

Focus Group 1: Planning and Validation	Focus Group 2: Early evaluation and Expansion	Focus Group 3: Parent and Community Partnership Building
<p>Date: May 2007, prior to program implementation</p> <p>Site: New Britain High School</p> <p>Participants: 9 teen girls recruited through CHC’s school-based health center; the meeting was facilitated by research faculty from the University of Connecticut.</p> <p>Purpose: Teen were asked about 1) body image and perceptions about health, physical activity and nutrition; 2) barriers to physical activity; 3) strategies for increasing physical activity</p>	<p>Date: June and July 2008, approximately one year after the first focus group and after one full school-year of implementation</p> <p>Site: YWCA of New Britain.</p> <p>Participants: 15 girls who had actively participated in program activities during the school year and were identified as potential leaders—or Ambassadors.. University of Connecticut researcher and the program nutritionist facilitated two groups.</p> <p>Purpose: Gather feedback on Healthy Tomorrows, generate ideas for future program activities (the leadership component in particular).</p>	<p>Date: August 2008</p> <p>Site: Spanish Speaking Center (grassroots agency serving Latino community)</p> <p>Participants: 18 Latino parents (17 female/1 male) recruited by the Center. The majority were Spanish-speaking. One was a high school student with a 5-month old baby.</p> <p>Purpose: Gather parent input and recruit parents to serve as members of Healthy Tomorrows Advisory Board.</p>
FINDINGS		
<p>Cultural differences shape attitudes about body image and weight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being “thicker” and “full-bodied” (rather than obese or overweight) is the norm for women in the community. ○ Weight is not perceived as a problem “because that is how everyone is.” ○ A stigma is attached to being “too skinny” or eating well. <p>Girls are somewhat aware of “energy balance” but think eating is less an issue than exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Bigger” people for the most part were not “active.” ○ Laziness and lack of motivation were seen as 	<p>Girls enjoyed all HT activities and wanted to repeat them in 2008-2009.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Girls especially liked activities that combined exercise with a “purpose” (e.g., breast cancer walk, a walk to museum of art, campus visits.) ○ Yoga at the YWCA was highly rated. <p>Girls were interested in a wide range of new activities in 2008-09.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical activities: exercise/dance classes as well as more active sports (rock climbing, volley ball). ○ Nutrition-related activities: visiting interactive Web sites and learning about fat/sugar content of various foods. 	<p>Participants (including the teen parent) were unaware of the Healthy Tomorrows program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents of teens (and the teen parent) were very interested in HT, especially the YWCA membership. ○ 2 parents (including the teen) expressed interest in becoming a member of the Advisory Board. <p>Parents of older adolescents (7 of 18) expressed great concern about the loss of insurance coverage for children over age 18.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children under age 19 were covered by the state S-CHIP plan (HUSKY) ○ Parents were frustrated that adult children

<p>factors in lack of exercise.</p> <p>Girls perceived a lack of control with regard to weight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At a certain age, “you just gain weight.” ○ Lack of exercise was connected to medical issues (diabetes, asthma) ○ Most did not eat breakfast and expressed surprise that they still kept gaining weight. <p>Physical education classes in the high school were a barrier rather than facilitator of access to physical activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Girls were put off by being forced to do activities (especially running) that made them feel self-conscious (changing clothes, looking weird in front of boys, sweating). ○ Routine activities were boring. Girls preferred different activities that might spark interest in sports they initially thought they couldn’t do. ○ Lack of flexibility with afterschool activities decreased participation ○ After school work, family responsibilities (babysitting) severely limits time available for exercise. <p>Girls expressed enthusiasm about a new program for improving physical activity in the school and offered strategies for making it work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don’t promote the program as a “health program”; emphasize that it will make you feel and look better (e.g., you feel/look good now, but what if you could look/feel even better?) ○ Make the program optional and approach people sensitively (not as a weight loss program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Media projects: making a video about eating and exercise. ○ Group activities (visiting an amusement park, ballgame) ○ Career related: “lunch and learn” at CHC with health professionals. <p>Program marketing was not effective; many more students would sign up if they knew more about the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students continued to perceive it as a “health” class rather than “fun.” ○ Free membership at the YWCA was a big incentive, but most students were unaware that it was part of the program. <p>All girls stated that they would be comfortable in a leadership role, specifically promoting Healthy Tomorrows in their school and community.</p> <p>Self-confidence is essential for a good body image, but so are external influences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The media influenced ideas of a “perfect” body. ○ Seeing overweight girls ridiculed by boys at school was an incentive not to get fat. ○ One girl said that not being able to get into clothes prompted her to diet for a few days—otherwise she eats “what she wants.” <p>Timing of meetings was a continuing problem due to girls’ hectic schedules at home and school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Afterschool meetings were a hassle because time was short and many girls had to leave early to meet the bus. <p>Opinions about the effectiveness of incentives to attract/retain members were mixed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Many girls thought gift cards should be reserved for special events (as raffles). 	<p>working in jobs without health benefits were not eligible for state health insurance, while non-working youth were.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Those who applied for state insurance coverage for their children were either denied coverage or had not received any response.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peer support for exercise is a motivator, especially if the peer is a close friend. ○ Explain to participants how activities would be helpful to them and help them change. ○ Introduce new activities that teens might enjoy and feel comfortable doing themselves later (in contrast to PE activities). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Most said they would attend meetings if no gift cards were provided. 	
Use of findings to inform program activities:		
<p>Expanded partnership with the YWCA Memberships in the Y were initially seen as incentives for participation in the school-based program activities. Based on negative perceptions related to school-based PE, CHC and the Y expanded their collaboration, to include free memberships and use of the Y facility for all program participants.</p> <p>Emphasis on peer support. CHC partnered with Wesleyan University to recruit a peer mentor who initiated a program of Saturday workouts at the Y, gmail account to communicate with girls, college field trips, and other activities that responded to girls interests. Girls were also encouraged to exercise with a buddy and were offered incentives for inviting new members.</p> <p>A flexible “portfolio” of fun activities rather than a nutrition workshop. Instead of a six-session workshop (“Food Smart and Fit,” developed for a program funded by the Office on Women’s Health for women in a clinic setting, offering a afterschool “club,” special events, field trips and yoga classes at the Y to participants, with content from the workshop integrated in based on girls’ requests rather than a curriculum.</p>	<p>Expanded use of YWCA programs and facilities. A fitness coordinator on the Y staff will offer afterschool programs 3 days per week to accommodate girls schedules.</p> <p>Marketing the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HT participants (Ambassadors) will market the program to their peers by speaking in classes. • Program Pediatrician has linked to local pediatric department to initiate community referral to program of adolescents to program, including YWCA services. • My Space page set up to communicate program information. • Linking to afterschool programs for middle school students to create “bridge” to HT <p>Adding an evening program. Wesleyan peer mentor has started a Thursday evening cooking session at the Y.</p> <p>Walking club. An HT participant (Ambassador) has started a walking club in Walnut Hill Park as a new student-leader initiated activity.</p> <p>Walkability assessments. Wesleyan mentors are leading HT teens in community service projects to map the route from school to the YWCA.</p>	<p>Initiate partnership with the Center. Following the successful focus groups, CHC invited the Center to become a full partner in HT. Under a subcontract with CHC, the Center will market HT, recruit participants, host parent workshops and provide translation service.</p> <p>Provide parent workshops for Center users. In 2008-09, CHC will provide nutrition workshops to Latino parents at the Center.</p> <p>Expand parent involvement. A Latino parent has joined HT as a member of the Advisory Board and will help market HT within the high school (by speaking at PTO meetings, etc.)</p> <p>Explore sustainability for participants. Pediatrician and CHC staff will explore ways that gains made in the program can be continued as adolescents transition to adult life. Specifically issues of insurance coverage, continued participation in physical activities/gym, career choices will be examined.</p>

