.
- You have to educate the parents. For example, the school can have in the letter about "Obesity and underweight and discuss the problems that can arise from that and then indicate that as a school we feel it is important that you do this or that. If you would like to participate, or not participate, please sign this sheet."

Q15. If you contact the school, who would you like to be involved in the conversation, if the Body Mass Index screener shows that your child is overweight or too thin, including or excluding the child? (**Probe:** *school nurse, counselor, PE teacher, other*)

Answer:

- Nurse and counselors,
- Teachers, in case they see some drastic change in the child's behavior because the screening indicate my child is overweight or kids teased him that he is fat.
- I would have no problem having a conversation with the school nurse or nutritionist. It's no different than an eye exam or seeing the doctor.

Backroom Questions

A. What questions would you like ask the school nurse or counselor?

Answer:

- What support are they going to provide?
- If my child's body make-up or bone structure is different from other children, what are they using to adjust for accuracy?

B. Is there any specific type of information the staff could provide you?

Answer:

- How often will the test be performed?
- Do you have information on different programs related to nutrition and fitness?
- I can't expect the school to tell me what to do. I should be able to have them provide me information that is helpful. That's what a lot of parents are doing, looking for the school to tell them what to do.
- If the school is going to do something, I want it to be a full program – see it all the way through.
- Full program meaning, the school can't just take the screening test and say, "here, these are the results." They must assist with program resolutions. It has to come full-circle – not here and good luck!

C. Would the BMI nurse tell you anything that you don't already know?

Answer:

- Probably the most important thing they can tell us, which most parents don't fully understand, is that this has to be a "Lifestyle Change."
- This has to be a lifestyle change at the schools and home. They must be aware of what they serve at school and eat at home. It's good that the schools are starting this at an early age.
- We all knew what BMI was, but it probably depends on the community that you are in.
- If a person has lived their whole life in front of the t.v. and eating bad food, how would they know unless they are truly educated.

Closing Remarks

Out of all the things we discussed here and the different letters and evaluations you've seen, what do you think we are trying to accomplish?

Answer:

- The schools want to do something positive and want us to be informed and educated.
- They are trying to indicate that based on national statistics and trends in our society, they recognize this is becoming a problem. Although the parents are aware of obesity, underweight, and eating disorders, the schools feel they need to educate at an early age – on up.
- Unfortunately, because of drug awareness type programs and parents are increasingly busy, they assume the kids are picking it up.
- I think it's a good thing what the schools are doing here. My husband and I are a little overweight and I didn't get this at school when I was growing up. This can get me motivated to get off the couch as a family and work on fitness, outdoor activities and nutrition.

- Overall, I don't think this is negative. It's how you come across with this and communicate it. I'm concerned where the line is drawn. I can see in some of this where my kids can get picked on.

Handout I: Utilizing a scale of 1 -5 (1 – being “Very disinterested ” and 5 – being “Very Interested”), please indicate your interest regarding the following options

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Very Disinterested | Somewhat Disinterested | Neutral | Somewhat Interested | Very Interested |

- 1). 3.6 YMCA Trim Kids or Trim Tot Programs?
Each week parents and their children learn fun and new ways to increase their daily activity while practicing achievable eating goals. Children will learn new and exciting ways to exercise, designed specifically for their current weight, while their parent/s enjoy a variety of presentations, including the ever-popular menu planning with nutritious kid-tested recipes!
- 2). 4.4 Park & Rec opportunities; such as 12 miles of biking/walking trails that run throughout the city. Recreational programs and activities are offered year round and range from swim lessons to performing arts to outdoor recreation
- 3). 3.8 Community programs, such as walk the trails or bike ride two nights a week as a family activity in your neighborhoods?
- 4). 4.1 Cause related walks; like juvenile diabetes or cancer walks?
- 5). 2.9 Continuing education classes, such as cooking with nutrition in mind or kid friendly nutritious snacks?
- 6). 2.2 A walking school bus (A Safe way to Walk to School with an adult)

Handout II: Schools and communities want to help support families, but **realistically** how much time per week could, or would, your family commit to physical activity?

Meaning, how many days per week on average? (Check One)

- 1). 0 None
- 2). 0 1
- 3). 5 2
- 4). 2 3
- 5). 2 4 or more

Next, how much time per day on average? (Check One)

- 1). 0 None

- 2). 2 15-20 minutes
- 3). 3 30 minutes
- 4). 2 45 minutes
- 5). 2 1 hour or more

What time of day, would your family be the most successful? (Check One)

- 1). 0 Before school
- 2). 0 After school
- 3). 2 After dinner
- 4). 0 Weekends
- 5). 7 Combination

Where would your family be the most successful? (Check One)

- 1). 2 At home
- 2). 0 At School sponsored activities
- 3). 0 At Church
- 4). 4 At local gym, fitness center or YMCA
- 5). 3 Outdoor activities at parks

HANDOUT III:

Utilizing a scale of 1 -5 (1 – being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 – being “Strongly Agree”), please indicate your opinion regarding the School Nutrition:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Fair | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1). <u>3.8</u> | | | | |
| | The school district offers nutritious meal programs that are fully accessible to all students? | | | |
| 2). <u>3.6</u> | | | | |
| | The school meals include a variety of foods that are affordable, appealing and nutritious? | | | |
| 3). <u>2.6</u> | | | | |
| | Your children are allowed adequate time to eat school meals? | | | |
| 4). <u>3.3</u> | | | | |
| | The school is doing well with its current school meal program? | | | |
| 5). <u>2.8</u> | | | | |
| | You are aware of what your child is learning about regarding good nutrition and food safety? | | | |
| 6). <u>4.2</u> | | | | |
| | You have enough information as a parent to assist you in making good nutrition choices for you and your family? | | | |
| 7). <u>4.9</u> | | | | |
| | I support the idea of using a Body Mass Index screener at the schools? | | | |
| 8). <u>4.2</u> | | | | |
| | I support the idea of using a Vision Screening process at my child's school | | | |
| 9). <u>4.3</u> | | | | |
| | I support the idea of using a Hearing Screening process at my child's school | | | |

- 10). 2.1 I would like to receive information about programs that can help address growth concerns?
- 11). 4.0 I trust the schools are working in the best interest of my child when they are performing the BMI screener?
- 12). 3.6 I believe the school provides adequate time in a school day for my child to do physical activity.
- 13). 2.3 I believe the school day does not include enough time for my child to be physically active or exercise.
- 14). 3.6 I believe the school needs to provide 30-60 minutes of physical activity every day for my child.

Group II (Des Moines CSD)

Q1 Have parents discuss their collages: Each of you brought some collages of foods and activities, I would now like to discuss why you selected those particular foods and activities for your collages? (These will be collected and information on choices will be tallied for the final report)

Answer: *SEE RESULTS IN APPENDIX*

Q2. What do you like about what the school is currently doing to promote health and wellness in your children? What can they do better?

Answer:

- Variety of Dairy. More vegetables
- Our school put in a walking track.
- At my child school, they have someone come around and introduce a new food once a month.
- Get to do more P.E. activities and get rewarded for 2 mile, 5 miles, and so many push-ups and set-ups.
- Getting ready for the spring track and field events at the school. They use that as a motivator.

Q3. What could parents and/or children do to improve nutrition and being more physically active in the home?

Answer:

- Shut off the videogames. Had I given him the chance to just sit there and play videogames all day long, he would have. But, I encouraged him to do activities outside, and other activities in general. Now he is only playing for a little while without me telling him. I think it's a mindset and parents just encouraging them to do other things.
- Eliminate Pop.

- Watch the portions that they eat. When my child try to go back for seconds, when I know he has had enough, I say no.
- Not keeping the house stock with a lot of junk and processed foods.
- Encourage kids to eat more breakfast foods in the morning and not just pop.
- Eat at fast food restaurants once a month instead of almost everyday.

Impressions of Body Mass Index (BMI)

Q4. By show of hands, how many of you have heard of the term; Body Mass Index?

Answer: *All Had heard of BMI*

Q5. First, those of you that have not heard of the term Body Mass Index, what do you think the term mean? Those that have heard of it, how would you describe it?

Answer:

- Fat to muscle combines the body weight
- Percentage of Fat on the body.
- Combination of body frame size/ lean muscle compared to fat along with your weight.
- Body frame with what it should be
- Ratio of fat, height/weight, lean muscle and how it should balance out.
- Total fat on the body.

Impressions regarding Screening Procedures

Q6. What is your perception of schools screening children for Body Mass Index?

Answer:

- If they keep it confidential, I'm fine with it.
- The school can actually use this in court and label you as neglect.
- What would be the reason schools getting involved in my child's weight. Is this their role?
- If they were to use it to work harder with my child in their fitness in gym I think it would be good as long as they do something productive with the results.
- If they would use it for statistics to say, X percentage of kids in this school was at this BMI rate that would be fine, but not individualize it.

- If it is used to re-evaluate the nutrition program, P.E. dept., etc.... for providing better lunches and to get the support for this type of program from parents and the district.

Q7. First, and foremost, do you even want to know about your child's Body Mass Index and would you feel comfortable discussing the topic of Body Mass Index with your child?

Answer: *All would want to know and would feel comfortable discussing the BMI*

- The first thing I would tell my child is we need to change some things – it depends how far off the chart she is.
- Use it to teach them that I'm doing something wrong. It allows me to help them.
- Be more pro-active in taking care of your health before it gets out of hand.

Q8. Would you feel comfortable discussing the topic Body Mass Index with a school nurse or nutritionist representative at your child's school?

Answer:

- Yes. If it is confidential.
- Yes. However, by kids hate the lunches at school. They need to get them something that they are going to actually eat so it doesn't get thrown in the garbage. That's not good for the kids or the school.
- What's the normal range they need to be? Sometimes they seem really harsh.

Q9. How would you like to be notified that these **screenings** are going to take place? (*i.e. email, phone call, flyer, or letter*)

Answer:

- Email
- Conferences. You can find out a lot by asking questions at conferences.
- Letters went home to the address. We don't always receive the information if the kids bring it home.

Q10. What information about your child would you like to receive resulting from the screening?

Answer:

- What is the range.
- If we are out of range, how far and what are the steps we can take to get back in range?

- BMI may also help me understand my range because of body structure. I may, or may not, be overweight because the BMI take into account my body mass to fat content.
- My daughter is in the 3rd grade and there is a child that's throwing up because she wants to be thin. Most parents don't know how to handle this and is not equipped to see their child doing this type of behavior. I tell my child that, you don't have to worry so much at this age at being thin.
- Some parents sugar coat things with their children. I try to be as honest as possible with them. No, I will not tell them that they are fat, but I will be direct. If he doesn't hear it from me, he is going to have a rude awakening in the real world because some kids can be mean.

Review of current notification options:

Letter from West Des Moines
Current Fitness Gram

Letter from DMPS
Family Nutrition and Physical Activity
Screening Tool

Q11. If you received this letter in the mail, first tell me if it's something that you fully understand and then give me your overall impression of the letter? (Repeat for the other options)

OPTION (Group may format their idea for a letter, comprised of ideas from all three options and insights)

Pink Letter (Des Moines School)

- Prefer the green letter. The pink letter didn't tell me anything.
- I didn't like it at all. There is no information on it. It tells me there is a BMI screening, which I wasn't aware of, and tells me to take this letter to the doctor. If I make an appointment, he's going to look at me and go, "what is this?"
- It tells me my child's height and weight, but where do we go from here?
- The pink letter is telling me after the fact. I want to be able to approve that you can perform the BMI screening on my child.

Green Letter (Crossroads Park)

- It's more informative.
- It spells out everything for you and gives statistics and explains the process.
- I didn't like it on the green letter where it indicates that if you are underweight, they are a lot more gentler – by saying this may be

normal. However, when the child is overweight, they give you all these statistics that scare you.

Family Nutrition & Physical Activity Screening Tool

- It's informative with a lot of statistics and the research to support that finding.
- It's trying to scare you.
- You have to be truthful and honest with yourself. If you are, this could be helpful.
- It's providing knowledge.
- It's a guide you can use to gauge yourself as a family and it provides activities.

Fitness Gram Sheet

- Better Statistics.
- You can see exactly where your child stands.
- It explains whether you are progressing with it or out of range.
- It has instructions for you to take with names and contact information.

Q12. What method of communication would you prefer? (Written progress report that goes out to **all** students, written notice only if your child has a finding that warrants further follow-up, or alternate means of communication besides written notices, i.e. email or verbally at conferences, phone call, etc. ?

Answer:

- Progress report emailed.
- I would prefer to talk to the person that conducted the screening test.
- Conferences, where you can get more information.
- Progress Report. Not when we are so far out and try to get back in range.

Q13. Would you want to receive information about programs that can help to address your child's growth concerns? Why, or Why Not?

Answer: *Majority Said No*

- I will get this type of information from my doctor's office.
- This is not for the school to do.
- Sometimes when they come out with these things, particularly as it relates to growth, it could be misleading or misinformed

Impact on student and or parents regarding Screening

Q14. Because this may be a sensitive issue to some parents, what steps can the school take to dispel the possible perception that a parent or child may feel they are being singled out if the Body Mass Index screener indicates that their child is overweight or too thin?

Answer:

- Schools should not discuss with others.
- Parents can take this type of information better than the child.
- The schools don't have the health history. Therefore, they have to be careful what they say, do or.

Q15. If you contact the school, who would you like to be involved in the Conversation, if the Body Mass Index screener shows that your child is overweight or too thin, including or excluding the child? (**Probe:** *school nurse, counselor, PE teacher, other*)

Answer: *All said Yes*

- I like to talk to whoever did the screening.
- Nurse. She knows, or would understand, the child health symptoms more.
- Healthy Choice Counselor; they better rapport with the kids.

Closing Remarks

As a parent, would you take advantage of literacy nutritional type programs held outside of the school day?

Answer:

- No. I'm too busy.
- As a single parent, it's would be difficult for me to commit to something like this.
- Only if it related to a class that he was taking or if there is a problem.
- Not enough time in the day.
- It would probably depend on the season.

After discussing and reviewing all of this information, what do you think we are trying to accomplish here?

Answer:

- Keep everyone posted on the nutrition and weight program.
- Trying to get the school, parents, and kids on the same page related to their health and nutrition.
- Give us information so we can see how our child is doing and so the school can work together with us.
- Promote making right choices. Healthier U.S. in the future.

- Teach generations not to make the same mistake.
- It's important that the schools let us know. Because, in my case, the school see the child more than I do. I practically only get a chance to see them on the weekends.

Handout I: Utilizing a scale of 1 -5 (1 – being “Very disinterested ” and 5 – being “Very Interested”), please indicate your interest regarding the following options

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Very Disinterested | Somewhat Disinterested | Neutral | Somewhat Interested | Very Interested |

- 1). 3.6 YMCA Trim Kids or Trim Tot Programs?
Each week parents and their children learn fun and new ways to increase their daily activity while practicing achievable eating goals. Children will learn new and exciting ways to exercise, designed specifically for their current weight, while their parent/s enjoy a variety of presentations, including the ever-popular menu planning with nutritious kid-tested recipes!
- 2). 4.5 Park & Rec opportunities; such as 12 miles of biking/walking trails that run throughout the city. Recreational programs and activities are offered year round and range from swim lessons to performing arts to outdoor recreation
- 3). 3.9 Community programs, such as walk the trails or bike ride two nights a week as a family activity in your neighborhoods?
- 4). 3.7 Cause related walks; like juvenile diabetes or cancer walks?
- 5). 3.8 Continuing education classes, such as cooking with nutrition in mind or kid friendly nutritious snacks?
- 6). 3.6 A walking school bus (A Safe way to Walk to School with an adult)

Handout II: Schools and communities want to help support families, but **realistically** how much time per week could, or would, your family commit to physical activity?

Meaning, how many days per week on average? (Check One)

- 1). 0 None
- 2). 1 1
- 3). 3 2
- 4). 3 3
- 5). 3 4 or more

Next, how much time per day on average? (Check One)

- 1). 0 None
- 2). 0 15-20 minutes
- 3). 2 30 minutes
- 4). 4 45 minutes
- 5). 4 1 hour or more

What time of day, would your family be the most successful? (Check One)

- 1). 0 Before school
- 2). 1 After school
- 3). 2 After dinner
- 4). 1 Weekends
- 5). 6 Combination

Where would your family be the most successful? (Check One)

- 1). 3 At home
- 2). 2 At School sponsored activities
- 3). 0 At Church
- 4). 2 At local gym, fitness center or YMCA
- 5). 3 Outdoor activities at parks

HANDOUT III:

Utilizing a scale of 1 -5 (1 – being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 – being “Strongly Agree”), please indicate your opinion regarding the School Nutrition:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Fair | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1). <u>3.8</u> | | | | The school district offers nutritious meal programs that are fully accessible to all students? |
| 2). <u>3.5</u> | | | | The school meals include a variety of foods that are affordable, appealing and nutritious? |
| 3). <u>3.2</u> | | | | Your children are allowed adequate time to eat school meals? |
| 4). <u>3.2</u> | | | | The school is doing well with its current school meal program? |
| 5). <u>4.0</u> | | | | You are aware of what your child is learning about regarding good nutrition and food safety? |
| 6). <u>4.5</u> | | | | You have enough information as a parent to assist you in making good nutrition choices for you and your family? |
| 7). <u>3.5</u> | | | | I support the idea of using a Body Mass Index screener at the schools? |
| 8). <u>4.3</u> | | | | I support the idea of using a Vision Screening process at my child's school |

- 9) 4.2 I support the idea of using a Hearing Screening process at my child's school
- 10). 3.4 I would like to receive information about programs that can help address growth concerns?
11. 3.9 I trust the schools are working in the best interest of my child when they are performing the BMI screener?
- 12). 3.3 I believe the school provides adequate time in a school day for my child to do physical activity.
- 13). 2.8 I believe the school day does not include enough time for my child to be physically active or exercise.
- 14) 3.7 I believe the school needs to provide 30-60 minutes of physical activity every day for my child.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, I highly recommend that the comments, suggestions, and recommendations made by the parents are seriously taken into consideration. As illustrated in the executive summary, and in the data results, the prevailing feedback from the parents provides a foundation for developing solutions for better communication.

It is understandable, however, that not everything suggested can be implemented. Therefore, the recommendations should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and implemented based on the following critical assumptions:

- Does the recommendation fit within the core competencies of the school and the overall goals of the program?
- Does the recommendations have an “adverse effect” on the quality of the educational component of the programs?
- Does the concept add value and benefit to the child and the program. Thus, enhancing the future market potential and growth of this type of program?

Based on the assessment of the focus group research results, there were several key areas that were consistent in both groups and will play a key role in how successful the schools will be in implementing the nutrition, fitness, and BMI programs.

The most visible problem regarding, “how to best communicate to the parents” is **Awareness**. A majority of the parents were not aware that the schools had a

BMI screening program. Therefore, the schools have to do a better job marketing the programs.

The second most common theme of concern was how this information will be disseminated. They recommended that the results remain confidential (even from the child). Plus, it should be sealed and delivered in the mail to their home address. Not in the child's backpack where they may not receive it or the child may read it.

Consistent with what some of the parents stated, it is also recommended that the program be promoted as a, "Lifestyle Change." In order for the nutrition and fitness programs to be successful and effective long-term, there has to be a lifestyle change in their eating habits and the activities they participate in, both individually and as a family.

In addition, the parents indicated that the programs should be "Full-Programs." In other words, they didn't want to just receive information that informs them about their child's BMI and not provide strategies for solutions.

All the parents indicated that they preferred to be informed prior to the BMI screenings are conducted, not after the fact. The letter they evaluated from Crossroads Park Elementary was the most preferred communication piece because it was informative, educational and had all the details they needed.

They would like the fitness gram as an insert. Although the parents had mixed views on the "Family Nutrition & Physical Activity Screening Tool," they thought it would be more useful as a guide.

The parents said the best way to communicate with them is through letters, conferences, and via emails.

The final recommendation is that the schools consider conducting workshops on nutrition, the fitness gram, and on the BMI screening procedures. This would provide parents an opportunity, and a choice, to find out more about the programs.

CLOSING

In closing, we at the Harvest Research Center would like to commend all the representatives involved in the developmental phase of the focus group research for taking the pro-active steps in conducting this type of research. Furthermore, we would like to extend our gratitude of thanks to all the parents for their valuable feedback!

Moderator: Vada Grantham

APPENDIX A

Letters:

- Des Moines CSD (Pink)
- Crossroads Park Elementary (Green)

Family Nutrition & Physical Activity Screening Tool

Fitness Gram

APPENDIX B

Collages: Group 1 & 2