



**Bronx  
Health  
REACH**

Making Health Equality a Reality

# Healthy Schools New York

*A collection of success stories from the Institute for Family Health's  
Bronx Health REACH Healthy Schools New York program*

July 2015

## Nutrition Education Initiative a Success at Bronx Writing Academy



Bronx Writing Academy is making great strides towards expanding its nutrition education programming, with many new initiatives introduced during the 2014-15 school year. A long-time partner of Bronx Health REACH through the NY State Department of Health's Healthy Schools NY program, Bronx Writing Academy is emerging as a leader among other schools in the South Bronx for its efforts to improve student wellness.

This year, Bronx Writing Academy was the recipient of a School Wellness

Council grant from the Department of Education Office of School Wellness to fund a new Capoeira (Brazilian martial arts) class and the school's community health fair. In addition, Bronx Writing Academy received a *Grow to Learn* school garden grant from Grow NYC to transform a previously unused plot of land in front of the school into an outdoor classroom full of kale, lettuce, and other vegetables. Students and teachers alike are enthusiastic about the new garden as a hands-on resource to comple-

ment academic instruction.

Bronx Writing Academy was also chosen to receive a REACH mini-grant from Bronx Health REACH to support professional development around nutrition education at the school. These funds were used to purchase materials and compensate teachers for their time spent attending nutrition education trainings and events.

Science teacher Cristine

Maisano participated in two gardening workshops through the Edible Schoolyard, and adopted the nutrition education curriculum, *Choice, Control, & Change*, as part of her regular classroom instruction. Students also attended a field trip to the Union Square Farmers Market in June and sampled local products while learning about seasonal produce and recipes on how to prepare them.





# New Poster Club at PS 132 Promotes Healthy Eating

Over 260 students at PS 132 Garrett A. Morgan Elementary School in the Bronx signed up for a new poster club this spring, spearheaded by the school’s four social work interns. In addition to providing an opportunity for students to socialize and express themselves artistically, the poster club served to promote healthy behaviors among the student body. All posters created during the club meetings focus on various aspects of wellness, from advocating against bullying to promoting fruits and vegetables. According to the social work interns, the club was so popular that they had to rotate the students that attended each meeting, since there were too many to accommodate in the same session.

Sarah Efird, one of the social work interns who helped start this initiative, described the poster club as “a way of achieving multiple wellness goals, like building community, reminding students of healthy habits, and providing opportunities for students to be creative together.”

The poster club is just one of many new and continuing wellness initiatives at PS 132. Students participate in *Box Out Bullying* to address behavioral health and conflict resolution challenges, as well as school-wide recycling and nutrition education programming through the Coalition for Healthy School Food and *Cookshop*—a program of the Food Bank for NYC. The poster club became an outlet for students to use art as a tool to promote holistic wellness throughout the school community. Says Ms. Efird: “Students started mixing topics like bullying, healthy eating, and recycling, so we ended up with some posters with fruits and vegetables being nice or mean to each other.” Joanna Chin, another social work intern, said the poster club “reflected the best of P.S.132’s creativity, teamwork, and desire to make their school a better place.”

PS 132 plans to build on its existing wellness programs to offer even more support for student health in the coming years. The school re-

ceived a School Wellness Council grant through the NYC Department of Education’s Office of School Wellness, which provided funding for a variety of health related programs this year.

In addition, the school was awarded a *Grow to Learn* school garden grant through Grow NYC, which will serve as an additional resource for hands-on nutrition education as part of the school curriculum. The social work interns at PS 132 coordinated most of this year’s new wellness initiatives, as well as a newly-formed student wellness council that uses student leadership to educate the school community on health and wellness topics.







## Lucero Elementary Hosts 2nd Annual Family Fitness Night

On the evening of May 21<sup>st</sup>, Lucero Elementary School in the Bronx held its second Family Fitness Night since the school opened in 2013. The event featured physical activity stations, a nutrition education workshop led by Corbin Hill Food Project and New Settlement Apartments, tastings from the SchoolFood Alternative Menu facilitated by George Edwards of the DOE Garden to Café program, and a variety of healthy food samples for students and their families. The event was organized by Lucero’s School Wellness Council, spearheaded by Ms. Muia, the PE teacher. The school has won Gold for the Excellence in School Well-

ness Award for the past two years, and this year Ms. Muia was recognized as runner up for School Wellness Champion of the Year. She was also chosen to participate in the NYC Department of Education’s new PE Focus Grant, an opportunity for selected PE teachers to participate in professional development and promote best practices for physical education among other schools in their

district.

Family Fitness Night was the culminating event of Fitness Week—a school-wide effort to promote physical activity among the student body. Each day of the week fostered awareness around a different activity, such as Move Around Monday and Touch Your Toes Tuesday. Regular announcements made over the intercom reminded students to get up and stay active throughout the school day. Since regular physical activity is linked with improved academic performance in addition to better health outcomes, we hope other schools will follow Lucero’s lead in providing more opportunities for students to be physically active.



## Scanning ID Cards for a More Efficient Lunch

At many schools across the country, lunch time is a period of chaos. Students wait in long lines, struggle to eat as quickly as possible, and often don’t have enough time to rest or play outside before returning to a busy day of classes. At MS 22, an innovative ID card system has transformed the school’s lunch routine to address many of these problems. Students swipe a card at the register instead of needing to recite their ID number. Thanks to this new technology, students can receive their food and finish eating within just 15 minutes, leaving

nearly half an hour of free time for outdoor recess.

Mr. Lopez, the community associate and former parent coordinator at MS 22, said the new ID scanning process is so fast that at first the cafeteria staff had trouble keeping up with the new pace. This is in contrast to the old system, which caused tension and inefficiencies when students forgot their ID number and a staff member had to look it up.

Not only does the ID scanning system cut the time spent getting food in half,

but it also encourages students to be more adventurous in the lunchroom. Says Mr. Lopez, “Sometimes when the kids saw food, if they didn’t think it looked good, they wouldn’t try it because they didn’t want to wait on line and put their number in. Now with the ID card system, they can at least try it. It’s not that much effort; they can at least put it on their plate and see what it is.” The SchoolFood manager overseeing MS 22 confirmed that the new system gives students more time to eat, and that they are sometimes

*Continued on page 4*





*Pre-school students at PS 369 visit a local community garden and learn about compost. Their school received a mini-grant from Bronx Health REACH to support nutrition education, as well as a Grow to Learn school garden grant from Grow NYC in 2015.*



*Scanning Cards continued from page 3*

more willing to try new foods. According to one cafeteria staff member, the kids especially like fruit and often ask for it. Other school staff members agree that the quicker process encourages more students to participate in the school lunch program, and that their kids have stopped complaining about hunger. Students previously may have been deterred by long lines and a rushed eating experience, and were reluctant to get in the lunch line when they forgot their ID numbers-- a source of frustration among cafeteria staff.

When asked how other schools could implement this system, Mr. Lopez explained that the scanning machine's primary function is to record attendance. The technology also has the capability to track when kids enter and leave the school and whether or not a particular child is in the lunchroom. It can create an ID number in a barcode format, which is

embedded in each student's personal ID card.

By working with the Office of SchoolFood, MS 22 has been able to get a bar code scanner installed on the cafeteria machines, which can scan a student's ID card in less than one second.

A small change in lunchroom technology can have a huge impact on students' participation in school lunch and willingness to try new foods, as well as make more time for active play during the lunch period. In light of the universal free lunch program recently introduced in NYC public middle schools, we are interested in tracking how many students are taking school meals. Mr. Lopez concluded, "For a school that's tight on time or their numbers are lower, this [system] will be amazing; it will cut down the time almost in half and increase the number of students picking up lunches. I mean, it has to be a good thing if the kids are eating."



Making Health Equality a Reality

**Bronx Health REACH**  
16 East 16th St, 6th Floor  
New York NY 10003  
212-633-0800  
[www.bronxhealthreach.org](http://www.bronxhealthreach.org)

**Email:**  
[bronxhealthreach@institute2000.org](mailto:bronxhealthreach@institute2000.org)

**Facebook:**  
<http://www.facebook.com/>

**Twitter:**  
<http://twitter.com/BxHealthREACH>

**Instagram:**  
<http://instagram.com/BxHealthREACH>

**Blog:**  
[bronxhealthreach.blogspot.com](http://bronxhealthreach.blogspot.com)

