

National School Grant Program

2020–2021 School Year Report



ACTION FOR
HEALTHY
KIDS 

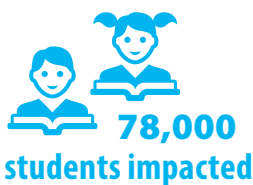
Table of Contents

Grants at a Glance.....	3
Promoting Health in Body and Mind	4
Nutrition Education Grants.....	9
Social-Emotional Health Grants	11
AFHK Family Connect Program	14

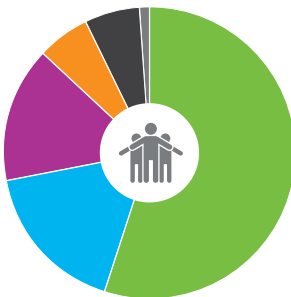
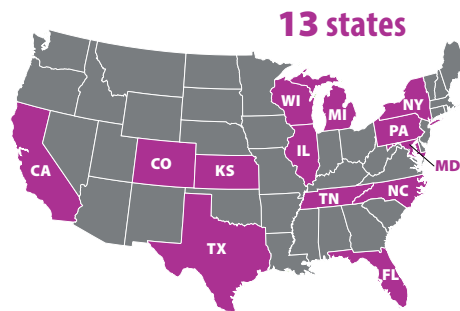


Grants at a Glance

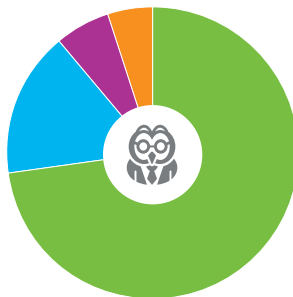
Since 2009, Action for Healthy Kids has worked together with our partners through our school grant program to reach over 3.4 million students in 5,400 school communities across 43 states, ensuring that every child is healthy in body and mind. This report reflects the AFHK school grant program for the 2020–2021 school year. COVID-19 presented students, families and school staff with a host of challenges this year. We are delighted and impressed by the resilience and adaptability shown by this school year's cohort of schools.



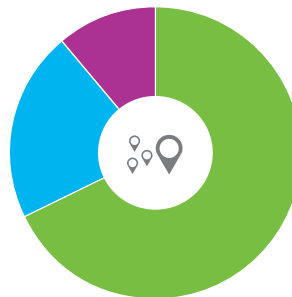
**128 schools* in
58 school districts**



- 55% Hispanic/Latinx
- 17% African American
- 15% Caucasian
- 6% Asian
- 6% Other or Unknown
- 1% Native American/Pacific Islander



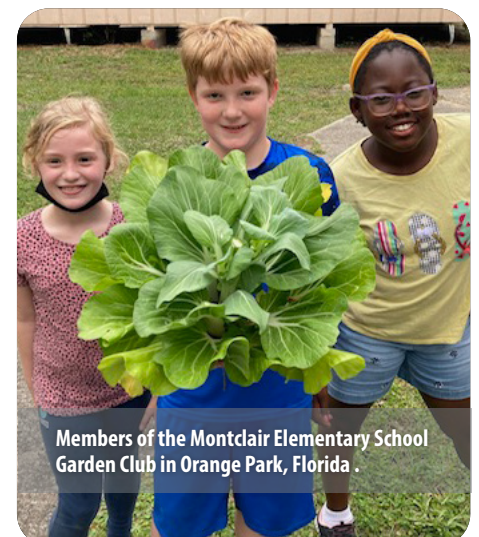
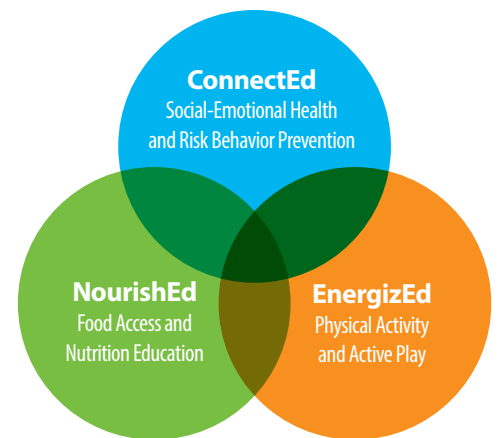
- 73% Elementary
- 16% Middle/Junior High School
- 6% High School
- 5% Combined



- 68% Urban
- 21% Suburban
- 11% Rural/Town

Family-School Partnership Model

AFHK's Family-School Partnership Model alleviates health disparities through equitable, culturally responsive interventions to build relationships between families and schools. These partnerships ensure that underserved children are supported with the foundations of lifelong health that are addressed by our three core programmatic areas.



*Analysis based on 120 final reports submitted by 7/1/21.

Promoting Health in Body and Mind

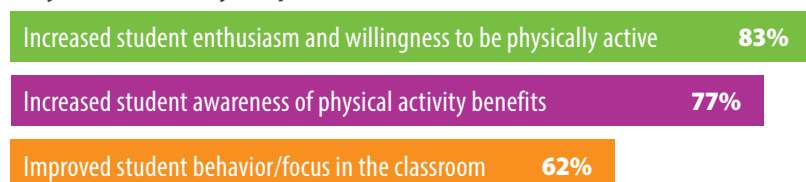
Action for Healthy Kids' Three Core Program Areas

EnergizEd (Physical Activity and Active Play)

School-based physical activity changed to meet the current needs of students.

This year, schools developed innovative ways to keep kids active wherever they are learning by providing at-home resources and equipment to help families get moving. Research shows that just 10 to 20 minutes of movement breaks improve student focus and behavior while learning.¹

Physical Activity Impacts (% of Schools)



65%
of funded schools
implemented physical
activity strategies

Top ways schools increased access to physical activity



Movement Breaks



Active Outdoor Recess



Physical Education Equipment

NourishEd (Food Access and Nutrition Education)

Schools creatively taught and reinforced healthy eating across shifting learning environments.

Nutrition education, cooking classes, and gardening not only happened at school but also at home through video conferencing platforms. Gardens have moved from the school yard to window boxes in students' homes. Research shows that nutrition education increases student knowledge, self-efficacy and consumption of fruits and vegetables.²

Nutrition Impacts (% of Schools)



81%
of funded schools
implemented
nutrition strategies

Top ways schools increased access to healthy eating



Nutrition Education



School Gardens



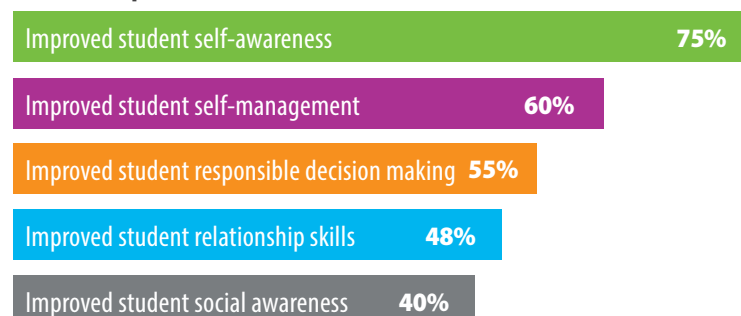
Healthy Cooking Classes

ConnectEd (Social-Emotional Health and Risk Behavior Prevention)

Schools made social-emotional health a priority, giving students the confidence

and skills to build resilience and cope with stress. Research shows that children who participate in school-based social-emotional health programs have positive attitudes towards themselves and others, positive social behaviors and better academic performance.³

SEL Competencies (% of Schools)



100% of schools
improved at least one of five core social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies as a result of their nutrition and/or physical activity strategies

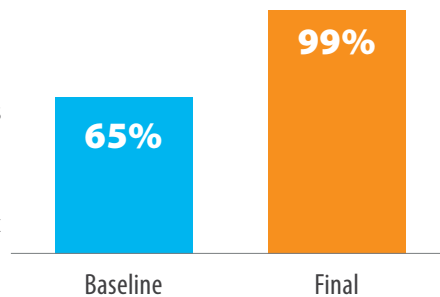
Family-School Partnerships

A common thread among effective school health programs and interventions is the engagement of parents and caregivers within the intervention.⁴ Effective family-school partnerships (FSPs) bring together district leaders, school staff, and parents/caregivers to create healthier communities by collaborating to develop and implement equitable solutions as a team. Increasing family connectedness to the school is key to achieving health equity. Feelings of trust, shared responsibility, and collective understanding can lead to increased family participation and effective family-school partnerships.

School Health Teams

School health teams (SHTs) are groups of school, family and community representatives dedicated to improving school health and wellness policies, programs and practices. SHTs are a great way to facilitate family-school partnerships to support child health and well-being. Students in schools with an active health team have lower average body mass index (BMI) compared to schools without a health team.⁵

34% increase
in schools with a
School Health Team



Learning Sessions

AFHK hosted 35 learning sessions for school/district staff and parents/caregivers. Learning sessions drew 2,355 attendees and included topics such as nutrition education implementation, caring for the self: leveraging SEL for adults, and FSPs. Overall, attendees reported gaining new knowledge, improving their attitudes, and taking action to support FSPs and child health and well-being.

54% of schools
implemented **new opportunities** for
staff and families to **collaborate** this year

26% of schools
increased opportunities for parent/
caregiver **leadership**

What did Family-School Partnerships look like this year?

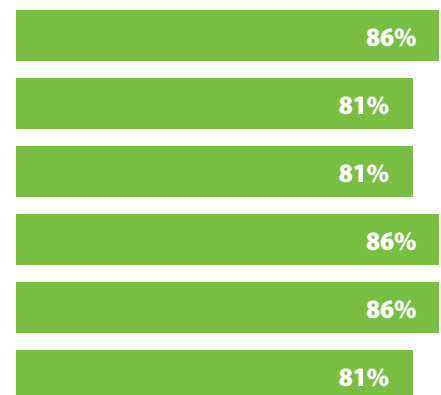
Parents/caregivers and school staff together:

- » Joined school health teams
- » Participated in virtual workshops and online challenges (such as an exercise video challenge)
- » Attended bilingual cooking clubs and classes
- » Created family-school garden teams

% of School and District Staff



% of Parents and Caregivers



⁴Upon completing an AFHK learning session, 124 attendees submitted a post-learning session evaluation survey. There were 103 school and district staff and 21 parents/caregivers. AFHK has a plan to increase respondents next year.

Supporting Schools During COVID-19

As a result of COVID-19, our school partners developed creative, resourceful, and safe ways to prioritize child health and well-being, whether students were learning in the classroom or at home. With the support of AFHK's generous sponsors, our school partners adapted to incorporate social distancing requirements, outdoor learning and leveraged technology for virtual and hybrid learning. AFHK supported this great work by creating tools and resources for caregivers and school staff on nutrition education, physical activity and social-emotional learning to meet specific COVID-19 needs.

Emergency Meal Equipment Grants

Additionally, in 2020, AFHK provided grants to districts for the purchase of emergency meal equipment for more effective and efficient school meal distribution in response to needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.



44 districts



363 total
distribution sites



20 million
total meals served
to children

Every Kid Healthy Week

Every Kid Healthy™ Week (EKHW) is an annual observance created in 2013 to celebrate school health and well-being achievements. Recognized on the calendar of National Health Observances and observed the last full week of April each year, each day of the week shines a spotlight on the great actions schools and families are taking to improve the health and well-being of their kids by linking nutrition, physical activity, and social-emotional health with learning and growth. Schools hosted a mix of in-person and virtual events to celebrate EKHW this year and AFHK was there to support them with digital resources, content for families and schools, and daily virtual activities that students, families and school staff could all take part in.

72%

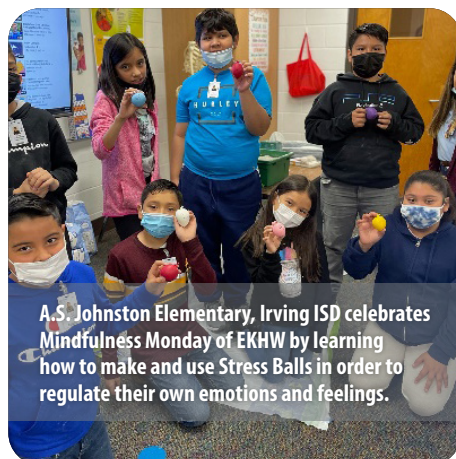
of schools hosted an in-person or virtual Every Kid Healthy Week event

26,443

students, staff, parents and community members attended events

2,866

organic social media engagements during EKHW



A.S. Johnston Elementary, Irving ISD celebrates Mindfulness Monday of EKHW by learning how to make and use Stress Balls in order to regulate their own emotions and feelings.

We had to completely change our curriculum. We focused more on personal fitness and individual activities (badminton, pickleball, fundamentals for different sports, etc.). We found through the year, a majority of the students enjoyed this curriculum over what we have done in the past.

Robin Clary, PE Teacher
Lincoln Junior High, La Salle, IL

68% of schools
engaged volunteers
in their project

Over 500
total volunteers



Contributing **6,500 hours**
of volunteer time for projects

Our children really loved EKHW. We made sure to do a different activity each day. Monday, we had yoga for 20 minutes with a professional yoga instructor. Tuesday, we planted herbs and had a night Cooking Class for Tasty Tuesday. Wednesday, we participated in a day of recycling to teach kids the importance of recycling. Thoughtful Thursday we had the students collect the bottle caps from the recycling they did on Wednesday to make an art project. For Fitness Friday, we had classes go outside for 15 minutes throughout the day to do jump rope and they took their jump ropes home with them. The students behaved so much better this week with the focus on being healthy.

Primary grant contact, PS 264
Bay Ridge Elementary School
Brooklyn, New York

Testimonials and Anecdotes



Students at Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, try foods from Latin America to celebrate "Tasty Tuesday" of EKHW.

We had more kids eating lunch this year. I am sure the lunch and breakfast being "free" had something to do with it. But having an awesome salad bar helped as well! From starting the CATCH program until now, K-2nd grades get excited to tell me, the admin or even their teachers, if they had a GO! food at lunch. I am happy to see they are using what they learned in their everyday life! Thanks again for your help by allowing us to have this grant opportunity.

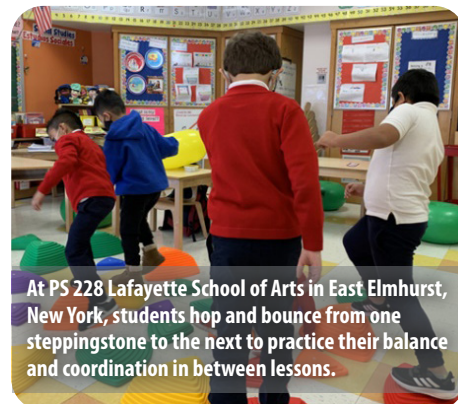
Katie Lorenzini, Physical Education Teacher
Weldon Valley School
Weldona, Colorado

Through learning yoga in his classroom, one student who has experienced significant trauma, found a passion for linking physical activity to self-regulation calming techniques. He loves to try new poses and share them with his friends and has learned how deep breaths can help him manage his emotions and behavior.

Joyce Harduvel, School Social Worker
Earle Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois

As a result of the AFHK grant, our school district offered free breakfast and lunch throughout the pandemic. Each meal provided healthy eating choices and students were encouraged to take both for the days they could not physically pick up.

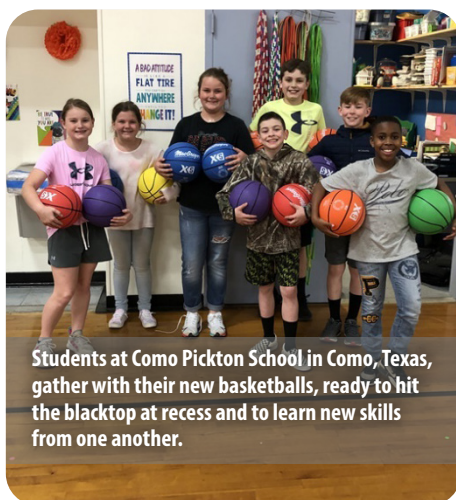
Greg Borchers, Physical Education Teacher
Fieldstone Middle School
North Rockland, New York



At PS 228 Lafayette School of Arts in East Elmhurst, New York, students hop and bounce from one steppingstone to the next to practice their balance and coordination in between lessons.

Brain breaks in the Calming Counseling Suite and the Virtual Calming Room have been implemented this year. The Virtual Calming Room includes a variety of activities that allow for physical activity and emotional support. In the Calming Counseling Suite, visitors have access to items that encourage calming such as stress balls, fidget toys, puzzles, and coloring activities. While sitting in comfortable seating, visitors can watch videos that teach and support relaxation. A student that experienced the loss of a family member used the Calming Counseling Suite to work through feelings of sadness and guilt.

Tara Smith, School Counselor
Western Harnett Middle School, Lillington, North Carolina



Students at Como Pickton School in Como, Texas, gather with their new basketballs, ready to hit the blacktop at recess and to learn new skills from one another.

This program was very insightful and fun during the pandemic. Bringing a virtual cooking class to the kids was genius! It seems like all the students were truly engaged. My son was very excited to learn how to make new things to eat! I also appreciated that the supplies were brought to us. I hope Lincoln keeps this program around!

Parent, Lincoln Elementary School
Pottstown, Pennsylvania



Volunteers from the Milwaukee community add soil to 10 new raised garden beds for students and staff to start a gardening program at St. Joseph Academy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Social Media Snapshot



1,005 social media posts

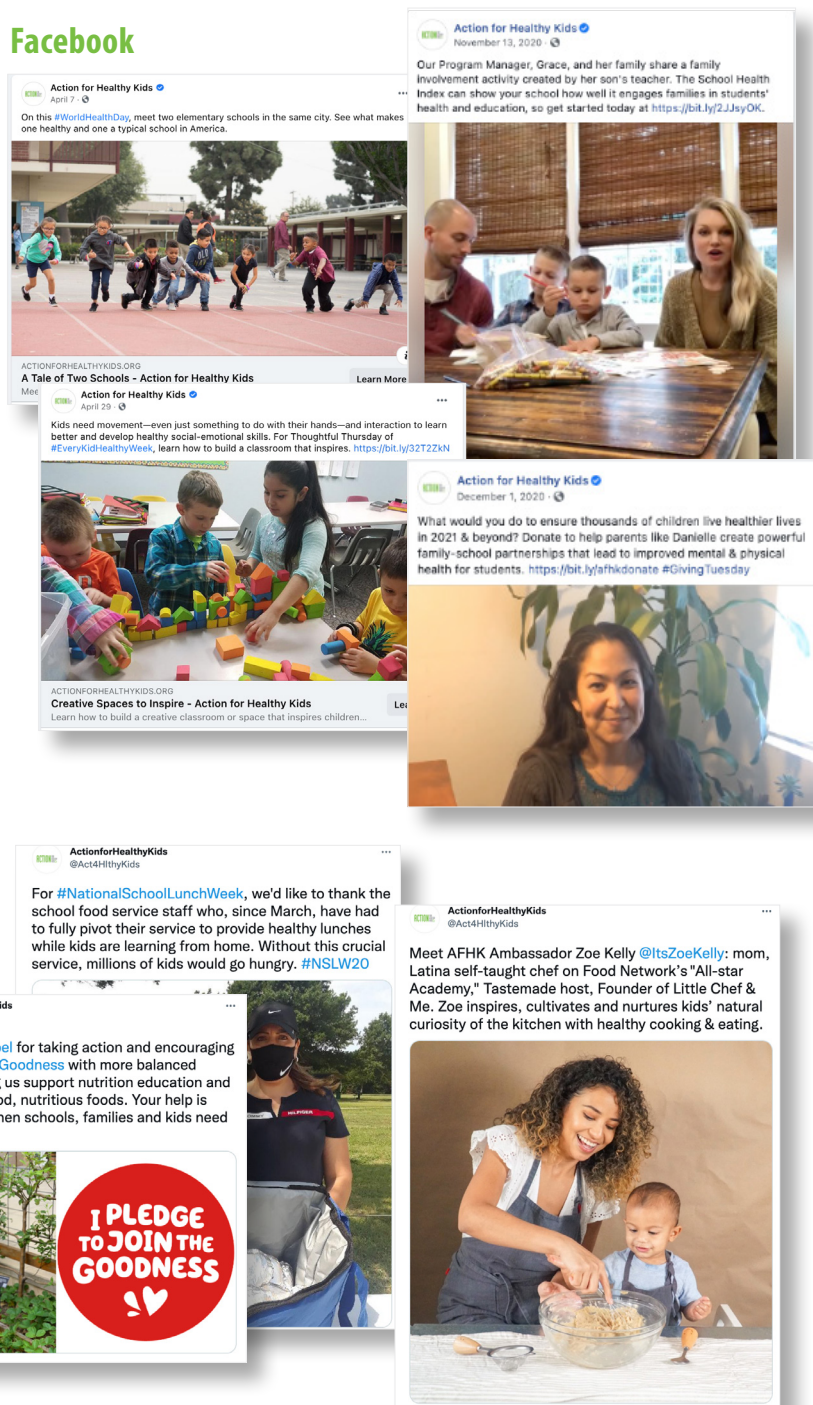
47,742 total followers

748,235 unique impressions

Instagram



Facebook



Twitter



References

- Carlson, J. A., Engelberg, J. K., Cain, K. L., Conway, T. L., Mignano, A. M., Bonilla, E. A., ... & Sallis, J. F. (2015). Implementing classroom physical activity breaks: Associations with student physical activity and classroom behavior. *Preventive medicine*, 81, 67–72.
- Wall, D. E., Least, C., Gromis, J., & Lohse, B. (2012). Nutrition education intervention improves vegetable-related attitude, self-efficacy, preference, and knowledge of fourth-grade students. *Journal of School Health*, 82(1), 37–43.
- Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlack, J. A., Weissber, R. P. (2017). Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects. *Child Development*. 88(4).
- Black, A. P., D'Onise, K., McDermott, R., Vally, H., & O'Dea, K. (2017). How effective are family-based and institutional nutrition interventions in improving children's diet and health? A systematic review. *BMC public health*, 17(1), 818.
- Au, L. E., Crawford, P. B., Woodward-Lopez, G., Gurzo, K., Kao, J., Webb, K. L., & Ritchie, L. D. (2018). School Wellness Committees Are Associated With Lower Body Mass Index Z-Scores and Improved Dietary Intakes in US Children: The Healthy Communities Study. *Journal of School Health*, 88(9), 627–635. *Healthy Communities Study*. *Journal of School Health*, 88(9), 627–635.

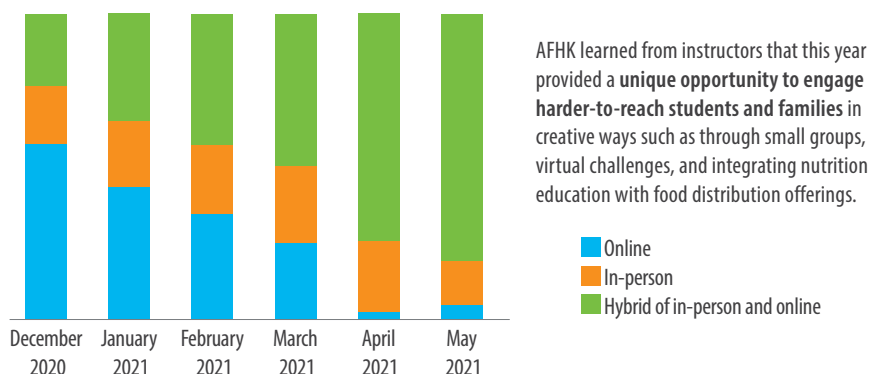
Nutrition Education Grants

Curriculum Implementation

There were 45 schools in 8 districts that were awarded nutrition education grants. Schools implemented an evidence-based nutrition education curriculum grounded in USDA MyPlate and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans that is age-appropriate and culturally relevant. Schools also implemented at least one nutrition best practice strategy, such as gardens, to expand learning outside of the classroom.

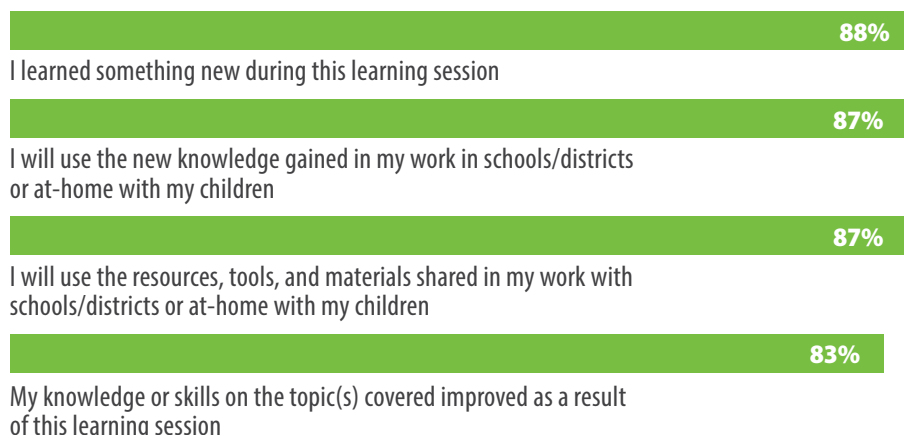
Curriculum instruction, including nutrition education, was impacted as a result of COVID-19. AFHK began tracking nutrition education implementation in December 2020. As shown in the chart below, most schools were implementing their curriculum online. Due to the evolving nature of COVID-19, a hybrid approach increased among schools throughout the school year. Schools adapted to the shifts in instruction and accommodated students' return to the classroom while maintaining their nutrition education curriculum delivery.

% of schools implementing methods of nutrition education instruction



Stakeholder Learning Sessions

AFHK provided three learning sessions to funded schools: Nutrition Education and Best Practices; Food Access and Healthy Eating for Parents/Caregivers; and Food Access and Healthy Eating for Stakeholders. There were a total of 161 learning session attendees with 77 post-surveys completed. Overall, attendees reported gaining new knowledge or skills and shared their intention to apply learnings in schools/districts or at home.



Key Findings from the Evaluation of the Program

During the 2020-21 school year:



19,975

students received nutrition education directly through curriculum instruction



3,147

nutrition education lessons were provided to students for a total of 92,346 minutes

When compared to the previous year, 2020-21 had:



Twice as many nutrition education lessons provided to students with nearly **5,000** additional children reached

89% of schools implemented the CATCH curriculum

"I am new to our community and public school. I feel more comfortable getting involved in nutrition at our school!"

"I now have a better understanding of what is required at breakfast and lunch. As a PE teacher, I was not sure what the requirements were until today."

Success Stories

Maiyer Vang, a school administrator from Parent University, a department of the Fresno School District, launched a comprehensive nutrition project to meet the needs of her community. Her project served meals to hundreds of families in Fresno. She also provided nutrition education through learning sessions to families. AFHK encouraged the School Health Team to be an integral part of healthy schools and school nutrition. Taking that advice, Maiyer united her team at Parent University, included other departments and collaborators such as school sites, nutrition services, local farmers, other community, and district offices. Through collaboration and innovation, this team helped their communities remain resilient and thrive through their food access and nutrition education programming.



Otis Brown Elementary, in the Irving Independent School District, has turned a nutrition grant from Cargill into a life-changing experience for their students, parents, and staff! Health Teacher Marcela Quiroz sent home healthy activities for families to do and was pleasantly surprised when videos of the families started pouring in. She had to enlist help from other teachers in her school to keep up! Kids participated both in-person and virtually, and the teachers encouraged them to do activities outdoors whenever possible. At school, healthy snacks were provided for Fruit Friday and Marcela had a drawing for active prizes and students received an entry for each activity they participated in. Teachers really embraced the challenge and had most of activities completed. Students were provided more than 30 different CATCH* [curriculum] activities to choose to do at home. One student did all 30 CATCH activities and sent a video showing off the different activities. Another student started their own garden and is growing tomatoes and lettuce — and she pulls her wagon with dirt for exercise! Children began to approach Marcela, their teacher, and ask “Is this a good choice?” — when deciding on healthy food options such as white vs. chocolate milk. Marcela shared that the culture of the whole school has changed, including having healthy snacks for teachers instead of candy and chips for teacher appreciation! She shared that she learned, “Parents just needed to know what to do. When I gave them a list of healthy snacks, they used it!”



*CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health curriculum) is a K-8 classroom curricula that consists of 7–14 lessons that are 25–40 minutes long for each grade level. Each lesson identifies key learning objectives and includes a variety of teaching strategies to improve knowledge and skills related to healthy eating and physical activity. To learn more: www.catchinfo.org.

Social-Emotional Health Grants

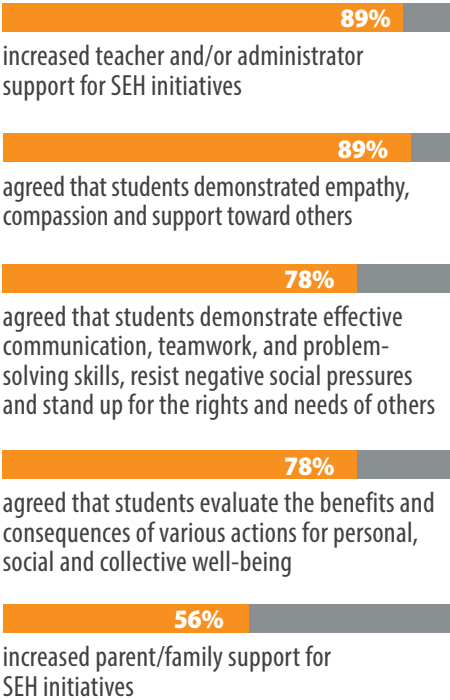
Through the Social-Emotional Health (SEH) Grant Program, AFHK partnered with schools and families in 11 schools, within 5 districts reaching over 6,000 children, to design and implement programming that facilitated the connection between physical and emotional well-being in support of the Whole Child. To do so, strategies chosen for developing and supporting projects aligned with the core practice areas recommended by the Center for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)* for school-wide social-emotional learning (SEL) for implementation, evaluation and improvement.



Connectedness and Nurturing Relationships

Schools and families worked together to build students' social-emotional competencies and model strong relationships for children.

Schools reported the following outcomes:



Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Schools and families worked together to create spaces where children are encouraged to make mistakes, explore emotions, learn and grow at school and at home.

89% of schools increased student participation in SEH initiatives

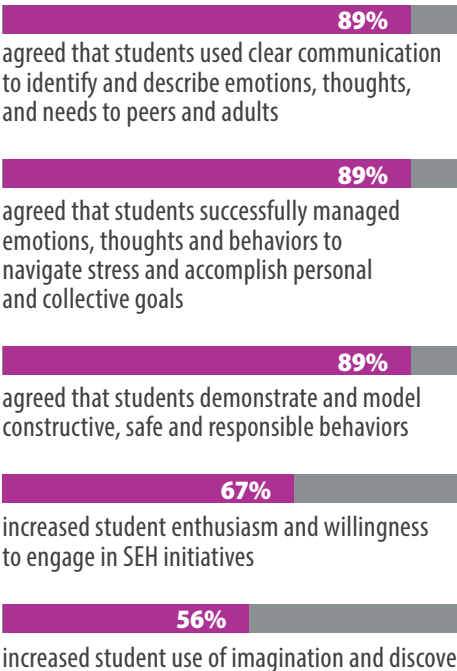
Projects focused on increasing access to SEH supports, nutrition education, physical activity and play throughout the school day. Even with school closures, schools found creative ways to pivot projects and continue learning at home.

-  **Play-based Learning**
Dance and Rhythm Programming, Art-based Learning
-  **Built Environment Enhancements**
SEL Room, Virtual Mindfulness Room
-  **Mindful Awareness Practices**
Yoga, Mindfulness, Mindful Movement
-  **Outdoor Learning**
School Garden

Promotion of Social-Emotional Learning

Schools and families worked together to develop and implement projects that facilitated SEL and skill development while leveraging nutrition and physical activity as vehicles for learning.

Schools reported the following outcomes:



*The Center for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the science and practice of social-emotional learning (SEL) as a core component of PreK-12 education. To learn more: www.casel.org.

Connecting the Dots

AFHK has worked to create lasting change in schools and communities across the country. With the expansion of AFHK program model over the years to work beyond nutrition and physical activity, schools focused on addressing student physical, social, and emotional health through integrated projects and initiatives.

- » Clay County School District developed school gardens. AFHK shared tools and resources for integrating movement and mindful awareness practices, such as mindful breathing and sensory-based learning, into nutrition education lessons in the garden.
- » North Chicago 187 School District used art and movement based nutrition education lessons to teach students and families the importance of making healthy choices and how they impact our mood and energy levels.



We sprouted 24 avocado pits. These seeds needed to be watered every day. This really gave the students a sense of ownership. They “had” to check on the seeds daily.

Robert Herren, PE Teacher
Montclair Elementary School



- » Anne Arundel County School District integrated mindful movement, such as yoga and stretching, into virtual physical education and as active brain breaks to help students reset and unwind.
- » North Chicago 187 School District demonstrated how movement and dance facilitates creative expression and reflection while staying active and using movement as a way to manage and respond to stress and emotions.

The Viking Navigation Station (a creative expression and SELab) has given students a good way to release some energy, anger, stress, whatever they are feeling.

Esther Rodriguez, School Support Staff
Highland Middle School

Operation Healthy Kids

AFHK supported school communities to address the physical, social and emotional health and well-being of military families. Through grant funding and technical assistance, AFHK supported five military communities in four states to strengthen family-school partnerships; build capacity and knowledge around the intersection of social, emotional, and physical health; and create a positive SEL climate at school and at home while navigating the challenges of COVID-19.

Great Lakes Community

- » With nearly 100% of families involved in the military, North Chicago 187 implemented RYTHYM programming, an integrative approach to mindful movement and self-reflection, for students in-person and virtually while leveraging military SEL specialists to support students during distance learning.
- » Provided support to families with a caregiver on deployment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anne Arundel Community

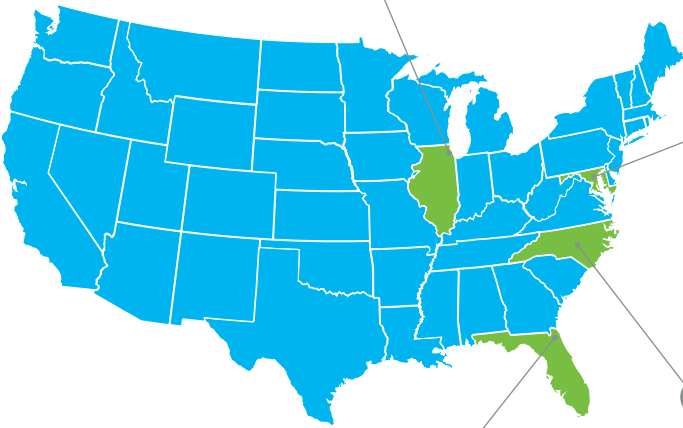
- » Engaged students throughout program design and implementation and celebrated Month of the Military Child by creating spaces for children to share and discuss their experiences with staff and students.
- » Provided support to families with a caregiver on deployment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fort Bragg and Harnett County Communities

- » Created calming rooms (including a virtual version) where students can engage in different activities to process emotions, discuss experiences, and manage stress.
- » AFHK NC Family Connector provided direct support to families of veterans in the Fort Bragg area, particularly those who had been hit hard economically by COVID-19.

Jacksonville Communities

- » Implemented BRAVE programming school-wide to support students in leveraging movement, mindfulness and creativity to manage emotions and stress.
- » AFHK FL Family Connector created an outreach and support plan for schools to reach military families who have not traditionally been engaged in health at school, with a focus on supporting the social-emotional health of kids and their parents/caregivers.



AFHK Family Connect

Action for Healthy Kids' family-school partnership model brings together district leaders, school staff, and families to create healthier communities by identifying challenges to family engagement and specific child health needs, then developing and implementing effective and equitable solutions as a team. AFHK's Family Connectors played a key role in facilitating these partnerships in their communities by building relationships with families and schools; conducting coaching sessions to support immediate needs of families and schools in the midst of COVID-19; and laying the foundation for the deeper work of growing strong partnerships in the 2021–22 school year and beyond.

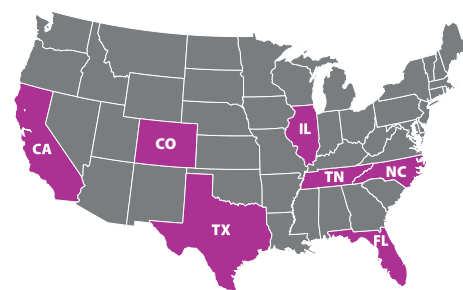
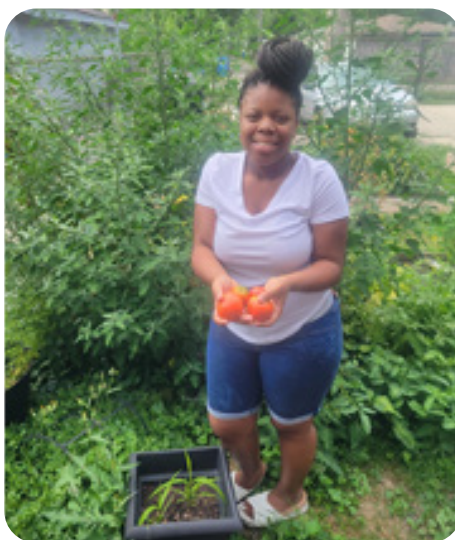
2020–2021 Featured Connectors

In Irving, TX, Family Connector

Cynthia Small supported the district in coordinating Grab & Go Meal Distribution. More than 450 families received meals along with a variety of incentives and summer take-home activities (English and Spanish) from AFHK.



In Chicago, IL, Family Connector Denise Dyer partnered with families and staff at Earle Elementary and Nicholson Tech Academy to create school gardens, providing opportunities for students and families to plant, water, and spend the summer working in the garden. They then harvested zucchini, kale, squash, and tomatoes and worked with a local chef to learn how to make vegetable focaccia bread with the fresh veggies from their garden! Students and families learned new skills, strengthened relationships with school staff, and took home healthy snacks and seeds to start their own gardens at home.



15 Connectors
in **seven** states



Worked with **139** schools
in **18** districts



Conducted **337**
coaching sessions

Connected* with
12,919
parents and caregivers



Impacted
15,270 kids

*Includes both in-depth and informal connections, such as coaching sessions, workshops, informational conversations, and parents/caregivers attending school events supported by Connectors.

2020–21 Family Connect Accomplishments

- » Partnered with family engagement experts at DISEÑO Learning and Development to provide in-depth training for all Family Connectors.
- » Identified, modified, and implemented an assessment developed by Johns Hopkins University which assesses family-school partnerships (FSPs). Connectors facilitate completion of the assessment with partner families and schools as both a programmatic support tool and evaluation measure to better understand FSPs.
- » Family Connectors in CA, CO, FL, TN and TX supported Every Kid Healthy Week with virtual and in-person events.
- » Developed partnerships with the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) and Kaiser Permanente to develop a training series for district level parent leaders on school health.

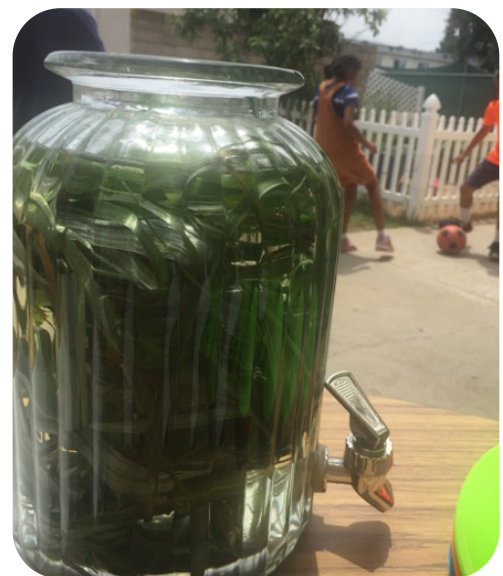
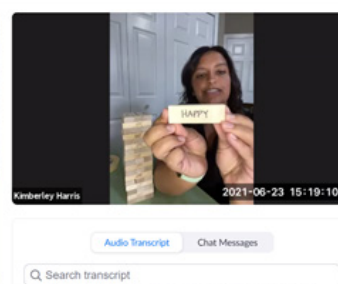
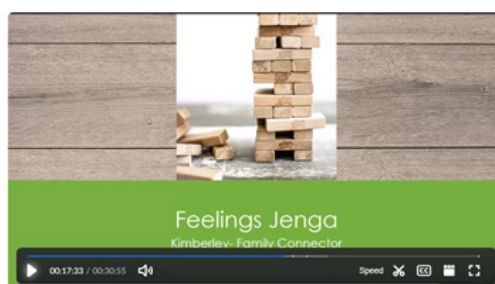
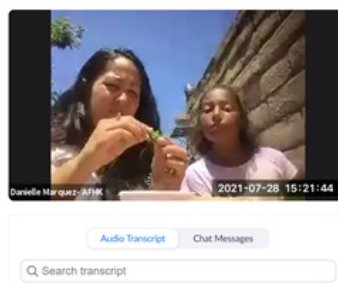
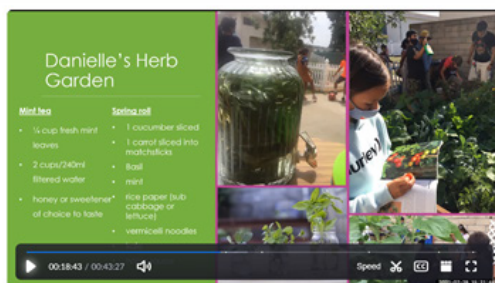


Family Connect Summer Series: Staying ConnectEd, EnergizEd, and NourishEd At Home

Throughout the 2021 summer season, AFHK and Family Connectors hosted the first Family Connect Summer Series which included three live learning sessions for families and school staff. In these learning sessions, we discussed the importance of physical activity, nutrition education, and social-emotional health at home over the summer and provided concrete examples and engaging activities for families to do at home. Over 192 parents, caregivers and school staff members registered for our events and Family Connectors created and delivered 10 unique healthy activities to reach families of all backgrounds across the nation.

Family Connect Summer Activities were created as digital resources that can be found in our Resource Library in the future. Examples include: Feelings Jenga, Growing Mint Leaves for Mint Tea, Breath Upon a Star, Hosting an At-Home Track & Field Day, and more!

At the end of each session, we provided space for all attendees and panelists to engage in open dialogues about healthy practices at home and how to support child health throughout the summer. These calls included both parents and school staff members which provided the perfect opportunity for both groups to listen and learn from one another.



2020–21 Family Connector Findings

While the 2020–21 school year provided many unique challenges, our first cohort of Family Connectors displayed tremendous flexibility in responding to shifting priorities and finding new ways to communicate and reach families as a result of COVID-19. Action for Healthy Kids evaluated the first year of implementation of this program. Nine Connectors responded to post-training surveys and six Connectors participated in focus groups to share their successes, challenges, and provide feedback for next year.

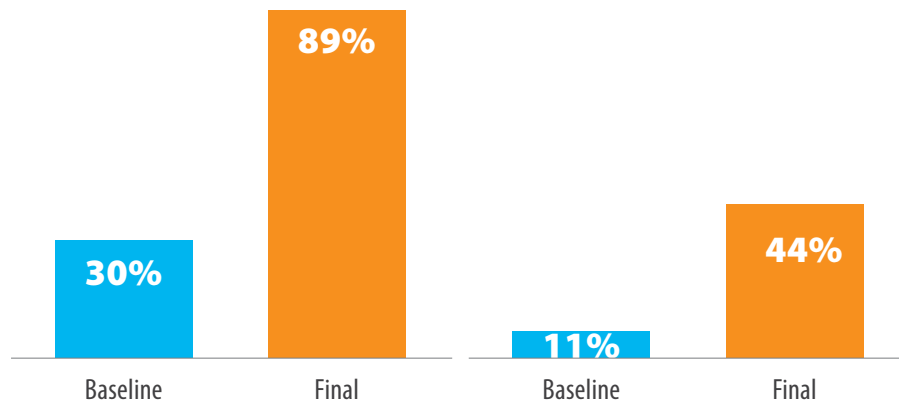
100%
of Connectors

felt confident they could effectively connect with parents and caregivers to create a trusting partnership

As a Result of Attending Trainings, Connectors Gained New Knowledge

3x as many Connectors were Moderately or Extremely Familiar with strategies to support caregivers to **advocate for health at school** when compared to baseline

4x as many Connectors were Extremely Familiar with strategies to support caregivers to **promote health at home with their children** when compared to baseline



In focus groups, Family Connectors were asked to reflect on their year. They reported facing many challenges; however, they shared their solutions to those challenges and the successes they experienced. Additionally, they were asked to look ahead at their role next year and their hopes for the future as a Family Connector. The following are four overarching themes heard in those conversations.

Connectors were proud of the relationships built this year

Connectors found creative ways to engage parents and caregivers in safe ways

Connectors believe they are well-equipped for next year

Connectors are excited to apply what they've learned next year

A Family Connector on what they've learned working with families this year:

One thing that I remember in almost every session is to meet the parents where they are. Build that trust and build the relationships because you don't know what they are bringing with them or what their experience has been. That has really hit home with me to recognize that working with families and building that trust is really important and really understanding what they bring to the table and yes, they have value. We can start to build the relationships when we start to recognize that. Let the families know that they are important and that they are essential to the success of their children.

A Family Connector on applying their experiences from this year to next year:

The most rewarding part of this role as a Family Connector was building relationships with the schools and district contacts. Even though I wasn't able to work directly with the parents because of the pandemic and the [school] protocols, I was able to work indirectly with them by sharing things with the teachers who shared it with the families. So those relationships were powerful and I really think that because we had time to build those relationships on Zoom and through emails, we help to set the stage for future partnerships.