

California Project LEAN | Building Healthy Communities

***Evaluation of the Parents in Action
Training: Advocating for Healthier School
Environments***

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INTRODUCTION

California Project LEAN (CPL) is providing technical assistance to the Building Healthy Communities Initiative (BHC) to advance school nutrition and physical activity policies and practices in California public schools. One of CPL's three objectives is to "train parents how to engage in the implementation, monitoring, and revision of the local school wellness policy." As one component in meeting this objective, parents in 4 BHC communities (City Heights, Coachella, Sacramento, and South Kern) participated in a 6-lesson training using CPL's *Parent Lesson Plans: Advocating for Healthier School Environments* (see Appendix A Description of Parents in Action Training). Healthy snacks were provided, as well as Spanish language interpretation and childcare as needed. Various incentives for participation were also provided, such as cookbooks or \$25 grocery store gift card. Those who completed at least 3 lessons received certificates of completion at the end of the training. The trainings were provided by CPL staff in English and Spanish and held between the fall of 2012 and early spring 2013.

Overview of the Evaluation

The Sarah Samuels Center for Public Health Research & Evaluation (Samuels Center), formerly Samuels & Associates, was contracted to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of parents who completed the training through pre-post surveys and focus groups. Parents also completed an evaluation form as part of the trainings.

The purpose of the pre-post survey was to provide a quantitative assessment to measure change in parents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as a result of participation in the trainings. The findings will help to understand the extent to which the trainings have prepared parents for policy and advocacy work to improve school nutrition and physical activity. The purpose of the focus group assessment was to understand parents' perceptions and opinions of their capacity and confidence to advocate for the implementation, monitoring and/or revision of their local school wellness policies (SWP) as a result of the training and application of their knowledge and skills in actual hands-on activities. The focus groups also sought to understand the barriers and facilitators parents face when engaging in SWP advocacy activities as well as the types of additional support or resources parents need to strengthen their capacity to do this work.

METHODS

This section describes the three methods that were used to evaluate the Parents in Action training: 1) Pre-post survey, 2) Training evaluation forms, and 3) Focus groups.

1) Pre-Post Survey

California Project LEAN staff, who provided the parent trainings, administered the pre-post surveys at the beginning and end of the training sessions (see Appendix B Pre-Post Survey Questions). The Samuels Center evaluators trained CPL staff to administer the pre and post survey using a detailed protocol. The pre-survey included 24 close-ended questions and the post-survey included 3 additional

questions (one question was open-ended) in addition to the same 24 pre-survey questions. The first 4 questions asked for demographic information.

Upon completion of the pre and post surveys, CPL staff mailed copies of the surveys to the Samuels Center office for analysis. Paired t-test analysis was used to assess change from parents before they participated in the Parents in Action training (pre-survey), then again after the training (post-survey). The majority of the questions in the survey required a “Yes/No/Don’t Know” response. For these survey items, “No” and “Don’t Know” were re-coded to one value, “0” and “Yes” responses were coded to “1.” The pre-post percentage for these items, therefore, represents the percentage of the participants that responded in the affirmative to the item. Other survey items required a rating response (1=not comfortable, 2=a little comfortable, 3=very comfortable) or (1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=a lot). For these items, a mean score is shown for the pre-post survey and an increase in score indicates a positive response to the item.

Analyses of statistical significance for this report include the calculation of the p-value, a value which demonstrates that a difference between two measurements did not occur by chance alone. In this report, a p-value of .05 or less was considered to represent a statistically significant difference.

In addition to the above analyses, four scales were constructed, combining various related questions from the Parents in Action Survey:

1. **Participation** (Q6a-c): Parent’s current participation at pre and post training in activities relating to wellness (does not include ‘did not participate’ items)
2. **Comfort** (Q7a-e; Q20a-e; Q23a-e): How comfortable a parent felt discussing wellness issues with parents or prominent school staff at pre and post training.
3. **Knowledge** (Q8 a-e; Q10; Q12; Q14; Q15; Q17; Q22): How much parents knew about wellness and wellness-related programs in the school community pre and post training.
4. **Attitude** (Q9a-e; Q11a-e; Q13a-e; Q16; Q19a-d): What parents felt about food, activity and wellness issues with regards to students as well as the different wellness programs in the school community.

Reliability of the scales, or the degree to which the items in the scale ‘hang together’ and measure the construct they are supposed to measure overall, was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. A coefficient of .85 or above is generally considered an acceptable level of reliability. For these scales, reliability ranged from 0.49 and 0.61 for the Attitude scale to 0.84 (pre and post) for the Comfort Scale. Paired t-tests were used to compare pre-training scores with post training scores on the survey scales. These findings are reported on page 18.

2) Parents in Action Training Evaluation Form

As part of the training, a standard evaluation form was completed by parents at the end of the training. The 5-question evaluation form included both open and close ended questions. Content analysis was applied, where themes and broad comments were identified. The evaluation form can be found in the

Parent Lesson Plans: Advocating for Healthier School Environments or downloaded from www.californiaprojectlean.org.

3) Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted with parents who received the 6-lesson training and had adequate time to utilize their newly acquired skills and knowledge. The two Spanish language focus groups were conducted in City Heights and Coachella in March 2013. A semi-structured focus group questioning guide was developed by the evaluation team and CPL staff to address the following research questions:

Focus Group Research Questions

- 1) How did the trainings support parents' capacity to engage in SWP advocacy work?
 - In what ways did parents use what they learned in the trainings to support their SWP advocacy work?
 - What did parents experience in their advocacy work that was not covered in the training?
- 2) How do parents perceive their confidence in SWP advocacy work?
 - In what ways and to what degree has the training and hands-on experience led to greater confidence in parents' capacity to advocate?
 - To what extent did the trainings provide a venue for parents to build social cohesion and camaraderie resulting in greater individual and group confidence?
- 3) What are the factors that prohibit and/or facilitate parents' capacity to engage in SWP advocacy work?
 - To what extent do language and/or cultural barriers influence one's capacity to engage in this work?
 - What competing factors prevent parents from engaging in this work?
 - What are the most essential factors that facilitate parents' ability to do this work?
- 4) What additional support or resources do parents need to be more skilled and confident to engage in the implementation, monitoring and/or revision of their local school wellness policies?
 - What additional support or training do parents need to build their advocacy skills?
 - What additional types of resources do parents need to strengthen their self-efficacy and confidence to advocate?

Each focus group averaged 60 minutes and was facilitated by trained moderators. All focus groups were audio recorded and the co-moderator took detailed field notes. A healthy snack was provided. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and data was analyzed by key questions using content analysis, where themes were identified, coded and linked to capture broad views of the participants.

FINDINGS

In this section, the pre-post survey and Parents in Action Training Evaluation findings are reported first, followed by the focus group findings.

Pre-Post Survey Results

At baseline, before the Parents in Action training began, pre-survey data was collected from 41 parents. The same survey (with 3 additional questions) was distributed to the same participating parents at the end of the training; a total of 34 post-surveys were completed. Of the 34 post-surveys, 2 participants did not have corresponding pre-surveys, so they were excluded from the analysis. The analysis in this report is based on the survey data of 32 parents who participated in the training and had matching pre- and post-surveys. The overall response rate was 78%. For each question, the number of parents for which both pre and post survey questions were completed, were analyzed. For example, if a parent answered question #5 on the pre-survey, but did not answer the question #5 on the post-survey, they were not included in the analysis.

Parent Demographics

Of those parents who completed both pre-post surveys, 91% were female, with 78% having a child or children in Elementary School, 18% in Middle School and 7% in High School. Half of the surveys were completed in Spanish and over three quarters of the survey respondents identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic (78%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographics of 32 Parents Who Completed Pre-Post Survey

Demographics	N	%
Survey Language		
English	16	50
Spanish	16	50
Gender		
Female	29	91
Male	3	9
Ethnicity		
African American	2	6
Hispanic/Latino	25	78
White/Caucasian	3	9
Other	1	3
Unknown	1	
Grade Level of Children		
Elementary	25	78
Middle	6	18
High	7	21

Parental Awareness of School District Wellness Committee and Coordinated School Health Council

Parents were asked if their school district had a wellness committee and/or a Coordinated School Health Council (Table 2). There was a significant increase from pre to post training on the responses to whether the child’s school districts had a wellness committee (pre 63%, post 89%, $p<.05$) and a Coordinated School Health Council (pre 14%, post 52%, $p<.01$).

Table 2: Parental Awareness of School District Wellness Committee and School Health Council

	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
Does your child’s school district have a wellness committee?	27	63	89*
Does your child’s school district have a coordinated school health council?	21	14	52**

* $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$.

Parent Participation in School-Related Activities

Parents were asked to select the school-related activities they were currently participating in within three categories: 1) District Wellness Policy, 2) School food, and 3) Physical activity and physical education (Table 3). At post-training, significantly less parents indicated that they had not been participating in District Wellness Policy activities (pre 52%, post 19%, $p<.05$). In addition, there was a significant increase in the percentage of parents who had been involved in activities where they were learning about the District’s Wellness Policy (pre 37%, post 78%, $p<.01$). Participation in other District Wellness Policy items (Asking to have the wellness policy in Spanish; Becoming a member of the District Wellness Committees or School Health Councils; Speaking to the Principal and school board members) also increased from pre to post training but was not statistically significant. There was a slight decline from pre to post in “Helping parents understand the wellness policy,” however this was not significant.

In terms of parent participation in school food-related activities, there was a statistically significant decrease in the percentage of parents who had not been participating in school food activities (pre 69%, post 35%, $p<.05$) and a significant increase in participation in activities that helped to reduce sugary drinks in the school (pre 12%, post 46%, $p<.01$). Although there was an increase in the percentage of parents who encouraged the school to have healthy fundraisers and healthier classroom parties, these changes were not significant.

Regarding parent participation in physical education and physical activity related activities, there were no significant changes from pre to post training. Although not significant, there was an increase in the percentage of parents that participated in activities that were “Helping to increase physical activity during the school day” and “Helping to improve Physical Education in my school district.”

Table 3: Parent Participation in School-Related Activities

Q6 Please select the activities you are currently participating in:	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
District Wellness Policy			
1. I have not been participating	27	52	19*
2. Learning about my district’s wellness policy	27	37	78**
3. Asked for my district’s wellness policy to be in Spanish or other languages	27	11	26
4. I’m a member of the district’s wellness committee and/or Coordinated School Health Council	27	7	19
5. Helping parents understand the wellness policy	27	22	19
6. Speaking to our Principal about the wellness policy	27	22	37
7. Speaking to school board members about the wellness policy	27	15	22
School Food			
1. I have not been participating	26	69	35*
2. Helping to reduce sugary drinks at school	26	12	46**
3. Encouraging our school to have healthier fundraisers	26	19	38
4. Helping to make classroom parties healthier	26	31	50
Physical Education and Physical Activity			
1. I have not been participating	25	56	40
2. Helping to increase physical activity during the school day	25	28	40
3. Helping to encourage more students to walk or bike safely to school	25	28	24
4. Helping to open the school facilities, outside of school hours	25	20	12
5. Helping to improve Physical Education in my school district	25	12	20

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Comfort Levels in Talking to School Administration about Healthy Food and Beverages

Parents were asked about their level of comfort when talking to various school administrators/staff about having more healthy food and beverages and physical activity at their children’s school (Table 4). Although comfort levels for talking to different school leaders about healthy food and beverages increased from pre to post training, level of comfort only significantly increased for talking to the Food Service Director (pre 2.04, post 2.43, p<.05).

Table 4: Parent’s Level of Comfort Talking to School Administrators and/or Staff

Q#7 How comfortable do you feel to talk to these people about having more healthy food and beverages and physical activity at your child’s school? (1=not comfortable, 2= a little comfortable, 3= very comfortable)	N	Pre mean	Post mean
School Board Members	29	2.34	2.34
Superintendent	23	2.09	2.43
District Administrators	23	2.04	2.39
School Principal	25	2.52	2.64
Food Service Director	23	2.04	2.43*

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parental Level of Knowledge of School Meal Programs and Nutrition Standards

Parents were asked to rate their level of knowledge of school meal programs and/or nutrition standards (Table 5). Proclaimed knowledge of Federal school meal programs such as the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, nutrition standards in California and the district wellness policy, and understanding of competitive foods significantly increased from pre to post training.

Table 5: Knowledge of School Meal Programs and Nutrition Standards

Q#8 How much do you know about these programs or standards listed below (1=not at all; 2=a little; 3=a lot)	N	Pre mean	Post mean
The School Lunch Program	28	1.68	2.50***
The School Breakfast Program	26	1.65	2.46***
Foods in the school that are called “competitive foods”	27	1.26	2.33***
California Nutrition Standards	27	1.30	2.37***
Nutrition Standards in the district wellness policy	28	1.39	2.36***

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parental Perceptions of Opportunities to Provide Healthier Food and Beverages at School

Parents were asked if there were certain opportunities at school, such as school celebrations, fundraisers, and school events that could provide healthier food and beverages (Table 6). Despite a slight increase in beliefs in all events (except “Food vendors in front of the school”), there was no significant increase from pre to post training on any of these items.

Table 6: Perception of Opportunities to Provide Healthier Food and Beverages

Q# 9 Do you think the events listed below could provide healthier food and beverages?	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
Classroom Celebrations and Parties	29	83	86
School Fundraisers that sell food/beverages	28	75	86
Food Vendors in front of the school	27	52	52
School Events (assemblies, fairs, sports events)	28	79	89
Rewards at School	27	85	85

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parental Perceptions Regarding Physical Activity and Physical Education

Parents were asked several questions regarding their level of knowledge of physical activity and physical education (Table 7). Although more parents knew the difference between “physical activity” and “physical education” after the training, this was not a significant difference. However, a significant percentage of parents believed that students should get more activity before school (pre 79%, post 96%, p<.05).

Table 7: Perception of Physical Activity and Physical Education

	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
Q#10 Do you know the difference between “physical activity” and “physical education”?	28	86	96
Q#11 Do you think students should get more activity:			
Before School	28	79	96*
During Recess	24	92	88
In Physical Education Classes	27	93	93
After School	25	88	92
At School, outside of school hours	25	96	92

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parents were asked whether their children’s schools were required to provide a certain amount of minutes of physical education (PE) to students and in what areas they thought PE could be improved (Table 8). After the training, all of the parents reported that their children’s schools are required to provide students with a specific amount of minutes of PE, a significant increase from pre to post

training (pre 85%, post 100%, $p < .05$). There were no significant changes from pre to post training regarding parents responding to what could provide better PE to students.

Table 8: Parent Perceptions Regarding Physical Education

	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
Q# 12 Are schools required to provide students with a certain amount of minutes of Physical Education?	26	85	100*
Q#13 Do you think any of these listed below could be improved to provide better Physical Education to students?			
Have a Physical Education program	28	100	89
Activity level during Physical Education class	25	88	92
Amount and quality of Physical Education equipment	27	85	93
Enough teachers to teach Physical Education	28	93	93
Meeting the required minutes Physical Education	26	85	92

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Parental Knowledge Regarding Sugary Drinks in Schools

Parents were asked to identify which beverages (soda; sports drinks; fruit drinks; 1% chocolate milk) were “sugary drinks” (Table 9). The percentage of parents that identified 1% chocolate milk as a sugary drink increased significantly (50% pre, 72% post, $p < .05$). There was a small positive increase in the percentage of parents who identified soda, sports drinks, and fruit drinks as a sugary drink, however, these changes were not significant.

Parents were taught to calculate the amount of sugar in beverages in the *Promoting Healthy Beverages on Campus* lesson. Significantly more parents knew how to measure the amount of sugar in a sugary drink from pre to post training (pre 44%, post 97%, $p < .001$). Parents also became significantly more aware that by California Law, schools were required to provide free water to students (pre 71%, post 97%, $p < .01$) and that by California law, sports drinks are allowed in schools (pre 13%, post 48%, $p < .01$). The proportion of parents that didn’t know which sugary drinks were allowed by California Law in Schools, decreased significantly from 16% to 0 ($p < .05$).

All parents, both before and after the training, felt that offering water is a good way to limit sugary drinks. The percentage of parents that felt a good way to limit sugary drinks in schools would be to offer chocolate or strawberry milk fell significantly from 45% at pre-survey to 5% at post-survey ($p < .01$).

Table 9: Parental Knowledge Regarding Sugary Drinks in Schools

	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
Q# 14 Which are sugary drinks?			
Soda	32	97	100
Sports drinks	32	72	81
Fruit drinks	32	69	78
1% Chocolate milk	32	50	72*
Don't know	32	0	3
Q# 15 Do you know how to measure the amount of sugar in sugary drinks?	32	44	97***
Q# 16 Do you think sugary drinks and overweight/obesity are connected?	32	90	94
Q# 17 By California Law, do schools have to provide free water to students?	32	71	97**
Q# 18 By California Law, which sugary drinks are allowed in Schools?			
Soda	31	3	3
Sports drinks	31	13	48**
Fruit drinks	31	32	52
1% chocolate milk	31	74	84
Don't know	31	16	0*
Do you think these are good ways to limit sugary drinks at schools?			
Offer plain water	30	100	100
Offer chocolate or strawberry milk	22	45	5**
Work to remove all sugary drinks at school	25	80	88
Ask schools to offer more sports drinks	22	23	14

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parental Level of Comfort in Describing Policy and Advocacy Terms to Friends

Parents were asked to rate their level of comfort in describing terms such as “policy, district wellness policy, and advocacy” to a friend, as well as describing how schools can prevent obesity and why parents should be involved in their children’s schools (Table 10). Parent’s comfort level for describing these topics to a friend increased significantly from pre to post training for all topics, except for

describing to a friend “Why parents should be involved in school”, which increased, but not significantly.

Table 10: Parental Level of Comfort in Describing Health Related Topics and Policy Issues to a Friend

Q# 20 How comfortable are you describing the following to a friend:	N	Pre mean	Post mean
What ‘policy’ means	24	1.92	2.67***
What a ‘district wellness policy’ is	26	2.04	2.65**
What ‘advocacy’ means	24	2.00	2.63**
How schools can help prevent obesity	26	2.31	2.73**
Why parents should be involved in their schools	28	2.57	2.75

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parental Involvement in Making Schools Healthier

Parents were asked how they could be involved in making their schools healthier (Table 11). Parents felt that “Learning about their child’s district wellness policy” was the best way to be involved in making their child’s school healthier (pre 81%, post 100%, p<.05). In addition, there was a significant increase from pre to post training in the percentage of parents who knew (‘some’ or ‘all’) the four steps of the Parents Taking Action advocacy process (pre 21%, post 93%, p<.001).

Parents also provided other suggestions on ways parents can become involved, such as talking to children about healthy choices, practicing wellness and healthy eating at home, and visiting the school cafeteria during meal times (Table 11).

Table 11: Parental Involvement in Making Schools Healthier

	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
Q# 21 How can parents be involved in making their schools healthier?			
I'm not sure	32	3	3
Learn about your child's district wellness policy	32	81	100*
Talk to other parents about the importance of being involved in schools	32	88	88
Participate on the Wellness Committee	32	91	97
Participate on the Coordinated School Health Council	32	66	75
Work with school leaders to improve the district wellness policy	32	91	84
Work with school leaders to use the district wellness policy	32	81	78
Other ways parents can be involved (Pre-Survey fill in question)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By talking to the kids about healthy choices • Hold on-campus trainings/events to practice and learn alternative food and advise families on what they can do at home too • Informing me and informing not only the parents but also the students • Learning and sharing, get involved • Practice at home • Visiting the cafeterias when serving the food 			
Other ways parents can be involved (Post-Survey fill in question)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing in healthy food/treats for celebrations • Not being afraid to speak and participate • Practice wellness and healthy eating at home • Talk to school Principal 			
Q#22 Do you know the four steps in Parents Taking Action?			
Yes/I know some	28	21	93***
Yes	28	7	64
I know some		14	29
No		79	7

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parental Level of Comfort in Describing Joint Use of School Facilities to Friends

Parents were asked about their level of comfort when describing joint use of school facilities to a friend (Table 12). In terms of describing why school grounds should be open outside of school hours and how parents can help to make this happen, the respondent’s comfort level increased significantly for all three questions.

Table 12: Level of Comfort in Describing Use of School Facilities to a Friend

Q#23 How comfortable are you describing the following to a friend:	N	Pre mean	Post mean
Why the school grounds should be open to the community, outside of school hours	15	2.13	2.60*
How parents can help to make school grounds open for community use	14	2.07	2.57*
What ‘joint use of school facilities’ means	14	1.86	2.64**

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Parental Perception of Why School Grounds Should not be Open to the Community

Parents were asked what they thought were reasons school grounds are not open to the community when students are not in school (Table 13). There were no significant changes pre to post training in the reasons why parents thought school grounds are not open to the community when students are not in school.

Table 13: Parental Perception of Why School Grounds Shouldn’t be Open to the Community

Q#24 Do you think any of the listed below are reasons school grounds are not open to the community when students are not in school?	N	Pre % Yes	Post % Yes
Schools worry about safety of the children	12	92	100
Schools worry about vandalism	14	93	100
It costs too much money for school facilities to be open	13	54	54
Schools are responsible for injuries that might occur	13	62	85

*p<.05; **p<.01;***p<.001.

Post Survey Findings

In the post survey, parents were asked to respond to 3 additional questions: what they thought they might do next after completing the training; whether the training helped them feel more comfortable to advocate for healthier foods and beverages and more physical activity at school; and an open-ended question asking parents what they thought about the training or what they had learned.

Parent's Future Plans Following Training

Eighty four percent of the parents reported they would speak to the principal about the wellness policy, and 78% reported they would like to learn more about the district's wellness policy (Table 14). Just over half (52%) of the parents said they would join the Coordinated School Health Council or speak to school board members about the wellness policy (56%).

About three quarters of the parents said they would help to reduce sugary drinks at school (72%) and help make classroom parties healthier (77%). Although over 70% of the parents reported they would help to increase physical activity during the school day (71%) and help to encourage more students to walk or bike safely to school (72%), help to increase Physical Education in their school district was less than half (58%) and 48% reported they would help to open the school facilities, outside of school hours.

Overall, the parents felt the training was very helpful with 91% of the parents feeling "very much" more comfortable to advocate for healthier foods and beverages and more physical activity at school since completing the training.

Parents provided a number of responses when asked what they thought about the training and/or what they learned (see Figure 1: Parent's Open-Ended Comments on the Trainings).

Table 14: Parent’s Future Plans Following Training

Q25 Now that the training is over, what do you think you might do next?	N	Post % Yes
District Wellness Policy		
Learn more about my district’s wellness policy	32	78
Ask for my district’s wellness policy to be in Spanish and other languages	32	56
Join the district’s wellness committee	31	65
Join the Coordinated School Health Council	32	53
Help parents understand the wellness policy	32	78
Speak to our principal about the wellness policy	32	84
Speak to school board members about the wellness policy	32	56
Not sure	32	0
School Food		
Help to reduce sugary drinks at school	32	72
Encourage our school to have healthier fundraisers	31	68
Help to make classroom parties healthier	31	77
Not sure	31	10
Physical Education and Physical Activity		
Help to increase physical activity during the school day	31	71
Help to encourage more students to walk or bike safely to school	32	72
Help to open the school facilities, outside of school hours		
Help to increase Physical Education in my school district	31	48
Not sure	31	58
	31	3
Q26 Overall, did this training help you feel more comfortable to advocate for healthier foods and beverages and more physical activity at school?		
Very much	32	91
A little		9
Not at all		0

Figure 1: Parent's Open-Ended Comments on the Trainings

Q27 What do you think about the training or what have you learned? (Open ended responses)

A lot! Thank you for this training, was the best one ever taken at the CVUSD. Please bring more trainings. Excellent.

Good!!! Very enriching, I had big surprises while learning. I would like to know even more and definitely feel myself integrated and feel very committed to the community.

I've learned a lot about things I didn't know (wellness policy). I think the visual lessons really impacted us and we remember that lesson the best.

How to calculate grams of sugar in beverages. The differences between PA and PE. School lunch, breakfast CA.

I appreciate the amount of information that was presented and the organized way to which we as parents can help to bring these ideas to our school for discussion and implementation.

I found it very good because I learned a lot especially that there is a school health policy while as parents we should make changes for the health of our children.

I have learned a great amount about how to make strides for healthier schools. I learned many new things. In reality I just didn't know a lot.

I learned more about the policies of wellbeing and health and even to eat food that you cook at home.

I learned to encourage parents to be involved and participate in the community to make a healthy and positive impact. This training is great. Great job. Excellent.

I liked everything a lot.

I thank you for giving us so much to learn, I hope they continue doing this that God gives them the opportunity to continue helping. Thanks God bless.

Incredibly exceptional.

It's important because I don't have knowledge of the nutrition in the schools and now one can go to my school and ask about the food of the month.

It was very helpful, to share and make change in our community.

It was very interesting. I learned things that from now on I will share with my school for improvements.

It was very valuable. They taught me a lot of things that are in place that we didn't know. Thank you.

Learned a lot from ladies that came. A lot of stuff that I didn't know thanks to Jane and Deidra. I will share this information learned.

Learned about the mandated state laws regarding PE and food services.

More people need to get involved including teachers and staff

Thank you very much. Much was learned and I feel empowered to take action.

The training was very helpful for me because I learned many things I didn't know. Many thanks for coming to our valley with this training.

The training was very informative and helped me to become aware of the district can do to help our kids be more healthy.

The training was well-rounded. I feel that I understand the district wellness policy well enough to push for enforcement at my school.

Wellness and the knowledge of wellness is extremely important to our district and families. However, I do know it will not be an easy task to change a culture that has been embedded in the society for a number of years.

Wonderfully presented and described. Allow us to be advocates and agents of change in our district.

As mentioned in the Methods section, four scales were constructed from the Parents in Action Survey:

1. **Participation** (Q6a -c): Parent’s current participation at pre and post training in activities relating to wellness (does not include ‘did not participate’ items).
2. **Comfort** (Q7a-e; Q20a-e; Q23a-e): How comfortable a parent felt discussing wellness issues with parents or prominent school staff at pre and post training.
3. **Knowledge** (Q8 a-e; Q10; Q12; Q14; Q15; Q17; Q22): How much parent s knew about wellness and wellness-related programs in the school community pre and post training.
4. **Attitude** (Q9a-e; Q11a-e; Q13a-e; Q16; Q19a-d): What parents felt about food, activity and wellness issues with regards students as well as the different wellness programs in the school community.

As can be seen in Table 15, parents improved significantly from pre to post training on their levels of comfort in talking with other parents and school staff about wellness issues (pre mean 2.33, post mean 4.23, $p < .001$); on their participation in wellness-related activities (pre mean 2.33, post mean 4.34, $p < .01$) and on their knowledge about wellness and wellness-related programs in the school community (pre mean 11.0, post mean 17.06, $p < .001$). There was no significant change from pre to post training on the Attitude scale, although this scale demonstrated very poor reliability.

Table 15: Pre and Post Survey Means for Parent in Action Survey Scales

Scale	N	Pre-Survey Alpha coefficient	Post-Survey Alpha coefficient	Pre-survey Mean	Post –survey Mean
Participation	30	.87	.79	2.33	4.23**
Comfort	32	.84	.84	17.6	28.44***
Knowledge	32	.62	.80	11.0	17.06***
Attitude	32	.49	.61	13.40	13.46

Summary of Pre-Post Survey Findings

The intent of the Parents in Action training is to teach parents how to advocate for healthier food and beverages and more physical activity by understanding how to engage in their district school wellness policy. Overall, parents felt the training was very helpful with a majority of the parents feeling “very much” more comfortable to advocate for healthier foods and beverages and more physical activity at school. As reported in the survey findings, parents have gained awareness and knowledge in a wide range of areas related to the local school wellness policy. Parents reported a significant increase in awareness of their school district wellness committee and/or their Coordinated School Health Council. In addition, at post training, parents reported a significant increase in involvement in their children’s school district wellness policy activities as well as school food related activities, in particular, helping to reduce sugary drinks at school. Level of knowledge also significantly increased about the Federal school meal programs and nutrition standards. Parents reported a significant increase in knowing some

or all of the 4 steps of the Parents Taking Action advocacy process, which will give them the tools to do this work.

Sugary Beverages

Parents reported a significant increase in identifying 1% chocolate milk as a sugary beverage, a common misconception for many parents. This was further supported in the finding that parents felt that offering chocolate and strawberry milk was a good way to limit sugary drinks at school, which decreased from 45% to 5%, post training. This can have significant implications for increased advocacy to further reducing sugary beverages at school, particularly as all parents (100%) reported that offering plain water is a good way to limit sugary beverages at school, while significantly increasing their knowledge of the California law, SB 1413, which mandates free drinking water must be provided to students where meals are served. At the end of the training, parents also significantly increased their skills in measuring the amount of sugar in beverages. Knowledge regarding the link between sugary drinks and overweight/obesity did not change, as awareness was already high (90 – 94%). A high proportion of parents, at pre and post training reported that a good way to limit sugary beverages at schools was to remove all of these types of beverages.

Parent Confidence as Advocates

One of the goals of the Parents in Action Training is to help increase parent's confidence as advocates for healthier foods and beverages and more physical activity opportunities. Parents reported an increase in their comfort level to talk to the Food Service Director, but not with other key decision makers such as school board members, Superintendent, and school administrators. When asked about their comfort level in describing health/wellness related topics and policy issues as well as joint use of school facilities to a friend, there was a significant increase in their comfort level in all the topic areas, which indicate they have increased their capacity to share the information they have learned. This is an important finding since trained parents can gain other parents' support and potentially engage them in this work. This significant increase may be supported by the fact that they are talking to their friends, who by nature, may be perceived as less intimidating than school officials. Future trainings could provide parents additional tools to feel more confident to talk to school administrators as they are key decision makers for the school environment.

Physical Activity and Physical Education

At post training, parent's participation in activities related to physical activity and physical education showed a slight increase, but was not statistically significant. Understanding the difference between the two terms - physical activity and physical education - also did not change, however knowledge was relatively high at pre and post training. There was a significant increase in parents reporting that students should get more activity before school, which could be when they feel children are most inactive during the school day. At post training, all parents (100%) increased their knowledge that schools are required to provide a certain amount of minutes of PE to students; this knowledge can help parents work to ensure adequate time for PE in schools. At both pre and post training, a high proportion of parents reported that PE can be improved in many areas, such as having qualified PE teachers and adequate equipment.

Parents in Action Training Evaluation Findings

A total of 12 evaluation forms were completed and reviewed. Parents were asked to rate the quality of training on a 5 point rating scale (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=average, 4=good, 5=excellent) in the three areas: 1) Take home activities and sharing results, 2) Review of local school wellness policy, and 3) “Parents Taking Action” Advocacy process. Eight of the 12 parents rated all three areas as “excellent” and 2 parents rated all three areas as “good.” One parent rated the “Parents Taking Action” advocacy process as “average” and added a note that she would like to have more time spent in this area.

When participants were asked what was useful and what they liked about the training, most parents indicated that they learned new and interesting topics. Other comments included the following: trainings were informative, discussions were great and did not have a lecture feeling, they enjoyed learning about the Federal school meal guidelines, and learning how to measure sugar in beverages.

Regarding suggestions for improvements, parents indicated the need for more explicit or “accessible vocabulary” for written resources. Other suggestions include adding more time for discussions.

Overall, parents were thankful for the learning opportunity and most requested the desire for more training for more parents.

Focus Groups Findings

Parents were asked to reflect on their participation in the trainings that aimed to teach them about ways they can be involved with their children’s school wellness policy and work with the school to create healthier school environments through advocacy and policy change. When asked to define “advocacy” and “school wellness policy,” a few parents were able to describe these terms. One parent describe advocacy as the following:

“It means you have to fight for the rights our kids have in schools. We’re the voice that says what we want, and what we dislike, but with reasons behind it. We have to say why we want something to be done. What is best for the kids. That’s advocacy.”

When the moderator defined these terms to the parents, they were able to recall the meaning and gave different examples related to healthy food and physical activity.

Impact of the School Wellness Policy Training on Parent’s Capacity to Engage in Advocacy

Parents were asked to describe the ways in which they used what they had learned in the trainings to help improve the school food or physical activity choices in schools. Parents reported that they have shared the information with school directors, Food Service Directors, teachers, PE teachers and other parents. Some parents stated that the training helped them to ask for changes they wanted to see regarding nutrition and physical education. They also reported sharing their knowledge during school site council and health and wellness committee meetings. Two participants said that it helped them to convince other parents to participate in their children’s classes and school activities. A few parents reported that they also used the nutrition information at home as well. Some parents said they had not

yet had the chance to share or use the information, but were planning to. A parent talked about the value of the trainings:

“She (trainer) is supporting us because a lot of the times we want things, we just don't know how to do it. We ask her and she helps us.”

Parents’ Perception of their Confidence in School Wellness Policy Advocacy Work

Parents were asked about the ways their confidence to advocate for healthier schools have changed as a result of the trainings and their hands-on experience at school. Most parents reported that the training gave them confidence, not only in knowing what to ask for, but also in knowing the right person to talk to. One parent said:

“You need to know who to direct your information to.”

Parents said the trainings and hands-on practical experience were both very helpful. Several parents reported that after the training, they no longer felt embarrassed to talk about these topics with groups of people:

“She (trainer) gives me ideas. That gives me more confidence, and then I can go and present myself in front of a group of parents and I know what to tell them and how to talk to them.”

Parents reported that the nutrition information was very helpful, for example, in learning how to read nutrition labels and determining the amount of sugar in soda, flavored milk and sweetened tea.

Parents reported that they found it extremely interesting to learn about school food and the healthy options that are now offered. The trainings helped them to understand that every child could eat a healthy meal for free, which would also be helping the school. Two parents reported that the training had given them the confidence and opportunity to be involved in other school related things, such as a recess assistant.

Factors that Prohibit/Facilitate Parents’ Capacity to Engage in School Wellness Policy and Advocacy Work

Participants were asked to describe factors that might prevent parents from doing advocacy work, including language and cultural barriers, and what might make it easier for parents to get involved. While several parents reported that to some extent, language was a barrier in their capacity to engage in this work, others reported that language was not a barrier, and that there is always someone who can speak Spanish at school. While a parent said that there are always translators available, another parent reported that people are not comfortable asking for translation services. As a suggestion to overcome the language barrier, one parent recommended that visual and images can be helpful:

“Sometimes people don’t understand Spanish. Sometimes just by looking at an image they know what we’re talking about.”

Several parents reported that being involved makes them a role model for their children, which was very important to them.

A few parents stated that there are many indigenous groups in their community and that these groups are difficult to reach. Some participants reported that parents are not interested in engaging in this type of work because they do not think it is important. A participant reported that parents would be interested, but they need to be approached. Other barriers described by the parents include having limited time to attend workshops and being afraid to speak publicly as they are timid about expressing themselves.

When participants were asked what would make it easier for parents to do this type of work, they said that having someone they trusted to lead the workshops was very helpful. They also reported that if they were invited to do this work by people they knew or feel comfortable with, that they were more likely to participate. To engage parents, several parents suggested that incentives and food demonstrations would be helpful.

Additional Support or Resources Parents Need to Engage in their Local School Wellness Policies

In addition to their experience with the trainings and hands-on work, parents were asked about other types of support, resources, and additional training parents need to be more engaged to do advocacy and policy work in schools. Parents suggested the following:

- Have workshops and resource materials available in Spanish.
- Begin classes and presentations with a fun activity, such as role-playing.
- Trainings on how to conduct power point presentations.
- More training on ways to feel confident speaking with leaders.
- Trainings on ways to engage or motivate more parents to engage in this work.
- The need for a training handbook to train other parents.
- Have a dedicated room for parent volunteers.

Several parents reported the need for the school community to be informed that they have completed this voluntary training and are ready to support, motivate and work with other parents to become advocates.

Future Advocacy Work

Parents were asked to describe their plans to continue to help improve the school food or physical activity choices in their children's schools. Parents reported the following activities:

- Sharing information and reaching out to other parents.
- Participating in the wellness committee meetings and other meetings to advocate for other school issues.
- Working with the school librarian to do a presentation to the school community.
- Organizing a ballet class and an art class for the kids.

A few participants reported they are organizing Zumba and nutrition classes for parents as a way to gather more parents:

“From those programs, like the Zumba classes or the nutrition classes, we can pull them into other stuff, kind of how they did to us.”

When parents were asked what they would tell their friend about their experience in the trainings and school wellness policy advocacy work, a participant said they would *“recommend it 100%.”*

Most parents were in agreement that the workshops provided *“great”* information. One participant added that workshops also served as a space to express opinions and clarify misconceptions.

Summary of Focus Groups

Findings from the focus groups indicate that parents who have received training have gained new skills and confidence in working to improve the school environment by learning about the importance of parent involvement in schools and ways parents can take action in local school wellness policies. Parents not only reported an increase in knowledge, but also reported that they have used the information to talk to key school administrators about changes they want to see regarding school nutrition and physical activity.

In terms of factors that may prohibit parents from engaging in school wellness policy and advocacy work, while language and cultural barriers make communication challenging, it was not described as a significant barrier. Having limited time and public speaking was identified as barriers as well as disinterest in this type of work. To engage parents, suggestions included providing incentives and for parents to personally invite others to participate.

Regarding other types of support, resources, or additional training parents need to do advocacy work to be engaged in schools, they suggested having all resource materials available in Spanish and the need for more trainings on public speaking, conducting PowerPoint presentations, and ways to engage or motivate parents to engage in this work.

Finally, parents reported that the trainings provided useful information that they are sharing with other parents as well as in wellness committee meetings.

CONCLUSION

This multi-method evaluation provides a wealth of information and evidence that parents who have received training have gained knowledge, new skills and confidence in working to improve the school food and physical activity environment. While there are areas that need more attention, for example building the capacity for parents to advocate around physical activity and PE issues as well as strategies to help parents gain more confidence in speaking to key school administrators, the Parents in Action trainings have provided parents with the necessary tools to advocate for the implementation, monitoring and/or revision of their local school wellness policies.

APPENDIX A: Description of Parents in Action Trainings

Lesson One: Parents and Schools Working Together to Improve Student Health

Objectives:

1. State the purpose of the local school wellness policy.
2. Describe advocacy
3. Describe why parents should advocate for strong local school wellness policies.
4. Suggest ways in which they can be involved in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of local school wellness policies.

Lesson Two: Foods and Beverages on Campus

Objectives:

1. Describe the programs that provide food and beverages to students on campus and how the offerings impact student choices.
2. Understand California's Nutrition Standards and local nutrition standards.
3. Discuss the challenges in providing healthy food on campus.

Lesson Three: Promoting Healthy Beverages on Campus

Objectives:

1. Understand the link between sugary drinks and overweight/obesity.
2. Identify types of sugary drinks.
3. Identify which sugary drinks are still allowable in California public schools.
4. Calculate the amount of sugar in beverages.
5. List ways they can reduce the amount of sugar in their children's diet.
6. Advocate for healthier beverages in their children's school.

Lesson Four: Physical Activity on Campus

Objectives:

1. State the benefits of daily exercise
2. Differentiate between physical activity and physical education.
3. Identify what prevents a student from being physically active.

Lesson Five: Opening up the Campus for Community Use Beyond School Hours

Objectives:

1. Describe the benefits of shared use of school facilities to the school and community.
2. Describe the barriers to opening school facilities outside school hours.
3. Suggest ways parents can work toward making schools available for community use outside school hours.

Lesson Six: Parents Taking Action in Schools

Objectives:

1. State why it is important for parents to take action in local school wellness policies.
2. Describe the Parents Taking Action process.

Appendix B: Pre-Post Survey Questions

Welcome to the Parents in Action Training!

Please answer each question as best as you can – if you need help, please ask the trainer.
Your name and answers are confidential.

Thank you!

1) a. First Name: _____ b. Last Name: _____

2) Gender: 1 Female 2 Male

3) Ethnicity (Select all that apply):

- 1 African American
- 2 American Indian or Alaska Native
- 3 Asian/Asian American
- 4 Hispanic/Latino
- 5 White/Caucasian
- 6 Other _____

4) What grade is your child/children in? (Select all that apply)

- 1 Elementary
- 2 Middle School
- 3 High School

5) Does your child's school district have a:

- a) District Wellness Committee? 0 No 1 Yes 2 I don't know
- b) Coordinated School Health Council? 0 No 1 Yes 2 I don't know

6) Please select the activities you are **currently** participating in: (Select all that apply)

- a) District Wellness Policy
 - 1 I have not been participating
 - 2 Learning about my district's wellness policy
 - 3 Asked for my district's wellness policy to be in Spanish or other languages
 - 4 I'm a member of the district's wellness committee and/or Coordinated School Health Council
 - 5 Helping parents understand the wellness policy
 - 6 Speaking to our principal about the wellness policy
 - 7 Speaking to school board members about the wellness policy

- b) School Food
- 1 I have not been participating
 - 2 Helping to reduce sugary drinks at school
 - 3 Encouraging our school to have healthier fundraisers
 - 4 Helping to make classroom parties healthier
- c) Physical Education and Physical Activity
- 1 I have not been participating
 - 2 Helping to increase physical activity during the school day
 - 3 Helping to encourage more students to walk or bike safely to school
 - 4 Helping to open the school facilities, outside of school hours
 - 5 Helping to improve Physical Education in my school district

7) How comfortable do you feel to talk to these people about having more healthy food and beverages and physical activity at your child’s school?	Please select (√) one		
	1 Not comfortable	2 A little comfortable	3 Very comfortable
a. School board members			
b. Superintendent			
c. District administrators			
d. School principal			
e. Food Service Director			

8) How much do you know about these programs or standards listed below?	Please select (√) one		
	1 Not at all	2 A little	3 A lot
a. The School Lunch Program			
b. The School Breakfast Program			
c. Foods in schools that are called “competitive foods”			
d. California Nutrition Standards			
e. Nutrition standards in the district wellness policy			

9) Do you think any of these listed below could provide healthier food and beverages to students?	Please select (√) one		
	0 No	1 Yes	2 I don’t know
a. Classroom celebrations and parties			
b. School fundraisers that sell food/beverages			
c. Food vendors in front of the school			
d. School events (assemblies, fairs, sports events)			
e. Rewards at school			

10) Do you know the difference between “**physical activity**” and “**physical education**”? (Select one)

- 0 No 1 Yes

11) Do you think any of these are times when students should get more physical activity ?	Please select (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) one		
	0 No	1 Yes	2 I don't know
a. Before school			
b. During recess time			
c. In Physical Education class			
d. After school			
e. At school, outside of school hours			

12) Are **schools required to provide students with a certain number of minutes** of Physical Education? (Select one) 0 No 1 Yes 2 I don't know

13) Do you think any of these listed below could be improved to provide better Physical Education to students?	Please select (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>) one		
	0 No	1 Yes	2 I don't know
a. Have a Physical Education program			
b. Activity level during Physical Education class			
c. Amount and quality of Physical Education equipment			
d. Enough teachers to teach Physical Education			
e. Meeting the required minutes of Physical Education			

14) Which are **sugary drinks**? (Select all that apply)

- 1 Soda 2 Sports drinks 3 Fruit drinks 4 1% Chocolate milk 5 I don't know

15) Do you know **how to measure the amount of sugar** in sugary drinks? (Select one)

- 0 No 1 Yes 2 I don't know

16) Do you think **sugary drinks** and **overweight/obesity** are connected? (Select one)

- 0 No 1 Yes 2 I don't know

17) By California law, do schools have to **provide free water** to students? (Select one)

- 0 No 1 Yes 2 I don't know

18) By California law, which **sugary drinks are allowed in schools**? (Select all that apply)

- 1 Soda 2 Sports drinks 3 Fruit drinks 4 1% Chocolate milk 5 I don't know

19) Do you think these are good ways to limit sugary drinks at school?	Please select (✓) one		
	0 No	1 Yes	2 I don't know
a. Offer plain water			
b. Offer chocolate or strawberry milk			
c. Work to remove all sugary drinks at school			
d. Ask schools to offer more sports drinks			

20) How comfortable are you to describe these to a friend?	Please select (✓) one		
	1 Not comfortable	2 A little comfortable	3 Very comfortable
a. What "policy" means			
b. What a "district wellness policy" is			
c. What "advocacy" means			
d. How schools can help prevent obesity			
e. Why parents should be involved in their schools			

21) How can parents be involved in making their schools healthier? (Select all that apply)

- 1 I'm not sure
- 2 Learn about your child's district wellness policy
- 3 Talk to other parents about the importance of being involved in schools
- 4 Participate on the Wellness Committee
- 5 Participate on the Coordinated School Health Council
- 6 Work with school leaders to **improve** the district wellness policy
- 7 Work with school leaders to **use** the district wellness policy
- 8 Other _____

22) Do you know the **4 steps in Parents Taking Action?** (Select one)

- 0 No
- 1 Yes
- 2 I know some of the steps

23) How comfortable are you to describe these to a friend?	Please select (✓) one		
	1 Not comfortable	2 A little comfortable	3 Very comfortable
a. Why the school grounds should be open to the community, outside of school hours			
b. How parents can help to make school grounds open for the community to use			
c. What "joint use of school facilities" mean			

24) Do you think any of these listed below are reasons school grounds are not open to the community when students are not in school?	Please select (✓) one		
	0 No	1 Yes	2 I don't know
a. Schools worry about safety for children			
b. Schools worry about vandalism			
c. It costs too much money for school facilities to be open			
d. Schools are responsible for injuries that might happen			

Post-Test (questions 1 – 3 are additional questions for post test)

These questions will help us understand how helpful this training was for you.

1) Now that the training is over, **what do you think you might do next?** (Select all that apply)

a) District Wellness Policy

- 1 Learn more about my district's wellness policy
- 2 Ask for my district's wellness policy to be in Spanish and other languages
- 3 Join the district's wellness committee
- 4 Join the Coordinated School Health Council
- 5 Help parents understand the wellness policy
- 6 Speak to our principal about the wellness policy
- 7 Speak to school board members about the wellness policy
- 8 Not sure

b) School Food

- 1 Help to reduce sugary drinks at school
- 2 Encourage our school to have healthier fundraisers
- 3 Help to make classroom parties healthier
- 4 Not sure

c) Physical Education and Physical Activity

- 1 Help to increase physical activity during the school day
- 2 Help to encourage more students to walk or bike safely to school
- 3 Help to open the school facilities, outside of school hours
- 4 Help to increase Physical Education in my school district
- 5 Not sure

2) Overall, did this **training help you feel more comfortable** to advocate for healthier foods and beverages and more physical activity at school? (Select one)

- 1 Not at all 2 A little 3 Very much

3) Please tell us what you think about the training or what you have learned:

Appendix C: Focus Group Guide

California Project LEAN's School Wellness Policy Parent Training Focus Group Guide

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Welcome

- Hello everyone!
- Thank you for joining us today.
- My name is (moderator) and helping me is (co-moderator) - we work in (city) with (Name of organization).
- (Co-moderator) will be taking notes and making sure everything is running smoothly but won't be a part of our discussion.

B. Overview of the Discussion

- You were asked to join us today because we are interested in your experience in working with your District's wellness policy and the training you attended a while ago, when you learned about advocacy and ways to help the school provide healthier foods and more physical activity.
- I have some questions for you and we'd like to hear your thoughts. You are not being tested; there is no right or wrong answer, we simply want to learn from you.
- I want to assure you that whatever you say here will remain confidential, and that your name will not be connected to any specific comments you make.

C. Ground Rules

- It's always a good idea for a group like ours to set some ground rules or group agreements for all of us to follow.
- I have a few basic ground rules that I'd like to share. The first one is that ...
 - 1) There is no right or wrong answer.
 - We actually welcome different points of view.
 - Please feel free to share your opinion even though it's not what others have said.
 - We are also interested in both positive and negative comments. The negative comments can be very helpful.
 - 2) Only one person at a time talks, so please, no side conversations.
 - 3) Speak loudly and clearly.
 - This is important since we are tape recording and we don't want to miss any of your important comments.
 - Let's also remember to turn off our cell phones.
 - 4) Confidentiality.
 - As mentioned, everything you say today will be confidential. Your name will not be on any reports or linked to any comments you make.
 - Let's all agree that what is said in this room stays in this room.
- Are there any other ground rules you'd like to add?
- Are there any questions before we begin?

II. DISCUSSION

A. Icebreaker (*Go around in a circle*)

- You may know each other already, but let’s begin by introducing ourselves as a group.
 - Tell us your name and (a favorite physical activity you enjoy).
 - I’ll begin, my name is (moderator) and (my favorite physical activity is....).

B. Introductory Question

- As parents, one thing we have in common is that we want our children to grow up healthy by having nutritious foods and the ability to be physically active in safe environments.
 - At home, what are some ways parents can help children eat healthy foods or be active?

C. Transition Question *(Have parents define “advocacy” and “School Wellness Policy” to set the stage; after they have provided their definition, define these terms for the group)*

- About (amount of time) ago, you attended a training led by (name of trainer/organization) on ways that parents can be involved with their children’s school wellness policy and work with the school to create healthier school environments through advocacy and policy change.
 - a. Let’s talk about advocacy – what are some ways to describe “advocacy?”
 - b. How would you describe “school wellness policies?”

CPLs definitions

Advocacy: “Advocacy is asking for something and making it happen through actions and efforts. Advocates speak on behalf of a group about an issue that affects people’s lives. The result of successful advocacy can be a change in a practice or policy.”

Local School Wellness Policy: All schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program were required to develop a local school wellness policy that sets standards for:

- Nutrition education.
- Physical activity.
- All foods and beverages available on campus.
- School-based activities designed to promote student wellness.

It also required that districts include parents, students, and community members in developing the policy.

D. Key Questions

- 5) Impact of School Wellness Policy Trainings on Parents’ Capacity to Engage in Advocacy Work**
 - a. After attending the trainings, how did you use/are using what you learned in the trainings to help improve the school food or physical activity choices in schools?
[Probe specifics of the training and link to advocacy activities]
 - b. What are examples of the activities you were/are involved in?
[Probe for activities such as: participated in meetings with teachers, school or district staff (such as food service director) regarding your concerns or changes you’d like to see and/or regarding the School Wellness Policy; assessed and/or made changes to the

types of food or physical activity opportunities at school; involved in policy or practice changes; worked on sugary beverages or joint use policies; continue to meet with other parents regarding the importance of being engaged in this work]

- c. In doing this work, what worked well/is working well and how did the trainings prepare you?
- d. In this work, what was/is most difficult and how did you overcome difficulties?
- e. In what ways did the trainings help prepare you for these difficulties?

6) Parents' Perception of their Confidence in School Wellness Policy Advocacy Work

- In addition to the trainings and hands-on work, having the confidence to do this type of work is also important.
 - a. In what ways has your confidence as an advocate for healthier schools changed because of your participation in the trainings? [*Probe specific skills they learned; social cohesion with their peers; the importance of being engaged*]
 - b. In what ways has your confidence as an advocate for healthier schools changed because of your hands-on experience?
 - c. What do you think was most helpful – the trainings or hands-on experience or both? Please tell me more.
 - d. Besides learning advocacy skills and school wellness policies, what were other ways the trainings helped build your confidence? [*Probe social cohesion and camaraderie from the trainings, resulting in greater individual and group confidence*]

7) Factors that Prohibit/Facilitate Parents' Capacity to Engage in School Wellness Policy Advocacy Work

- We want to understand the things that help or prevent parents from doing this type of work. Besides not having enough time, keeping up with children and household duties, not being interested in doing this work, or not knowing how to be involved...
 - a. What might be other reasons that prevent parents from doing advocacy work?
 - b. In what ways do language and/or culture make it difficult to do advocacy work? What is needed to help with these challenges?
 - c. What would make it easier for parents to do this type of work?

8) Additional Support/Resources Parents Need to be More Skilled and Confident to Engage in the Implementation, Monitoring and/or Revision of their Local School Wellness Policies

- We would like to help more parents work with their schools to make them healthier. From your experience in the trainings and your hands-on School Wellness Policy work...
 - a. What other types of support or additional training is needed for parents to do advocacy work/be engaged in schools?
 - b. What do you think will help parents be more confident in doing advocacy work with School Wellness Policies?

9) Future Advocacy Work

- Finally, I have two last questions about your plans for more advocacy work.
 - a. What plans do you have to continue to help improve the school food or physical activity choices in schools? [*Probe: will continue to meet with other parents; be*

involved in the School Wellness Policy council or Coordinated School Health council; have no future plans; moderator can pull examples from Q1b]

- b. If your friend wanted to get involved in this work, what would you tell them about your experience in the trainings and School Wellness Policy advocacy work? *[Probe for both positive and negative experiences]*

III. CONCLUSION

- a. Are there any other thoughts or anything you want to add about what we've been talking about today?
- b. I'd like to ask (co-moderator) if s/he has any questions or comments.
- c. I want to end by thanking you for your time and for sharing your opinions with us. This has been *very helpful* – thank you!