

Developing Healthy Weight Promoting Strategies for Elementary Schools in Taiwan: Practice Experiences from Health Promoting Award Schools

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Setting/problem: Research has shown that the obese children were more likely to be as obese adults. Schools play a vital role to cultivate students' healthy lifestyle. In 2002, Health Promotion Administration (HPA), the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan collaborated to advocate Health Promoting Schools Program (HPS). To align with the global standards of WHO and UNESCO, the HPA and MOE revised the existing HPS standards around 2022 and launched the HPS Featured Award Program in 2023. The award program was designed to incentivize schools in counties and cities to adopt the new generation standards and internalize healthy behaviors, thereby positively influencing families, communities, and workplaces. Schools recognized with the Excellence Award (EA) and Featured Award (FA) showed higher percentage of students in healthy body weight. This study explores the association between these new strategies and students' healthy weight outcome in HPS- awarded schools.

Intervention: The HPA organized review committees to evaluate 97 award winning schools in the Award Competition program (50 EA and 47 FA). A total of 85 elementary schools were selected, and 53 schools demonstrated high performance in healthy body weight programs were recruited for further analysis. We analysed these programs, made a GIS resource inventory map, and extracted the key elements contributing to their success.

Outcomes: Most of healthy weight promoting strategies measures follow the MOE's "PREMA PULS, GO Health" policy which includes positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishment (PERMA) and physical activities, live optimistically, nutrition, and sleep (PULS) and integrate life skills development with curricula for students. The main successful education elements are immersive learning with culture education, ecological education, food and agricultural education, and VR and AR technologies connecting with local characteristics. School principals play a vital role in managing school activities and resources, implementing the "whole school approach" policy, and fostering collaboration by engaging parents and the community.

Implications: The findings suggest "PREMA PULS, GO Health" policy and successful education elements from health promoting award schools can apply to other elementary schools. The schools in underserved areas have a continued need for enhanced resources.

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