



## Unity Point Elementary School

Principal April Haar and her staff at Unity Point Elementary School have made health and wellness a priority through changes in their P.E. curriculum, school lunch menu, and their partnership with the Jackson County Health Department.

### Unity Point Elementary School

Level: preK-8th grade

Enrollment: 697

Low Income: 56%

- 58% White
- 12% Asian
- 18% Black
- 7% Hispanic

(ISBE School Report Card )

### Beginning With Partnerships

Improvements to P.E and wellness at Unity Point Elementary School in Carbondale, Illinois began six years ago, supported by its partnerships with Southern Illinois Healthcare (SIH) and the Jackson County Health Department. In 2007, Principal April Haar and the school administration revived their wellness committee headed by the school's dietician. What began as a professional development partnership that utilized the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH®) curriculum has now developed into a comprehensive health and wellness initiative at the school. For example, the school now has five different playgrounds that each caters to a different developmental stage, funded by various grants and the PTO.

### The Path to Change

Principal Haar identified several champions that motivated the school's transition to health and wellness. Jill Misner, who is one of the school's physical education teachers, has been the main coordinator of the CATCH® curriculum and has creatively integrated the common core standards into her own curriculum. Ron Rogers, who is a physical education teacher at Unity, promotes healthy lifestyles through an integrated PE and health curriculum. Ulli Tragoudas, the Food Service Director and dietician, led the change in the school's snack policies to encourage students to make healthy choices.

Finally, Angie Bailey of the Jackson County Health Department and Amy Wright of Southern Illinois Healthcare have been instrumental in securing funding and resources for the school to implement the CATCH® curriculum. CATCH is focused on ensuring that all students are as active as possible, even when playing team sports. SIH helped facilitate completion of the School Health Index to identify potential areas for improvement.

Southern Illinois Healthcare has also sponsored several professional development opportunities, as well as heart rate monitors and pedometers for the P.E. department that have helped to maintain the momentum of wellness at the school.

**"I use heart rate monitors to link health to physical education by teaching in detail about different types of exercise, what each student's targeted heart rate zone is, and why these numbers differ from student to student."**

**-Bret Pinnon, P.E. Teacher at Unity Point Elementary School**

### Review and Revision— Improving P.E.

Misner believes in keeping her students very active, which is why she has students do a cardio workout while she delivers instructions for each day's lesson. After her students have finished their cardio workout, they jump right into a skill-related activity that is inclusive of all students and does not entail elimination games.

The partnership with SIH has allowed the P.E. teachers at Unity to measure the efficacy of their curriculum in maintaining moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for students and alter the activities, if necessary. SIH also worked with the school to assess the time students spend in moderate to vigorous

## Resources

### SoFit

[www.activelivingresearch.org](http://www.activelivingresearch.org)

### CATCH

[catchusa.org](http://catchusa.org)

### Southern Illinois Healthcare

[www.sih.net](http://www.sih.net)

### Jackson County Health Department

[www.jchdonline.org](http://www.jchdonline.org)

### Enhance P.E. Task Force

[www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm](http://www.isbe.net/EPE/html/EPETF.htm)

### The Community Guide

[www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org)



### Unity Point Wellness Team

Left to Right: Bret Pinnon, Ulli Tragoudas, Ron Rogers, and Jill Misner

physical activity (MVPA) during P.E. using the SOFIT (System for Observing Fitness Instruction Time) tool. According to an analysis of SOFIT data, since 2011, the school has met its goal of having students spend more than 50% of their time in class in MVPA.

As demonstrated by their evaluation and assessment activities, a common theme at Unity Point Elementary school is “review and revision.” Even the students participate in this; as they walk through the halls between their classes, they can see videos of themselves during P.E. displayed on monitors. Misner wants her students to see how they are performing and to identify ways that they can improve.

Bret Pinnon, who is the P.E. teacher for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, works with his students daily to increase their level of fitness. “I use heart rate monitors to link health to physical education by teaching in detail about different types of exercise, what each student’s targeted heart rate zone is, and why these numbers differ from student to student.”

By the time the students have left Pinnon and are in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, their cardio workouts are more intense. As these workouts get harder, P.E. teacher Ron

Rogers teaches students about the different muscle groups they are working and has them maintain a journal to describe how their body feels and graph the results of their workout.

## What’s Next at Unity Point?

Other teachers in the school also appreciate the cognitive benefits of physical activity. A fourth grade teacher at Unity Point recently led an in-service training day called “brain gym” for her colleagues that emphasized the benefits of frequent movement.

One of the barriers that Principal Haar and her staff have faced is the lack of a community infrastructure to support their changes, since the district is comprised of only their school, a single K-8<sup>th</sup> grade school. “Our school is in a rural community and is not within the city limits. We do not have businesses, restaurants, parks or municipalities to speak of within our district boundaries that could help reinforce the active living lifestyle we teach our students.” Principal Haar also said that while all of their stakeholders have been supportive of their transition, they are concerned about ongoing financial support.

The school and its partners are working on generating parent and community involvement in the wellness-related changes that are necessary for success. She hopes to keep them motivated and informed by continuing to provide evening activities for families, like wellness booths presented by the Jackson County Health Department and SIH.



For more information, contact April Haar  
618.529.4151 [ahaar@up140.org](mailto:ahaar@up140.org)



[www.iphionline.org](http://www.iphionline.org)