

## PROJECT BRIEF

### Project Health

#### Background

The public school system is an underutilized venue for facilitating the health of adolescents. Although high school health teachers are not typically seen as public health professionals, they are expected to address some of our society's most pressing public health problems, including adolescent pregnancy, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and drug and alcohol abuse. Unfortunately, health teachers are rarely provided with the necessary training, support or tools to adequately fulfill this important role.

#### Purpose

To develop the "Project Health" curriculum, which is designed to support "health competence" among at-risk adolescents in the public school system.

#### Primary Goals

1. Create a curriculum that integrates "best practices" in high school health education.
2. Utilize a project-based learning approach designed to maximize student engagement and the development of health related skills.
3. Test the efficacy of the new curriculum on the health competence of high school students.

Targeted areas of health are: Pregnancy and STD Prevention, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Healthy Dating Relationships, and Stress Management and Reduction.

#### Pilot Study

Our primary objective is to demonstrate feasibility, build a collaborative relationship with Milwaukee Public Schools, and determine which positive health outcomes are attainable and sustainable.

A pilot study in 8 MPS schools was launched in January of 2010. Teachers in 4

schools were trained to administer the Project Health curriculum, and teachers in 4 matched schools volunteered to be included as "control" schools.

Service learning college students from UWM have been placed in each of the 4 project health classrooms to assist with implementing the Project Health curriculum.

We believe that students in the "Project Health" classes will report more healthy behaviors and less risk behaviors that students in the control group. We also expect to observe higher rates of student engagement and improved health related problem solving skills.

These are ambitious goals and we realize that it may take several iterations before we have developed an effective, workable curriculum.

#### Progress to Date

As of March 2010, 160 youth – about 80 in each of the two groups – were administered questionnaires focusing on (a) healthy and risky behaviors (b) problem solving skills, and (c) and intentions.

Baseline data was collected in January of 2010. Follow up data was collected half-

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way through the semester and then at the conclusion of the class. We are also in the process of designing and preparing to implement a process evaluation. Another round of data collection will occur in Spring and Fall of 2010.

### **Funding Sources**

This project is funded through the UWM Center for Addiction and Behavioral Health Research, the Center for Urban Population Health, Centers for Disease Control, and Milwaukee Public Schools. We plan to apply for NIH funding to continue this research.

### **Project Partners**

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The Center for Urban Population Health is a partnership among the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Aurora Health Care, Inc. Our mission is advancing population health research and education to improve the health of urban communities.