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District 197 receives wellness grants to promote healthy lifestyles for students

(Mendota Heights, Minn.) --- District 197 has been awarded three wellness grants from Dakota County for the 2010-2011 school year. This includes Wellness Site Leader stipends of \$7,200, a contracted Registered Dietitian at \$27,500, and an Active Recess grant of \$17,500. Garlough Environmental Magnet School, Mendota Elementary, Somerset Elementary, and Friendly Hills Middle School have also received additional “mini-grants” for individual school wellness projects.

District 197 has made efforts in the past school year to make positive changes in the overall nutrition of students, however there are still many improvements to be made. These wellness grants will help District 197 in its commitment to providing a school environment that promotes the health of its students by providing opportunities for them to choose nutritious food items and to participate in physical activities throughout the school day.

“We are excited about the opportunity that these grants give us to provide our students with healthier meal options and chances for more physical activity throughout the school day,” says Superintendent Jay Haugen. “Eating healthy meals and being active are linked to improvements in student achievement, so we are encouraged that this will help our students thrive academically as well.”

These grants will allow for a registered dietitian to thoroughly evaluate menus and the overall nutritional environment in the schools. The registered dietitian will then offer expertise to the district staff and food service department in order to improve and implement nutritional policies for all schools, including an increase in variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. This will be a district-wide effort, so the impact and development will be consistent across each school.

Wellness Team Leaders were introduced to all eight District 197 schools during the second semester of the 2009-10 school year, and this grant will allow them to continue and receive stipends for the 2010-11 school year. Their role is to organize site committees, site activities, facilitate meetings with parents and staff, and implement new policy and environmental changes. Wellness Team Leaders initiate activities that encourage wellness through environmental changes in the areas of nutrition and physical activity among students and staff at each of the district’s eight schools.

Currently, elementary and middle school students in District 197 have little or no access to games and equipment during recess and spare time on the playground; they ultimately end up with little or no activity and often stand around socializing. The Active Recess grant will provide students with the age appropriate equipment necessary to actively participate in physical activities, promoting physical wellness.



The mini-grants at the individual schools are for additional wellness opportunities. Somerset will receive \$2,500 for physical education and recess equipment. Mendota will receive \$813 for student “Taste Testing” of healthy food options. Garlough will receive \$2,500 for snowshoes so that students can participate in outdoor physical education during the wintertime. Lastly, Friendly Hills will receive \$2,500 in additional rewards.

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