

Evaluation of Strategies for Increasing Parent Involvement in Marathon Kids and Pilot Implementation of Marathon Kids In-a-Box

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Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT AIMS

Marathon Kids® is a free, school and community-based program that promotes running and walking and fruit and vegetable (FV) consumption in children in grades K through 5 and their families. In 2012-2013, The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at the University of Texas School of Public Health was subcontracted by Marathon Kids® (MK) with funding from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation to conduct an evaluation of new initiatives aimed at increasing program reach as well as parental involvement in the program. The evaluation had three primary aims: 1.) to evaluate the effect of enhanced parent communication strategies on parent exposure and involvement in the Marathon Kids program and on parental social support for children's physical activity and healthy eating; 2.) to conduct focus groups with key program stakeholders to identify lessons learned and best practices for the Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative; and 3.) to evaluate the pilot implementation of Marathon Kids In-A-Box – a new delivery model- in three new program sites.

METHODS

For Aim 1, a quasi-experimental design was employed to evaluate the effect of three Marathon Kids program conditions on knowledge and involvement in the MK program and social support for children's energy-balance behaviors among 2nd and 4th grade parents. The three program conditions consisted of: 1.) a usual & customary MK comparison condition (*MK Basic*) (n=273 parents); 2.) MK Enhanced condition (n=116)- which included increased messaging about MK (e.g., newsletters, emails, bulletin boards); and 3.) an enhanced plus school organizing condition (*MK Wellness Team Initiative- MKWT*) (n=168)- which included efforts to form and guide parent wellness teams in addition to parent communication strategies. Data were collected from parents using a self-administered questionnaire sent home with students at three time points (October 2012, January/February 2013, and April/May 2013). The final analytic sample consisted of n=8 schools, with 3 schools each in MK Basic and MKWT conditions, and 2 schools in the MK Enhanced condition. Logistic regression methods were used to compare parent outcomes among the three conditions, adjusting for parent age, ethnicity, and gender. Process evaluation data were also collected from MK school coordinators, and inputs were tracked by MK national staff (presented in report). Aim 2 consisted of a series of focus group discussions conducted in spring 2012 (n=4 focus groups) and spring 2013 (n=3 groups) with parents, teachers, and community leaders that aimed to identify lessons learned and best practices with the Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative (n=5-12 participants per group). For Aim 3, a mixed-methods approach based on semi-structured interviews with MK district coordinators (n=3) and an online questionnaire with MK school coordinators (n=22) was implemented to assess overall implementation (fidelity and reach) of the program and elicit feedback and recommendations on program delivery. Data were collected in spring 2013. For both aims 2 and 3, content analysis was conducted of qualitative data to identify key themes; for survey data, analyses included descriptive statistics, chi-square tests and ANOVA.

FINDINGS

Aim 1- Parent Communication Study: Overall, parents in the two enhanced communication/parent outreach conditions reported higher exposure to MK messages, school wellness activities (MKWT), and child participation in specific facets of MK program. Specifically, parents in the MK Enhanced and MKWT conditions reported significantly higher exposure to MK messaging via school newsletters, website, marquee (MKWT only) and school bulletin boards (MK Enhanced only) (p<.05). Parents from MKWT

schools reported higher exposure to information from their school wellness teams ($p=.01$) compared to the other two conditions; parents from both MKWT and MK Enhanced schools reported significantly higher participation in school wellness activities compared to MK Basic School ($p=.03$). Parents in both enhanced communication conditions also reported higher participation of their children in filling out their mileage log compared to MK Basic parents ($p<.05$); no differences in parent report of children's completion of fuel (fruit and vegetable) log were observed. While no differences in *global social support* for children's physical activity and healthy eating were found across conditions, *instrumental support* for children's physical activity (*exercising with child* and *taking child to a place to be active*) significantly increased across conditions ($p<.05$). Specific areas that merit further exploration are discussed in the report, such as increasing attendance at MK kick-off and final mile events and further clarification of parent roles in supporting child with MK goals and activities.

Aim 2- MK Wellness Team Initiative Focus Groups: Several key themes related to wellness team functioning were explored with MK wellness teams ($n=4$ in spring 2012 and $n=3$ in spring 2013), which resulted in the identification of key best practices/recommendations for school wellness teams (see report). Among the key findings, wellness team stakeholders expressed great support for the inclusion of a MK parent communicator, who was vital in organizing meetings and wellness activities. We also learned that face-to-face/personal communication was identified as the most effective way to reach parents, with wellness teams also voicing the importance of other communication approaches so complement this approach. Groups also recommended that wellness teams have two co-chairs in order to ensure high functioning of the team, that parents have a dedicated space for meetings, and that teams provide for flexible schedules and child care support to enable them to attend meetings.

Aim 3: Marathon Kids In-A-Box (MKIB) Pilot Implementation: MK school coordinators representing 22 schools from 3 Texas school districts that participated in the MKIB pilot implementation reported high satisfaction with the MK program and with support received to implement MKIB. MK school coordinators also reported a high level of implementation of several of the core MK program components, including structuring time for student running and walking during school hours (100% of schools), school support with tracking of mileage and fuel logs (>90%), and implementation of a Final Mile Run event (91%). In addition, over half of the schools (59%) reported holding a recognition ceremony for students who completed the program. Areas that merit further fine-tuning include: increasing support with Kick-Off event (only 50% of schools/districts held one); further activating parent communication (e.g., less than half reported sending a reminder notices to parents about MK and only 27% reported communicating to parents about MK via the school newsletter); listing MK as a school partner (14% did so); and securing greater support from the PTA (32% reported doing so).

CONCLUSION

Our findings indicate several positive accomplishments and outcomes with Marathon Kids program activities during the 2012-13 year, while at the same time highlight some areas that may benefit from further fine-tuning and enhancement. Overall, we found that the additional support provided to the two enhanced parent communication conditions resulted in increased parent exposure of the MK program as well as enhanced program outcomes related to student tracking of miles and attendance at MK events. We found a higher level of activity taking place in MK wellness team schools, and our parent communication findings provide triangulation to support greater exposure of parents to wellness messages and activities in schools that had MK wellness teams. Despite 2012-13 being the first year of implementation of MKIB, we found a high level of satisfaction by MK school and district coordinators and implementation of several key program components. We explore specific areas for enhancement of the program within the report with the aim of continual fine-tuning of the program.

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Introduction

Childhood obesity rates remain at unprecedented levels in the United States, with the latest national estimates indicating that just under one in five children and youth (16.9%) are obese.¹ Alarmingly, the U.S. obesity rates among elementary school-aged children have experienced no significant decline between 1999 and 2008.¹ Children's participation in regular physical activity (PA) and healthy eating (e.g., diets rich in fruit and vegetables (FV)) are key factors in the prevention of obesity.² These behaviors also provide multiple additional health benefits, including chronic disease prevention and promotion of mental and emotional health,^{2,3} with a growing body of research finding positive benefits of PA for student academic achievement.⁴ Despite these benefits, less than half of U.S. children aged 6 to 11 years meet national recommendations⁵ of 60 minutes of daily PA,⁶ and less than a quarter meet recommendations⁷ on FV consumption.⁸

Marathon Kids

Marathon Kids® is a free, school and community-based program that promotes running and walking and fruit and vegetable consumption in elementary school children and their families. Founded in 1996, Marathon Kids currently operates in seven sites throughout the United States.⁹ In 2013, the program reached over 280,000 students and their families.¹⁰ The core program activities of Marathon Kids center on a 6-month walking/running and fruit and vegetable consumption (FVC) program for elementary school children and their families. During the program, students track the number of miles they walk or run along with the number of fruits and vegetables they eat by coloring in their MK Mileage Log and MK Food Log for each quarter mile run/walked and each fruit/vegetable consumed, respectively. Successful completion of MK is based on walking or running 26.2 miles over an approximate 6-month period and filling out a "fuel"/food log of healthy eating. Students can perform these activities at school, home, and in their community, and PE teachers, classroom teachers, parents and community leaders help to implement the program. In many schools, structured time is provided during recess, PE class, or other periods of the school day for students to walk or run, and teachers often assist students with the tracking of their miles and FVC. The Marathon Kids program is book-ended by highly publicized Kick-Off and Final Mile Run events held at well-known public venues, such as university or city football stadiums, where children run their first or last laps, with encouragement from public figures. Students who complete the program receive a finisher t-shirt, and those who attend the Final Mile Run also receive a medal.

Two recent evaluations conducted by the authors provide evidence on the effectiveness of the program in promoting children's physical activity and FV consumption. A 2008-09 evaluation found low-income children who attended Marathon Kids (MK) schools engaged in significantly more running over the course of the school year compared with similar students

from non-participating schools. Modest increases among MK participants were noted in FV consumption.^{11,12} In 2010-11, a second evaluation study was conducted to test strategies aimed at increasing FV intake in children.¹³ Children attending schools that received support for community organizing around FV intake-with activities that included FV tracking, community gardens, and farmer cafeteria visits, consumed roughly a quarter cup more of FV per day than children attending schools in a regular MK condition. Significant increases in FV during school lunch were also observed in a MK enhanced condition, which included a new FV tracking system, group FV tracking, and daily fun fruit facts. All MK conditions resulted in modest yet significant increases FV as a snack.

Evaluation of Marathon Kids

Stemming from this foundation of evidence, Marathon Kids continues to explore approaches for increasing its program impact and reach. A common theme identified in the first and second evaluations^{12,13} conducted by the authors was that much of the MK program activity takes place at school, not at home or with parents. Given findings from the second evaluation¹³ that program effects increase with greater school organizing and participation of parents and other school stakeholders, Marathon Kids developed the *MK Wellness Team Initiative* as well as enhanced parent communication strategies, which aim to increase parent and community involvement in child health promotion efforts. In addition to exploring approaches to enhance program efforts, Marathon Kids is also exploring ways to increase program reach. In 2012-13, Marathon Kids piloted the “Marathon Kids In-A-Box” program, an innovative model that aims to promote locally-driven efforts to implement Marathon Kids.

In 2012, researchers at The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at the University of Texas School of Public Health-Austin were subcontracted by Marathon Kids® (MK) with funding from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation to conduct an evaluation of new initiatives aimed at increasing a.) parental involvement in the program via enhanced parent communication strategies and parent-school wellness teams via the *Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative*, and b.) program reach via the *Marathon Kids In-a-Box* model. This report presents findings on evaluation efforts that took place between March 2012 and August 2013. The evaluation had three primary evaluation aims, which guide the organization of the report:

- 1.) To evaluate the effect of enhanced parent communication strategies on parent exposure to and involvement in the Marathon Kids program and on parent social support for children’s physical activity and healthy eating;
- 2.) To conduct focus groups with key program stakeholders to identify lessons learned and best practices for the *Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative*; and
- 3.) To evaluate the pilot implementation of *Marathon Kids In-A-Box*- a new delivery model- in three new program sites.

Evaluation of Parent Communication & Organizing

Evaluation Aim #1

Despite initial evidence on the positive effect of Marathon Kids on running and FV consumption in elementary school children¹¹, previous evaluations of the program indicate that much of the program activity takes place at school, with less activity at home or with parents^{12,13}. With the aim of learning more about approaches to increase parent involvement in Marathon Kids, we conducted a quasi-experimental study to assess the effect of enhanced parent communication strategies on parent exposure to and involvement in the program and on parent social support for children's physical activity and healthy eating during the 2012-13 school year. The specific study question we aimed to address was: *What is the effect of increased parent communication strategies and school/community organizing on parent exposure to and participation in Marathon Kids, including parent social support of children's physical activity and healthy eating?* A summary of the findings are presented in the call-out boxes.

Key Summary Points & Conclusions (Aim 1)

The following presents a summary of key findings from the Marathon Kids parent communication study of parents of 2nd and 4th graders from 8 public schools in Austin.

#1 MK Implementation in Schools

- The majority (82%) of school leaders who serve as MK coordinators feel MK contributes to student health and would recommend program to others.
- Overall implementation of key MK activities was high, including structuring of running/walking time, support of tracking students' miles, and participation in Kick-Off/Final Mile events.
- Both MK Basic and MK Wellness Team Initiative schools reported structuring walking/running time *before* school in addition to during school.
- Displaying students' mileage/fuel logs varied by school and may merit further promotion for higher implementation across schools.
- Transportation to events was higher in MK Basic and MK Wellness Team schools; only a third of coordinators from MK Enhanced schools reported that their school provides transportation. Further exploration to ensure provision of transportation to events merits attention.
- MK Wellness Team school coordinators reported the highest participation in health promotion events (walking clubs, community gardens, cooking classes) as well as promotion of MK and health via various communication channels.

Methods

Evaluation Design and School Study Sample

A quasi-experimental, nonequivalent comparison group, pretest/posttest design was used to evaluate the effect of enhanced parent communication strategies on parent awareness and involvement in the program and on parent social support for children's physical activity and healthy eating (Figure 1). Specifically, we compared two 'enhanced' parent outreach conditions- an "enhanced parent communication" condition ("Marathon Kids Enhanced") and a "Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative" condition- with a "usual & customary" MK comparison group condition (Figure 1) (see also description of study conditions on p.9).

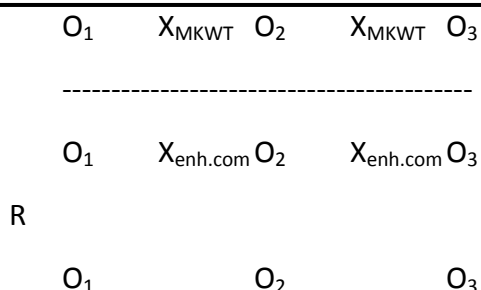


Figure 1. Nonequivalent comparison group, pretest/posttest evaluation design for evaluation of parent communication approaches. Measures taken in: O1= Sept/Oct '12 (baseline); O2=Jan/Feb '13; O3=April/May '13(posttest). X= intervention conditions, with MKWT=Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative (n=3 schools); Enh.Com=Enhanced Parent Communication condition (n=2 schools).

In forming our study sample, we aimed to recruit a total of nine lower income schools, with three schools in each study condition. Three schools that previously participated in the Sprouting Healthy

Key Summary Points & Conclusions (Aim 1)

#2 Parent Exposure to MK and other Health Messages

- Parents from *MK Enhanced* and *MK Wellness Team* schools reported higher exposure to MK messaging via school newsletters, school website, marquee (MKWT only) and bulletin boards (MK Enhanced only) vs. MK Basic schools.
- Few differences in exposure to other (non-MK) health messaging were observed by study condition. While over 60% of parents across study conditions reported exposure to health messaging in school newsletters, roughly half or less reported health messaging via other communication channels (email, phone, website, school meeting), suggesting an important opportunity for action.

#3 Parent Exposure to Wellness Team Information and Activities

- Parents from *MK Wellness Team* schools reported significantly higher exposure to information from wellness teams (60% vs. ~50% for the other two conditions) (p=.01).
- Parents from *MK Enhanced* and *MK Wellness Team* schools reported significantly higher participation in school wellness activities compared to *MK Basic* schools (p=.03). As only 15-18% participated in wellness activities, further efforts to increase parent involvement in school-based wellness promotion efforts are warranted.

Marathon Kids program, a school organizing initiative between Marathon Kids and Sustainable Food Center that took place in 2010-11 aimed at promoting FV consumption, were first identified and were included as part of the Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative (MKWT) condition. We then identified six additional schools that were matched on socio-demographic characteristics (percentage of economically disadvantaged children and ethnicity) to the MKWT sample. These six schools were subsequently randomized to the “usual and customary” comparison condition (MK Basic) or the MK Enhanced parent communication condition (3 schools each). Despite multiple efforts to collect baseline data at one of the nine schools, we were not allowed to collect data at this school until the second measurement period. As such, this school was dropped from the analysis, bringing the total analytic sample to n=8 schools. Parents of 2nd and 4th grade students were recruited with the aim of incorporating different developmental stages of elementary school children. The evaluation was conducted during the 2012-13 school year, with a baseline assessment conducted in October/November 2012, an interim assessment conducted in January/February 2013, and a posttest assessment conducted in April/May 2013.

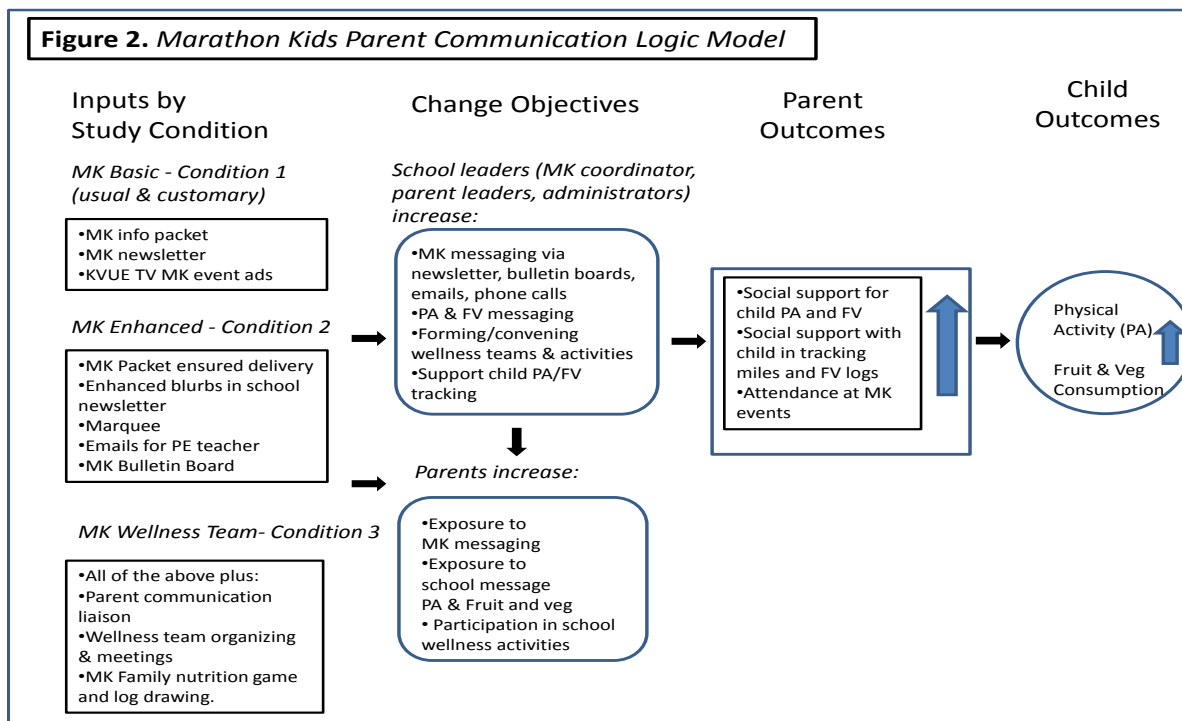
Key Summary Points & Conclusions (Aim 1)

#4 Parent Participation in Marathon Kids-Related Activities

- A significantly higher percentage of parents in *MK Enhanced* and *MK Wellness Team* schools reported that their children filled out their mileage log in fall 2012 and spring 2013 compared to *MK Basic* parents ($p<.05$). These positive findings notwithstanding, no differences in parent support for children’s filling out their logs were found across conditions. With roughly one-third or less of parents reporting that their child filled out a mileage or fuel log, it is possible that parents feel schools are responsible for this task, and as such, do not provide further support. Further exploration of the role of parents in supporting this task is warranted.
- A higher percentage of *MK Enhanced* and *MK Wellness Team* parents reported that their child participated in the Kick-Off and Final Mile events compared to *MK Basic* parents, however, findings were not statistically significant at $p=.05$. With approximately 20% or less of parents reporting child participation, participation in MK events represents another potential area for exploration.

Description of Study Conditions and Program Inputs

Figure 2 presents a logic model of the enhanced parent communication and outreach initiatives. For the current study, we were specifically interested in how increased parent communication and school organizing via wellness team support enhance: a.) parent exposure to messaging about Marathon Kids; and b.) parental social support for their child's physical activity and healthy eating, including support for tracking of children's mileage and fuel logs and attendance at Marathon Kids' events. Below we describe each study condition.



Marathon Kids Basic (“usual & customary”) condition: For the usual and customary condition, Marathon Kids distributes information packets to a Marathon Kids coordinator, often the PE teacher, about the Marathon Kids program. The information packet includes an application to register for the program, a mileage and fuel log, and a letter about the program. The MK coordinator is then asked to photocopy and distribute this information to parents and classroom teachers.

The **Marathon Kids Enhanced condition** focuses on enhancing parent communication through strategies that aim to increase parent awareness about and participation in program and activities (social support for child participation, participation in celebratory events; and direct participation of program goals). The additional communication efforts included: insuring Marathon Kids program recruitment packet were delivered to students; distribution of an enhanced school-parent newsletter; provision and promotion of program activities through the school marquee and bulletin board; and increased communication between Marathon Kids staff and school faculty via periodic emails.

The Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative (MKWT) condition builds off accomplishments achieved through a partnership between Marathon Kids and Sustainable Foods Center from a previous grant. In addition to incorporating strategies outlined under the MK Enhanced condition, the MK Wellness Team condition aims to “wrap community around schools” to generate parent-school-community-led action around fruit and vegetable consumption (FV) activities and programs such as community-school gardens, access to fresh fruit and vegetables (FV) from local farmers, and promotion of physical activity through activities such as parent exercise groups (e.g., Zumba, parent walking groups). A key component of the MKWT condition is a focus on school organizing for promotion of FVC and PA via the formation and facilitation of school wellness teams. Teams are encouraged to meet regularly with the aim of selecting and implementing actions from a menu of activities. Schools in this condition were provided a Marathon Kids parent communicator (a lay parent from the community), whose roles and responsibilities include: aiding school wellness teams, engaging parents and community members, and coordinating communication messages between school and parents regarding Marathon Kids. In addition, this condition promoted an online family fitness and nutrition game/tracking log with a raffle and a prize drawing for families who participated.

Key Summary Points & Conclusions (Aim 1)

#5 Parent-Reported Social Support of Child Physical Activity and Fruit & Vegetable Consumption

- Significant increases in *parent instrumental support* of child physical activity (past 7-day parent exercise with child and taking child to place to be active) for all three study conditions were observed, with increases between baseline and interim observed for *MK Wellness Team* and *MK Enhanced*, and baseline and posttest for *MK Basic*.
- No significant difference in *global parent social support* (encouragement, modeling, instrumental support) for child physical activity or fruit and vegetable consumption were observed by conditions or time periods.
- Significant increases were found between baseline (fall 2012) and posttest (April/May 2013) in child fruit and vegetable consumption for both the *MK Basic* ($p=.01$ for fruit; $p=.009$ for vegetables) and *MK Wellness Team* conditions ($p=.04$ for fruit; $p=.03$ for vegetables).
- No differences were found across study conditions or measurement periods for parent-report of past 7-day child physical activity.

Measures & Data Collection

Parent data were collected via a 39-item self-administered questionnaire that aimed to assess child participation in Marathon Kids, parent exposure to MK messages (exposure to messages in newsletter, marquee, bulletin board, website, school meetings), child and parent participation in physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption, and parent social support for healthy eating and physical activity (see [Active Kids – Healthy Kids questionnaire](#)). The MK-specific questions on participation in the program and exposure to messages were created for this study. The child and parent physical activity and healthy eating measures were adopted from previously tested measures with evidence of reliability and validity.¹⁴⁻¹⁸ Parent social support for physical activity and parent social support for healthy eating were based on two separate scales of six items each. Items on both scales were adapted from measures with evidence of reliability for assessing family influences on child health behavior.¹⁹⁻²¹ We found good internal consistency reliability for both the FV social support scale ($\alpha = .87$) and the physical activity social support scale ($\alpha = .82$). Parent questionnaires were distributed via the classroom teacher at participating schools to parents of 2nd and 4th grade students. All classrooms of 2nd and 4th grade students were invited to participate in the study. Data were collected at three time points during the 2012-13 school year as described above.

In addition to parent-related data, process evaluation-related data on implementation of parent communication strategies and Marathon Kids program-specific activities were collected. For parent communication strategies, Marathon Kids staff tracked their inputs into schools in terms of promoting inclusion of MK messaging into newsletters, marquee, and wellness team meetings, among other activities. UTSPH staff also collected implementation data on Marathon Kids activities across study conditions (e.g., distributing information packets; tracking of miles with students; displaying logs; etc.) with MK school coordinators (usually the PE teacher or a classroom teacher). These data were collected in spring 2013.

Participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. All study aims, measures and protocols were approved by the University of Texas School of Public Health Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects and the school district review committee.

Analysis

Demographic characteristics of the sample at baseline were examined across each of the three intervention conditions, using frequency distributions and ANOVA methods. The chi-square test was used to compare the distribution of nominal measures across the three groups, while the F-test was used to evaluate equivalence across the three conditions on continuous measures. Additional comparisons across the three conditions included different measures of child participation in the MK program as reported by parents, for each of the time periods. These measures included whether the parent received an MK permission form, whether the parent signed up their child for MK, whether they received any information about MK in the

newsletter, and whether they had seen information about MK at a school marquee, on a school bulletin board, or on the school website, and whether they attended the kick-off event, or the final mile event, whether the child had filled out the mileage log or the fruit and vegetable logs, and whether the parent had assisted the child on either of these logs. Additional questions, not restricted to the MK program, examined if the parent had received messages from the school wellness team or attended any wellness meeting during the year, and exposure to activity messages as well as messages regarding FV from the school via email, via phone, via a newsletter, and over the phone. Each of these measures was coded as binary, and the probability of a positive response on each of these measures was obtained from logistic regression, adjusting for grade of participation, and stratified by condition and time period.

Social support for FV and physical activity across the three conditions and time periods were modeled using generalized estimating equations (GEE) methods, which allowed repeated measures for each parent across time periods. These models were further adjusted for student's grade level, parent's age, parent's race, parent's education. Similar GEE models were used to obtain estimates of two separate measures of parental instrumental support for children's physical activity, one measure of parent instrumental support for children's FV consumption, multiple measures of child's physical activity in the past week, and child's FV consumption in the past week. As in the models for social and instrumental support, these models adjusted for student's grade level, parent's age, gender, ethnicity, and education level, and accounted for repeated measures across waves. Analyses were conducted using SAS analytic software, and statistical significance was determined at $p < .05$.

Results

A total of 557 parents from eight economically disadvantaged schools comprised the final analytic sample (Table 1), representing a 60% response rate amongst parents of students who were invited to participate in the study. Of these parents, 405 participated in the final posttest. No differences in demographic characteristics were found between baseline and posttest sample [data not shown in table]. Across conditions, study participants were primarily female (>86%), Latino (71-84%), and had a mean of age of 34 to 37 years old, depending on the study condition. Although the 'usual & customary' MK comparison condition and Marathon Wellness Teams condition were similar in socio-demographic characteristics, several differences in socio-demographic characteristics were noted for the MK Enhanced condition, which was found to have a higher composition of white parents (22% vs. 8% or less for the other two conditions); had a lower percentage of parents who spoke Spanish (36% compared to ~74% of the other two conditions), and had a higher education level (71% had a high school degree or higher vs. ~40% of parents in the other two conditions). Although the composition of economically disadvantaged children was high across conditions (>80%), the MK Enhanced condition had the lowest level of disadvantage (83% vs. >93%). In addressing these differences, we adjusted for parents' age, ethnicity, and education level in the analyses.

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of **baseline** sample (N=557). *Marathon Kids Phase III-* Austin, Texas, Fall 2012.

	MK Basic n (%)	MK Enhanced n (%)	MK Wellness Team n (%)	<i>p for difference</i>
School Sample (n)	3	2	3	
Parent Sample (n)	273	116	168	
% Female	228(84.76)	103(90.35)	143(87.2)	0.3288
Parent Age (mean, SD)	34.27±6.05	37.09±8.78	34.79±6.59	0.0003
Parent relationship (%)				
Mother	219(83.91)	106(92.17)	143(86.67)	0.0448
Father	39(14.94)	6(5.22)	18(10.91)	
Guardian (Aunt/uncle,grandparent)	3(1.15)	3(2.61)	4(2.42)	
Grade Level of Child				
2nd	133(48.72)	49(42.24)	89(52.98)	0.2053
4th	140(51.28)	67(57.76)	79(47.27)	
Ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic, non-Latino	17(6.34)	26(22.61)	16(10.06)	
African American	14(5.22)	5(4.35)	15(9.43)	
Mexican American, Latino, or Hispanic	231(86.19)	81(70.43)	120(75.47)	<0.0001
Other	6(2.24)	3(2.61)	8(5.03)	
Speak Spanish with child most time (%)	181(73.88)	40(35.71)	115(72.78)	<0.0001
Grade level				
Less than high school	145(58.47)	35(31.53)	83(54.97)	<0.0001
High school grad or higher	103(41.53)	76(68.47)	68(45.03)	
School Percent Composition of Economically Disadvantaged Students ^a	96.50±0.45	82.49±8.21	93.31±1.13	<0.0001

Implementation of Enhanced Parent Communication and Organizing Strategies

As a measure of program fidelity (implementation), we collected process evaluation data via the following methods: a.) the implementation of a tracking system by MK staff to track parent communication activities; and b.) an online survey with MK coordinators (PE teachers) to assess implementation of Marathon Kids' core activities. With regard to parent communication strategies, MK national staff developed a tracking system to ensure that parent communication and organizing strategies were implemented in the two enhanced communication conditions (MK Enhanced and MKWT). Table 2 presents the actions on behalf of MK staff to promote messaging and action around Marathon Kids. Actions for both MK Enhanced and MKWT included: ensuring delivery of information packet, promoting inclusion of Marathon Kids' announcements in school newsletter, requesting that Marathon Kids be included in the school marquee, emails to PE teachers. For MKWT, additional actions included: promoting a write-up on Marathon Kids in school newsletters, holding monthly wellness team meetings, emailing families, and a raffle drawing for families that participated in an online family nutrition/fitness game to track their miles and fruit and vegetable consumption.

Table 2. Tracking of implementation parent and school communication strategies. Marathon Kids
Evaluation of Parent Communication Strategies, Marathon Kids III Evaluation. Fall 2012 - Spring 2013, Austin, Texas.

Interventions	Marathon Kids Enhanced		Sprouting Healthy MK/MK Families		
	School A	School B	School D	School E	School F
Insure packet delivery	Done	Done	Done	Done	Done
MK newsletter	March, June, Sept.	March, June, Sept.	March, June, Sept.	March, June, Sept.	March, June, Sept.
Marquee msg. (request)	Feb, March, April	Feb, March, April	Feb, March, April	Feb, March, April	Feb, March, April
Email PE teachers	Jan, March	Jan, March	Jan, March	Jan, March	Jan, March
Write-up in school newsletter	n/a	n/a	Jan, March, May	Jan, March, May	Jan, March, May
WT Meetings	n/a	n/a	monthly	monthly	monthly
Email families	n/a	n/a	Jan, March, May	Jan, March, May	Jan, March, May
Drawing	n/a	n/a	Feb, April	Feb, April	Feb, April

In addition to tracking implementation of parent communication strategies, we administered an online survey with MK coordinators at schools participating in the parent communication study (primarily PE teachers, $n=11^1$) in spring 2013 to learn about the implementation of Marathon Kids. Appendix A presents the tables with findings from the MK Coordinator (central Texas) survey. Key findings are presented below:

Satisfaction with MK

- 82% of coordinators agree/strongly agree that MK contributes to child health & fitness.
- 73% agree/strongly agree that children enjoy MK.
- 82% agree/strongly agree that MK is an important part of their coordinated school health program.
- 82% would recommend participation in MK to others.

Implementation-Related Findings

- Tracking of miles took place primarily with PE teacher or classroom teacher across study conditions (MK Basic, MK Enhanced, MKWT).
- Between 25-33% of coordinators report displaying logs in classroom, with 25%-50% displaying logs in PE class.
- Over two-thirds of MK coordinators participated in Kick Off and Final Mile Run events.
- 75% of MK coordinators from MK Basic and MKWT conditions reported that their school provided transportation to MK events compared to 33% of MK Enhanced coordinators.
- 75% of MK Basic schools included an event to recognize student participation in MK compared to only 33% of Enhanced schools and 0% of MKWT schools.
- 100% of MK Basic and MKWT schools structured running/walking time for MK during recess and PE compared to 67% of MK Enhanced schools. Half of MK Basic and MKWT schools also structure walking/running time before schools. Fewer schools structure time during lunch or after school.

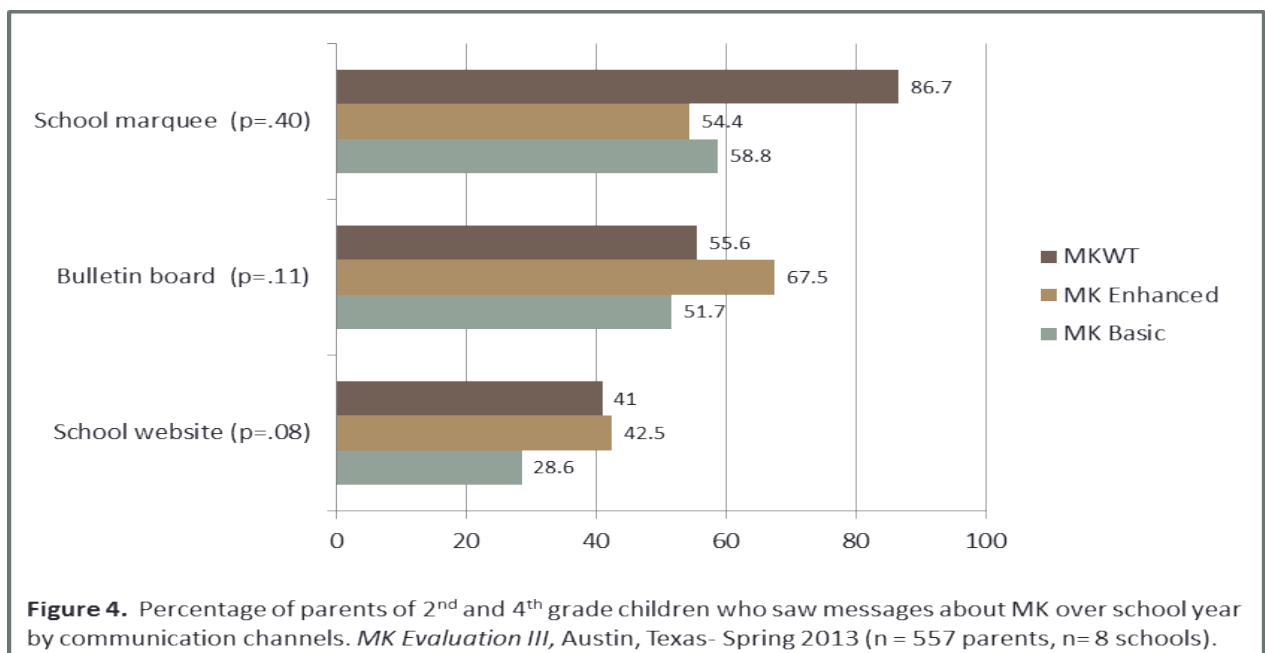
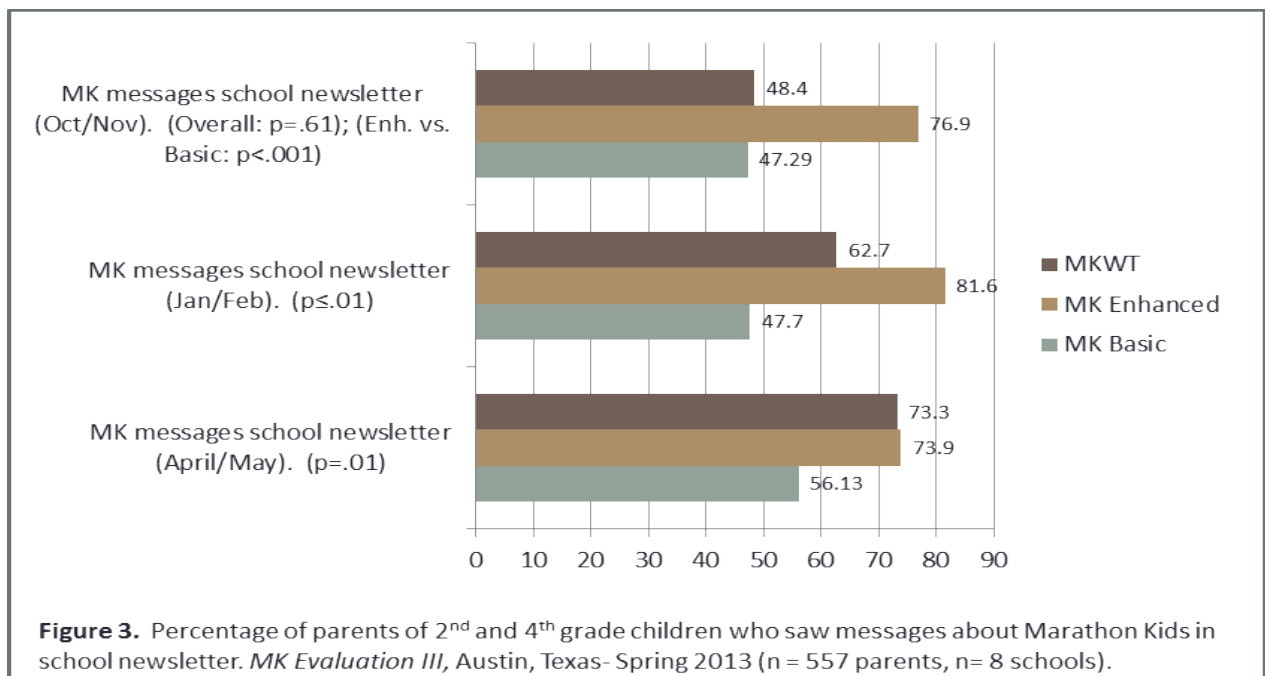
¹ Sample size represents 8 schools, of which 3 schools had two respondents.

- Fruit and vegetable promotion activities and parent-related activities are presented in Table 6. MKWT schools reported the highest involvement with parent walking clubs, parent cooking classes, and community gardens, followed by MK Basic schools.
- *Communication about Marathon Kids with Parents:* Coordinators reported several communication channels through which they promote MK, including school newsletter, phone messages, school meetings, school marquee, school bulletin board, and school website. While email was identified as a channel by half the MKWT coordinators, no coordinators from MK Basic or MK Enhanced conditions reported using email. Although patterns of usage of these channels varied by study condition, MKWT coordinators reported the most activity in using the various channels (see Appendix A).

Exposure to Marathon Kids Messages

We explored whether parents attending the two enhanced parent outreach conditions (MK Enhanced and MKWT) were exposed to more messaging around Marathon Kids compared to parents in the usual and customary MK Basic condition. In fall 2012, a majority of parents in the MK Enhanced condition reported seeing messages about Marathon Kids in the school newsletters (76.9%), compared to just under half of parents in the MKWT condition (48.4%) and MK Basic condition (47.3%) ($p < .001$) (Figure 3). At the interim and posttest measurement periods, a higher percentage of parents in both the two enhanced conditions reported being exposed to messaging around Marathon Kids in the school newsletters ($p \leq .01$).

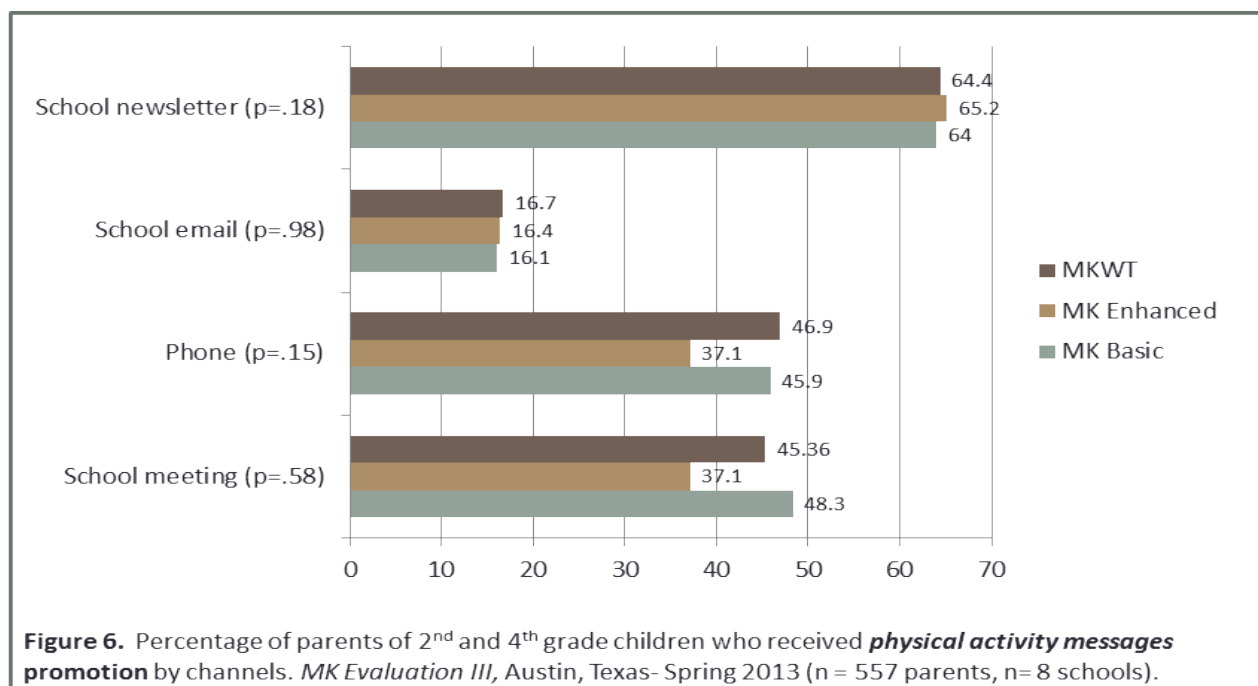
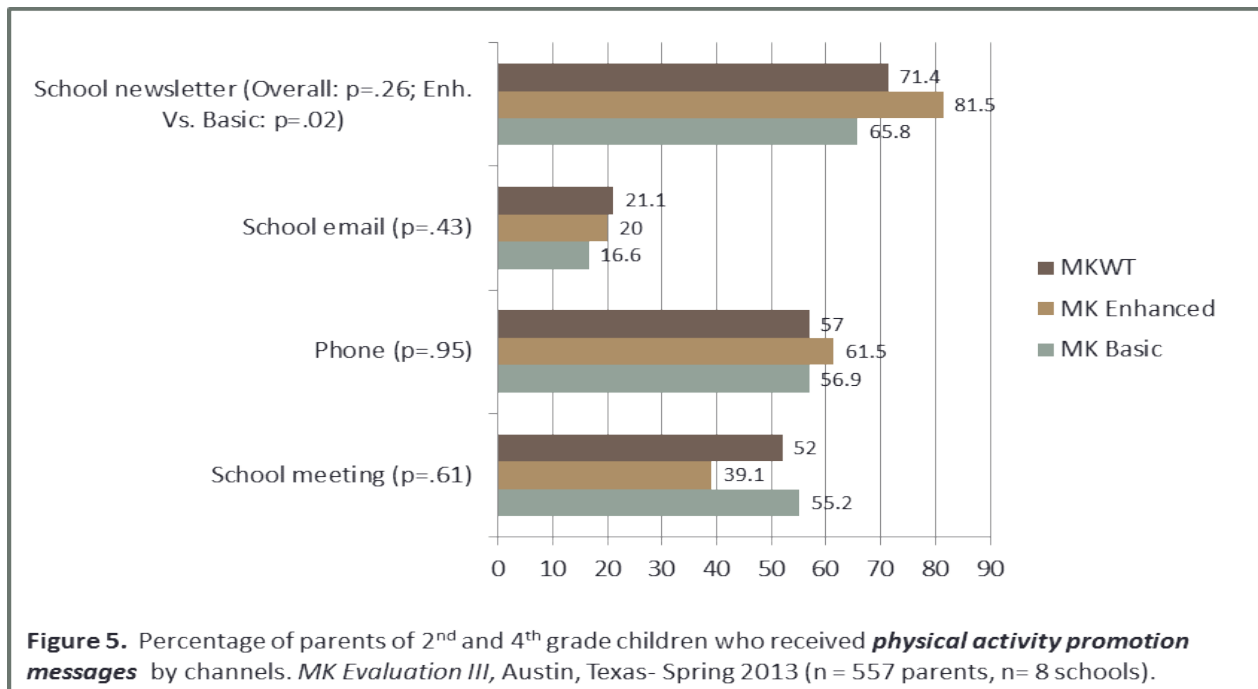
In addition to exposure to MK via the newsletter, we inquired about exposure to MK via other communication channels that included the school marquee, a school bulletin board, and school website. A significantly higher percentage of parents in the MK Enhanced condition reported exposure to MK messaging in these channels compared to MK Basic in fall 2012 ($p < .05$) [data not shown]. At posttest, over half of parents across conditions reported exposure to Marathon Kids via the school marquee and bulletin board (Figure 4). At the end of the year, parents in the MKWT reported the highest exposure to messaging about MK via the school marquee (86.7%), although this difference was not statistically significant ($p = .40$). A higher percentage of parents in the MK Enhanced and MKWT conditions reported exposure to MK via the website (41-42%) compared to MK Basic parents (28.6%), which was borderline significant ($p = .08$).



Exposure to other school-based health promotion messaging

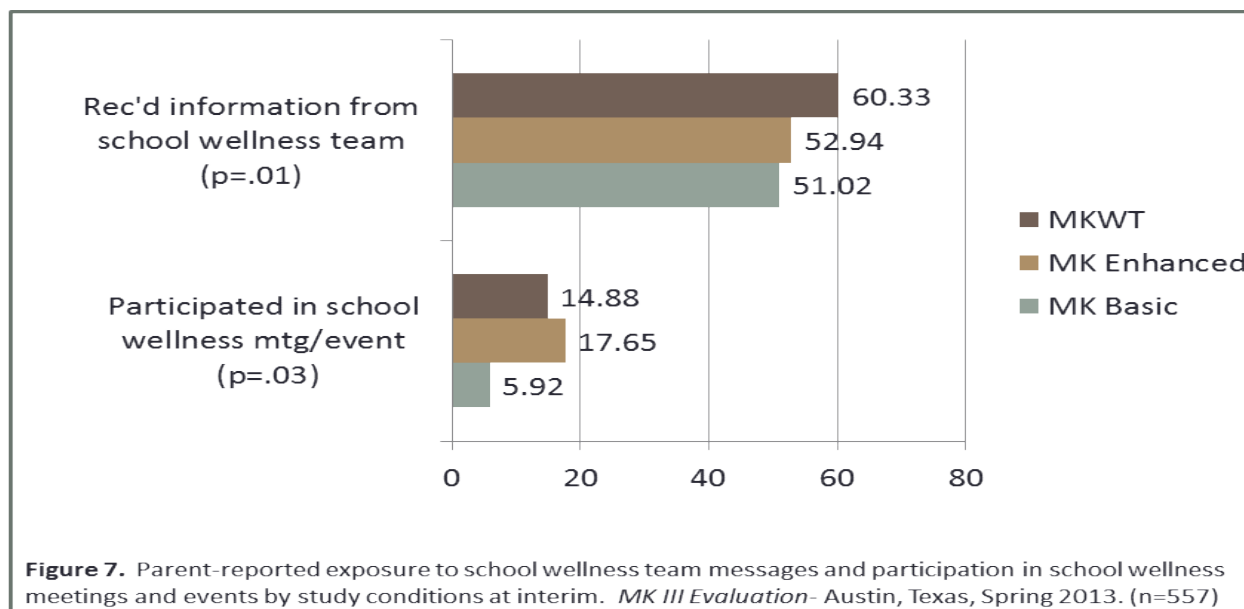
We also examined exposure to “general” physical activity and fruit and vegetable promotion messaging during the school year. Parents in the MK Enhanced condition reported significantly higher exposure to physical activity messaging in their newsletters (81.5%) compared to MK Basic parents (65.8%) ($p=.02$) (Figure 5). While MKWT parents also reported higher exposure to PA messaging in the newsletter (71.5%), this finding was not significant in

comparison with MK Basic ($p=.36$). No significant differences across study conditions were observed in exposure to physical activity by the other communication channels (school email, phone or school meetings). While MKWT parents reported significantly higher exposure to FV messaging in the school newsletter at interim (Jan/Feb 2013) ($p=.04$) [data not shown], no significant differences in exposure to fruit and vegetable promotion messaging were observed for any of the communication channels examined at posttest in April/May 2013 (Figure 6).



Parent Exposure to School Wellness Team Messages & Activities

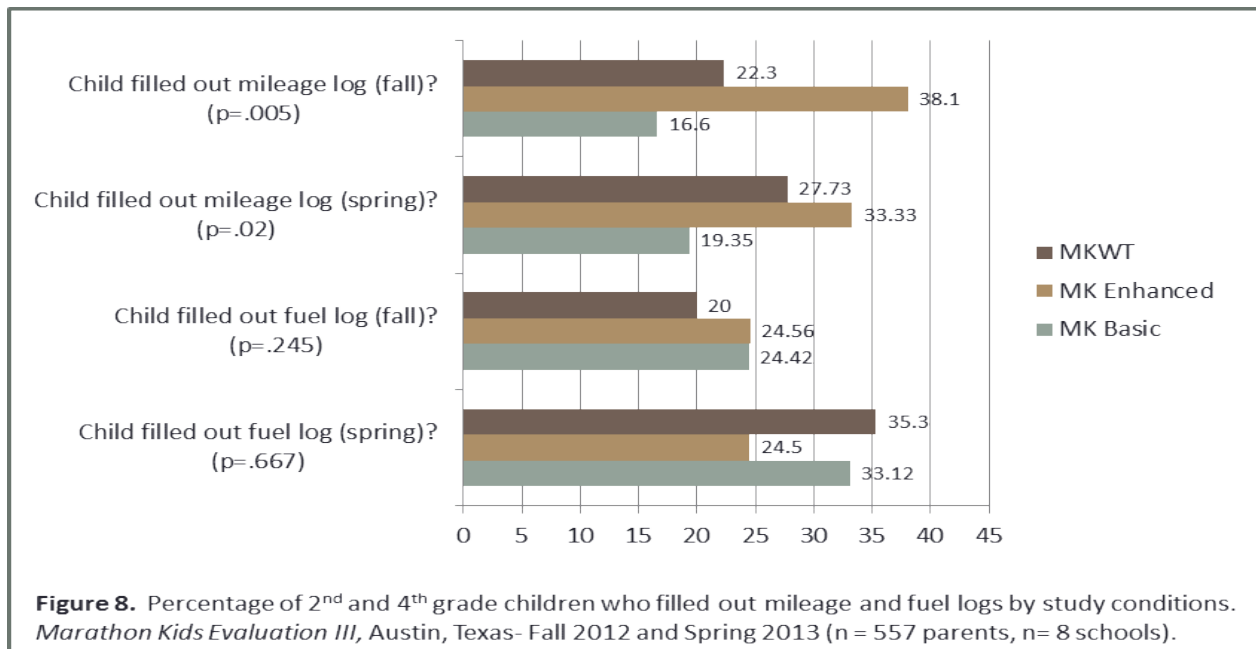
Across study conditions, roughly half or more of parents reported receiving information from their school wellness team (Figure 7). Of note, a significantly higher percentage of parents in the MKWT team reported receiving information from their school wellness team ($p=.01$) by the interim period in January/February. While attendance at school wellness team-sponsored meetings and events was lower among parents across conditions compared to receipt of information, a significantly higher percentage of parents in both the MKWT and MK Enhanced conditions reported attending wellness team-sponsored events compared to parents in the MK Basic condition ($p=.03$). By posttest in April/May, no significant differences in attendance were observed across conditions.



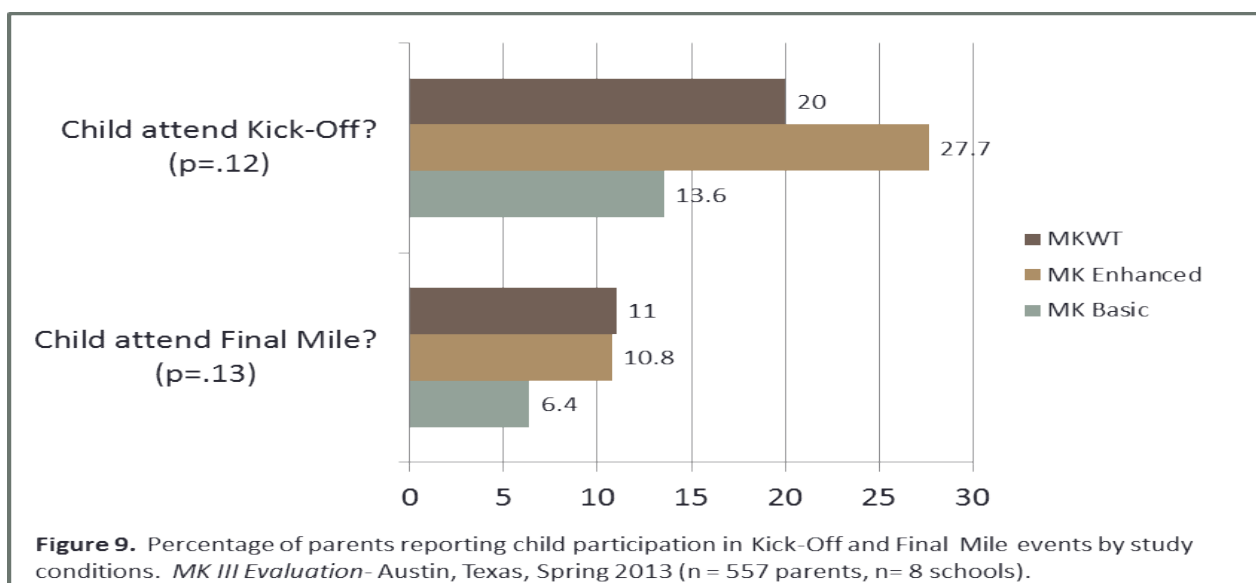
Child Participation in Marathon Kids

Participation in Mileage and Fuel (Food) Logs: Roughly 20% to 40% of parents, depending on study condition, reported that their children filled out their mileage log- the log that tracks miles run or walked (Figure 8). Parents in the enhanced communication and parent organization conditions reported significantly higher levels of child participation in filling out the mileage log at both fall and spring data collection periods compared to parents in the usual and customary condition ($p<.05$). Participation in the fuel log that tracks fruit and vegetable consumption was similar to participation in the mileage log, with roughly 20% to 35% participation, depending on study condition. Although no significant differences across conditions in fall or spring were noted, the MKWT condition was found to have the highest participation in the fuel (food) log in spring 2013 (35%). We also asked about parent support of children in filling out their mileage and fuel logs. No significant differences across conditions or data collection periods were noted for parent support with filling out the mileage or fuel logs. An average of 16% of parents reported supporting their children with their mileage log.

Interestingly, a higher percentage of parents reported support with their child's fuel log, with 30%, 27% and 35% for MK Basic, MK Enhanced, and MKWT conditions, respectively, reporting support in January/February 2013 [data not shown].



Participation in MK Kick-Off & Final Mile Run Events: A higher percentage of parents in MK Enhanced (27.7%) and MKWT (20.0%) conditions reported participation of their child in the *kick-off event* compared to the MK Basic condition (13.6%), although these differences were not statistically significant ($p=.12$) (Figure 9). While fewer parents across conditions reported that their children attended the *final mile event*, the percentage of parents in the enhanced conditions (11.0%) was almost double that of the MK Basic condition (6.4%) ($p=.13$).



Parent Social Support for Child Physical Activity and Healthy Eating

In assessing the potential impact of increased messaging to parents, we examined whether parents increased their “global social support” as well as “instrumental social support” for their child’s physical activity and fruit and vegetable (FV) consumption. Global support was based on two six-item scales that measured physical activity and FV encouragement, role modeling, and instrumental support (e.g., directly giving child fruits and vegetables, exercising with child, modeling active behavior). Global social support scores were high across conditions (range of 6 = low support to 30 = high support), and no significant differences in parent support scores were found across conditions or by measurement period (Appendix B, Table 1.).

In addition to global social support, we also examined whether parents provided increased instrumental social support for children’s physical activity based on two single-item measures. Instrumental support refers to directly exercising with child or taking child to a place to be active. Between baseline and interim measurement period, we found significant increases for parents in the MKWT condition for past 7-day times exercising with child ($p=.01$) and taking child to a place to be active ($p=.03$) (Appendix B, Table 2). In addition, we found increases in parent reporting of taking child to a place to be active between baseline and interim measurement period among parents in the MK Enhanced condition ($p=.04$). Between baseline and posttest (April/May), significant increases in exercising with child ($p=.003$) and taking child to a place to be active were found only for parents in the MK Basic condition ($p=.007$). No net increases in instrumental support were found in comparing the two enhanced conditions with the MK Basic condition (Appendix B, Table 2).

Parent-Reported Child Physical Activity and Healthy Eating

Lastly, we assessed differences in parent-report of child physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption. While no differences were found across study conditions or measurement periods for parent-report of past 7-day child physical activity (Appendix B, Table 3), we found significant increases between baseline (fall 2012) and posttest (April/May 2013) in child fruit and vegetable consumption for both the MK Basic ($p=.01$ for fruit; $p=.009$ for vegetables) and MKWT conditions ($p=.04$ for fruit; $p=.03$ for vegetables) (Appendix B, Table 4). No significant change in FV consumption was reported by parents in the MK Enhanced condition, and no net increases were found in comparing parent-report of child FV for MKWT parents compared to MK Basic parents.

Evaluation of Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative

Evaluation Aim #2

In 2010, Marathon Kids initiated a partnership with Sustainable Food Center, a local nonprofit in central Texas, that aimed to “wrap the community around the school” for the promotion of child and family fruit and vegetable consumption. At the core of this initiative was the formation of parent-led school wellness teams. Findings from a second evaluation of Marathon Kids by the authors in 2011 indicated that children attending schools that had parent organizing and wellness teams consumed more fruit and vegetables during the school year¹³. *With the aim of identifying best practices and lessons learned about Marathon Kids’ Wellness Team Initiative*, we conducted two sets of focus group discussions with wellness team stakeholders from four MK Wellness Team Initiative schools (previously titled “Sprouting Health Marathon Kids (SHMK)” schools) in spring 2012 and three MK Wellness Team Initiative schools in spring 2013. In this section, we present the core findings from our discussion groups preceded by a brief description of our methods.

Methods

In conducting the focus groups, a focus group discussion guide was first developed by the research team with input from Marathon Kids staff. The guide included semi-structured questions that aimed to generate discussion around best practices for working with wellness teams, highlights of wellness team actions, and lessons learned and recommendations for improving wellness team action. Focus groups in spring 2012 and spring 2013 were moderated by Mr. Sherman Chow, MA, MPH, evaluation project coordinator and qualitative data specialist with the University of Texas School of Public Health-Austin. Focus groups were conducted at participating schools in English with simultaneous interpretation in Spanish provided by a graduate student (spring 2013) or a SFC AmeriCorps VISTA (spring 2012). All focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for overarching themes by Mr. Chow.

Findings

Spring 2012 Wellness Team Initiative Focus Group Findings (Summary)

Focus group discussions were conducted in spring 2012 with four AISD elementary school wellness teams (names removed for confidentiality). The school wellness teams that participated were identified by Marathon Kids staff, and they also classified the wellness teams as either high-implementing school wellness teams (Schools A and B) or low-implementing (Schools C and D) teams.

The spring 2012 focus group results were presented to Marathon Kids staff in fall 2012 and are included in Appendix C. A number of key themes related to school wellness team

functioning were identified and explored. These themes included: methods of parent communications including personal and internet/ social media; team members' goals and motivations to participate in school wellness; barriers and facilitators to school wellness; wellness team ownership and sustainability; and recommendations for implementing wellness teams. Finally, a set of best practices for school wellness teams was generated based on findings from focus group discussions in spring 2012 and spring 2013 (see below).

Spring 2013 Wellness Team Initiative Focus Groups Findings

Marathon Kids Wellness Teams: Highlights and Achievements (Table 3)

The wellness teams in the three schools that participated in the focus groups in spring 2013 (names removed due to confidentiality considerations) carried out many of the same programs (Zumba classes and SFC Happy Kitchen) and activities (e.g., gardening) during the 2012-13 school year (Table 3). School A's team held two large events this past school year. A service day was held in fall 2012, and with the help of volunteers, they built 7 garden beds for 7 incoming pre-K classes. The second event was a CATCH Family Night held in Spring 2013. School A also hosted Zumba classes, but not on a consistent schedule. On the other hand, this past school year was the first year School B was able to organize a Zumba class through their wellness team. School C's wellness team members also expressed their satisfaction with Sustainable Food Center's (SFC) Happy Kitchen classes as well as with their burgeoning garden, which may also be open to the larger community in the future. School B's most salient achievement and highlight was implementing a very successful Zumba class held by one of their very own wellness team members. The class was held twice a day with 30-40 attendants at each class. Additionally, School B's garden is a certified National Wildlife Federation habitat. Similar to School A, School C's wellness team also helps organize their spring CATCH Family Night.

Table 3. Wellness team: Highlights and achievements. Quotes and responses, *Focus Groups with Wellness Teams* (n= 3 groups), Spring 2013

- The idea is to have an event in fall and another one in spring. The service day is like a Saturday afternoon type of deal, and we kind of fixed up projects around school. We finished doing the playgrounds. We got donations from Lowes to make new gardens because we had 7 new pre-k classes last year. So we made them each a little garden bed, which was great because they made an alphabet garden. We got all of the material donated because one of our teachers husband works there. So, we worked with a couple different groups from UT, and so in October 30 students came and helped us with all the stuff. Then in the spring is the CATCH night, and so we had a bunch of different stations. So those are the 2 biggest events that we had this year. We also did a Zumbathon, a very small Zumbathon. Hopefully next year we can make it bigger. We also had the Marathon Kid Final Mile; we had a couple of buses coming, and everybody came back here and had a nice picnic.
- We tried a local Zumba instructor, she teaches across the street in Highland Mall, and some parents and some teachers have participated in her classes like independently. She actually also knows our principal and volunteered to come to the health night to do a 30 minute demo, and then when she was there we talked about organizing a bigger thing. She does volunteer based Zumbathon, so she will tell all of her Zumba people to come and its donation based. She will teach Zumba for an hour and a half and whoever comes and you pay what you can. All of that money went to our field trip fund. So we don't have a consistent Zumba class.
- Some times when we have Zumba, different parents from the community attend. Sometimes one or two different people come to Zumba.
- Yeah, but it still makes a difference like when we come to Zumba, and we see the same people. Then you are happy because you see like 4 different people
- This is the first time that the wellness team organized the Zumba classes.
- And if we can get more people involve in those activities I think that we can get more leaders on the campus for other things as well.
- All of the programs are important for us. The Happy Kitchen is healthy and economic. Good food and its good for our weight. Zumba class is always exiting to go to,
- This program for me is very interesting. I will continue to be in this program next year. Also the gardening program was very interesting because they taught us how to cultivate, and then they gave us some plants so we could plant them back home. So we got involved more with the school and the teacher, and we learned more for our kid's education.
- One of the things we have been brainstorming is to have not only the community garden but to have a local community farm where parents could engage. We can benefit from that resource financially. I want to have the conversation to have part of the garden with goats and chickens, part of a more sustainable and nutritional [sic] community.
- So we have a program where we have a garden in the back. We have a vegetables garden. Ms. Garcia has a garden as well, and then we also have a Zumba class that is every day twice a day plus its get pretty full. We also have a CATCH program on campus. We try to do stuff that they (CATCH) would implement. We have health fairs, health nights.
- We have been meeting after school but now it's is too hot to go out to actually do the gardening so we decided to move to a 8:30 and 9:30 schedule, and Mr. Tena's class came out to help us with the 8:30-9:30. We cleaned up the garden and we got the kids involve in that. We do it after school. We usually have kids that participate because they help the parents clean plants and stuff like that.
- The garden is outside the library, I am the school librarian, it's certified National Wildlife Federation. Kindergarten has been coming out and helping maintain the garden and helping grow veggies.
- It's (Zumba) full. It's all ladies but they do have kids that participate a lot. She (instructor and wellness team member) has a 8:30-9:30 class and then she has one at 5:00-6:00pm. 30 to 40 people show up to class. We had two Zumbathons.

Wellness Team: Role of the MK Parent Communicator and Members' Personal Motivations (Table 4)

For the fall 2012 and spring 2013 school year, all three of our level-3 schools had an employed MK parent communicator as part of each school's wellness team. Discussions across schools made it readily apparent that the MK parent communicator was an integral part of their success (Table 4). The fact that the MK parent communicators were both Spanish-speaking and a member of the community was noted as a vital as part of their success. In general, it was that person's ability to dedicate time and energy in meaningfully communicating and coordinating wellness team activities and meetings between school staff and teachers with parents. In addition to serving as an effective communicator, wellness teams noted that an important accomplishment of the MK parent communicators was their ability to recruit new parents into the wellness teams. When asked what brought parents to the team, responses usually began with the MK parent communicator acting as a recruiter and motivator. This, in turn, allowed many parents to explore opportunities (cooking classes, gardening, Zumba, etc.) within their respective wellness teams. While living a healthier lifestyle was a challenge reported by some parents, together with the social support from other members of the wellness team, parents' self-efficacy as a positive role model to their family steadily increased. Our findings indicate that parent communicators play a key role in parent organizing around child health promotion activities.

"She (Rocio- MK parent coordinator) actually communicates with the community not just our school. She helps me (lead wellness teacher) a lot because I can give her the information and she goes out to the rest of the community."

"We are really trying to impart to the parents that you need to step up, you need to be a leader for your child, and you need to be able to be the voice in your community, and Sandra (MK parent communicator) was one of these people who said, 'I can do that'."

"I found out about this program through Sandra [MK parent communicator]...We have a parenting class, and the teacher [also] told us about this program. And he said this is an opportunity for you, your family, for your kids. I thought it kind of scary but it's a challenge for me, I want to do it and I am here."

Table 4. Wellness team: Role of the MK parent communicator and members' personal motivations. Quotes and responses, *Focus Groups with Wellness Teams* (n= 3 groups), Spring 2013

- We are really trying to impart to the parents that you need to step up, you need to be a leader for your child, and you need to be able to be the voice in your community, and Sandra (parent communicator) was one of these people who said I can do that.
- I found out about this program through Sandra...we have a parenting class and the teacher told us about this program, and he said this is an opportunity for you, your family, for your kids. I thought it kind of scary but it's a challenge for me, I want to do it and I am here.
- We didn't have any parents and there were teachers, who I think are still interested but they are very busy and for most of them this isn't their community. They do love their children, but they also have other lives and things to do. And so teachers have really dropped off and became basically nobody on the wellness team until some parents stepped up, which it has been really nice because this is what we want anyways, to make it more of a community effort.
- All of the programs are important for us. The Happy Kitchen is healthy and economic. It's good for our weight. Zumba class is always exciting to go.
- This program for me is very interesting. I will continue to be in this program next year. Also the gardening program was very interesting because they taught us how to cultivate, and then they gave us some plant so we could plant them back home. So we got involved more with the school, and the teacher, and we learned more for our kid's education.
- We first came here to learn English, and then when we were here Sandra had all this different programs like Happy Kitchen, Zumba, and gardening class.
- I guess what motivates them to come is to learn English, and then it expanded to opportunities like fitness and nutrition and all those linked into that tree. That is the gateway of the community.
- But it depends on each person, it's personal. I think trying to make parents realize their potential maybe like you said, going out in the community and someone saying, "hey, I could do that too".
- Because I have 2 little girls, and I was raised, well, we ate a lot and most of us were big, and I did not want that to happen to my girls to a point. I just want them to be more healthy. I think learning or showing them how to exercise or to have a healthier life style in a way would probably help them better in their life. Also they learned from us, and I don't want them to ask why I should be eating right if never did. So that is one of my reasons.
- I like it because of the exercise and healthy eating. My younger kids now are eating healthier and like to go to Zumba.
- I think that as parents we all are concerned about our kids' health and we get involved in things that are good for them and to us too. Knowing that they are going to benefit from it as well as us makes us want to get more involved in these activities that are good for everyone.
- It is all about relationships, you can see how these ladies are all unified. You can tell that they all are friends.
- I like it; I grew up with my mom who was very involved in parenting and school stuff. I decided to get the kids exposed to things like gardening.
- The parent communicator first of all, Rocio. She actually communicates with the community not just our school. She helps me a lot because I can give her the information and she goes out to the rest of the community.
- I think that it's because of the great communication we have between each other. I am not here anymore but they still count me in and volunteer me in any way possible
- I go to these types of meeting and activities to show my kids I am interested and to give him a healthy life.
- Get a parent communicator.
- A person that has time and willingness, because sometime I admire Rocio because sometimes when you have time you don't have the patience, but she has her motivation that helps her to keep on.
- Somebody like stronger, like for example what Rocio has is that she is a really strong person. She is constantly on her responsibility and she continuously motivates people to keep on going.

Parent Communication: Cast a wide net, but face-to-face is still best (Table 5)

Parent communication and, subsequently, parent engagement (discussed in the next section), were two constant concerns among all three schools (Table 5). In regards to communication, face-to-face (or personal phone calls, texts, etc.) was cited as the most effective method by all three schools. This further supports the evidence that the role of the MK parent communicator is a key component in the success of wellness teams. Indeed, MK parent communicators were often mentioned as utilizing face-to-face and personal communications.

However, it should be noted that all three schools agreed that casting a wide net of communications was the best practice to reach all parents at their respective schools. In addition to face-to-face communications, other channels included: fliers, automated phone messaging, texting, and Facebook. While exposure to messaging is greatest with fliers, parents reported that it may be the least effective. The automated phone messaging has received mixed feedback. While some believe that parents are getting messaging, others believe that the messaging goes straight to voicemail, which parents may not check. Also, it is interesting to note is that each school is different in regards to the effectiveness of texting and Facebook as a means of parent communication.

"I think when you are invited, it kind of opens your eyes. Like I can probably put aside 30 minutes. When you tell me in person, 'hey we are going to be in the garden at this time'. It's kind of like, 'yeah I'll do it'."

"The school messenger system that AISD has is bilingual. And so the message gets across to them briefly what's happening. We also send fliers... Some parents are trained to navigate social media and...that is why we have here once a year the technology classes...It's convenient; it enhances their expectation about academic performance but parents need to get those resources for technology. That will be the key. I had to limit my communication with flyers to what's important because paper cost too much for the school systems. I think word to mouth from parents (is most effective)."

Table 5. Parent communication: Cast a wide net but face-to-face is still best. Quotes and responses, *Focus Groups with Wellness Teams (n= 3 groups), Spring 2013*

- For me, I think person to person it's the best way
- So to communicate with every parent is by fliers, which is very ineffective. You send all the fliers on the same day, and there's 100 pieces of paper in the backpack and it becomes redundant. We've been trying to figure out a better way, but a lot of our parents do not have access to e-mail.
- Last year we had the call system. The problem with the phone calls is that people don't listen to the message, and they just call back. So the office literally spends the 3 hours after the phone calls answering phone calls telling them listen to your message please. It actually has turned out to be more work than it's worth.
- If I have a message from school I am not going to wait for the message, I am just going to call the school to see if my kid is ok.
- I feel that texting could work but phone numbers change very often.
- Fliers do work but it's better face-to-face.
- Texting is still ok.
- The majority of the people have a smart phone, but normally they don't have or they don't give you their e-mail. They just use the Internet for Facebook.
- People check their Facebook more than their e-mails.
- We have Facebook.
- The school messenger system that AISD has is bilingual. And so the message gets across to them briefly what's happening. We also send fliers... Some parents are trained to navigate social media and...that is why we have here once a year the technology classes...It's convenient; it enhances their expectation about academic performance but parents need to get those resources for technology. That will be the key. I had to limit my communication with flyers to what's important because paper cost too much for the school systems. I think word to mouth from parents (is most effective).
- Well I think having a phone tree works, and then after people kind of already know about it when they hear it from people they know it means more to them. Most people have phone, so phone tree system really works.
- I think that a lot of the people don't have computers.
- Not everyone has access to computer.
- But the phone they do, they might ignore it but they are going to answer the voicemail. We tend to use every resource of communication, either through social media or phone calls. We get the message to the parents.
- We have person in our group Rocio Garcia; she is the one that communicates everything. The important thing is that my kids stay active, and Rocio is the one that always keeps us up to date of everything. She is also the parent communicator, and she sends text to everyone.
- Texting because we don't have computers.
- We usually spread the word person to person. It depends on whether you like certain activity like zumba or gardening.
- I think when you are invited; it kind of opens your eyes. Like I can probably put aside 30 minutes. When you tell me in person, "hey we are going to be in the garden at this time" it's kind of like, "yeah, I'll do it". For me is just seeing the kids because the kids love doing anything outside and learning.

Parent Engagement: a Barrier and a Goal (Table 6)

In regards to parent engagement, focus group attendants provided a few concrete strategies on how to engage and recruit parents (Table 6). Events seeking parent participation should always provide food, incentives/ raffles, and entertainment at the very least. The purpose of the incentives and raffles are to pique students' interest and desire to attend

events, while food is served to substitute as a meal, which is especially important for events or meetings after 5:30 p.m. Even events that are not specifically geared towards parents can have tables or demonstrations that are relevant to parents' interest. Also, for more parent-specific events, meetings, or programs, child care (or even parents-only) would enhance parent attendance.

The discussion on parent engagement also led to insights regarding the cultural values, practices, and education of community members. Obviously, the populations surrounding these three schools are a Spanish-speaking majority and many are immigrants. Again, while serving food at events or meetings may serve a basic life priority, many respondents stated that other parents may be experiencing their own personal issues and struggles. Also, respondents stated that the school itself and the school system's high value on academic achievement is intimidating and thus act as barriers to accessing the wellness team. They stated that these considerations would make activities such as joining the school's wellness team a lower priority. As a result, there are some challenges and barriers to recruiting parents who are otherwise able to participate on the school wellness team. Indeed, some respondents stated that the school wellness team was something conceptually new to them. While many wellness team parents did recount their own struggle to join, they shared a desire to be a positive role model and to seek education opportunities at the school level, which often led them to joining the wellness team with the encouragement of the MK parent communicator.

"I go home and watch soap operas. Somehow the village (community) leaders try to kind of change and educate them (parents) at that. Soap operas are good, but spending 30 minutes at your child's school campus once a week brings value to their higher education, to become strong leaders, and the child sees that relationship and that has been the challenge. You must understand that there are a lot of immigrant people, and they come from different values and that has been the challenge. Their values are (watching) "soap operas", [and] they feel intimidated by the school system."

Table 6. Parent engagement: a barrier and a goal. Quotes and responses, Focus Groups with Wellness Teams (n= 3 groups), Spring 2013

- I think ideally if my kid participates I am in.
- We also try to sell food or have raffle prizes to motivate the parents to come. I think with the kids, it's the most powerful part (to get parents involved).
- If the kids are involved then the parents are going to be involved.
- Another thing that I think helped also specially on health night was to have prizes to raffle, so the kids wanted to come because they wanted a new bike or whatever, and they brought their parents. There were centers to learn about different things about physical activity for them to participate once they were here. It's not just like you get here, and you sit while your kids does something else. You get here, and the parents can also go to cooking demos and Zumba. The key is to getting them active while they are here.
- If it's only for parents they would come because what are they going to do with their kids there?. I think what happened last year was that they wanted to start Zumba, but they said no kids allowed.
- Any activity or meeting for me with a babysitter, I am in.
- I think we kind of figure out how to reach parents, but I like us all to keep on working on how to actually get more people. Unfortunately for me the most motivating factors is serving food. If you have an event where you are serving pizza, and you have the same event like a literacy night, and you are not serving food the parents won't show up.
- Provide any culture with entertainment, incentives, and food, and they will be here because if we are having a program around 5:30, you are coming out of work, [and] people are hungry. It's a choice, the parents are like "I know it's important, and I value that but I have to go cook". If they provide food then the parents will go. Having child developing components and having food for the parents makes sense.
- We also have other parents that have other issues that they have to struggle with.
- Some parents have other issues where we are trying to get them to eat healthy or to do homework; actually we are very low on the totem pole because they have a lot of other issues that they have.
- Every parent is different, I think that parents do value education; perhaps they do have challenges to value it.
- They also have a different definition. I mean they are parents who want the best for their kids. At the same time they will say, "Well, this was best for me so why should they have to go on do that?" It's not that they don't value education but it's a different definition.
- It's not about finding time. I think it's about prioritizing, and I think it comes back to value again, because I was thinking when you were talking about having food and you supply the basic necessities, and then you can focus on these ideals and the values. So if it comes down to my children and husband needing to eat, they been working all day, they have been at school. Do I do that and be a good mother and wife, or do I go to this other event where spiritually it's a good thing? I am going to take care of the basic values and then I am going to address the other issues.
- It depends on the values that everyone has. In our country we don't have this, this is new for us.
- That is what we want to hear, that you have been success. These are the success stories that we want to hear, and say you can do it with your voice as a leader. If I can do it then you can do it, and you can do it if you believe in it.
- You see the benefits in how your education helps your children.
- In my case, I have time and availability. Some parents don't have the time or availability to do stuff because they work or don't have time. I tried to stay informed and help always as a volunteer.
- That has been a challenge in the community. We have organization within organization in the campus, and they're a prime example that they are involved, but to encourage other people like parent outside the organization that has been one of the major challenges. I don't know if we need marketing ...but when there is no strategy, planning, and marketing I think it is what prevents us to reach to our goals.
- I think in reaching the community through marketing, I think that part of it is also education. Like our parents, the education that they get here on campus, it's very integrated with community awareness, participation. We are teaching them the values that they are passing them to their children, and they are kind of living and acting

as student scholar. I think they are more enthusiastic about participating because they understand the value but the general public, I don't think they are often as fortunate as our parents in the sense that they might care about it (health and wellness) but they don't value it..

- I think we don't understand until we are here. When we are only at home, we don't understand until we get here. Maybe at home we spend all day watching tv or working, and we have the opportunity to come to this program because maybe we have work and when we are in the school or in this program, we appreciate it and we understand the values and how everything works.
- There is a population of non-working and working parents and...it's like she just said. I go home and watch soap operas. Somehow the village (community) leaders try to kind of change and educate them (parents) at that. Soap operas are good, but spending 30 minutes at your child's school campus once a week brings value to their higher education, to become strong leaders, and the child sees that relationship and that has been the challenge. You must understand that there are a lot of immigrant people, and they come from different values and that has been the challenge. Their values are "soap operas", they feel intimidated by the school system. We can probably go to the community.
- I think tapping to other cultures within cultures like she said, and maybe those cultures can identify leaders to go to their community. I talked to some of the parents that are from other countries, and they feel intimidated by the educational system. I think sometimes, we have to reach to the community and go to their community.
- You have to entertain the community, the village, it's not only about academic performance, it gets where we want but a lot of administrators, they are brainwashed and they are built into that cocoon of performance. This is what happens when you do this. You detach yourself from part of the community. That is what intimidates parents. You have to approach the community with a level of understanding. The system detached from our community a long time ago, we have to bring it back and one of the things we do is baby steps. So replicating this concept to another environment, to another school, it will work again if the administration believes in the engagement of the community.

Wellness Team Recommendations (Table 7)

The focus group discussions generated several promising recommendations for enhancing school wellness team efforts. (Table 7). These include: 1) administrator support; 2) establishing a teacher and parent wellness team coordinator; and 3) incorporating health and wellness activities into classroom curriculum. These recommendations are discussed briefly below. Administrator support for the wellness team was reported as a major contributing factor to successfully maintaining the wellness team. To be sure, wellness teams reported that the support must be an active or action-oriented support (attending events, making announcements, etc.) rather than a passive (supporting in spirit or morally) one.

While the importance of the MK parent communicator was undisputed in our focus group discussions, the role of the classroom teacher was cited as key for children's health promotion. The main teacher's role was described in our groups as one that is more business-oriented, focusing on achieving goals and meeting deadlines. In this way, both parent and teacher leaders can better serve the wellness team by coordinating parent and school staff around common goals. One strategy discussed in our focus groups was to incorporate messaging and activities into daily/weekly classroom curriculum with the aim of promoting messaging across the school. Teachers in our wellness team discussion groups recognized that this is, perhaps, a lofty goal. However, they also recognized that such a goal requires planning and preparation beforehand, otherwise its effectiveness and sustainability will be questionable.

"We got a new principal this year; her mission is everything about the kids so all initiatives focus back on the students. So obviously an initiative about student health is going to line up with her agenda, and therefore we feel supported in our mission. So any event that we had, she has been here to support in any way that she can. She has helped by making announcements, you know just having the positive association with the stuff that we are doing is definitely helpful for me and for the organizing but also for participation. It is also validating all of the extra time that all of us would put in into something like an extra event will be appreciated and well attended and supported even the Zumba-thon that was not well attended, she was there the whole time."

"One thing that has always been on a teacher's mind is how to incorporate everything into your day, making everything fit. In the same way I think we could do that strategy with wellness. Incorporate it into everything that we do. Have 5 minutes health moments at the beginning of a meeting or 5 minutes health reminders or announcements on Tuesday because Mondays are busy. It's a lot easier to have somebody to do all that work ahead of time then have it be nicely incorporated for

"Something that I think it would be very helpful for me for that part of things is to not just have a teacher coordinator but also a parent coordinator. So that they are two people in charge of the committee so that those two people can talk to connect two really important parties in the committee, and that way work around scheduling issues or communication issues."

Table 7. Wellness Team: Recommendations. Quotes and responses, Focus Groups with Wellness Teams (n= 3 groups), Spring 2013

- Leadership from administration, I think is huge. This year we had a major change in a good way. I think it has affected all the committees and everything that happens. We got a new principal this year; her mission is everything about the kids. so all initiatives focus back on the students. So obviously an initiative about student health is going to line up with her agenda, and therefore we feel supported in our mission. So any event that we had, she has been here to support it in any way that she can. She has helped by making announcements, you know, just having the positive association with the stuff that we are doing is definitely helpful for me and for the organizing but also for participation. It is also validating all of the extra time that all of us would put into something like an extra event will be appreciated, and well attended, and supported. Even the Zumba-thon that was not well attended, she was there the whole time.
- We did have support (principal) before, but now we have more. There's a lot of support especially when we talk about the kids.
- I think too, like having Miss Gordon in charge, she is very organized. I know last year it took someone really mean, like one person to be the spearhead. You have to have a good team but you also have to have somebody who's going to have a bottom line to get things done.
- One thing that has always been on a teacher's mind is how to incorporate everything into your day, making everything fit. In the same way I think we could do that strategy with wellness. Incorporate it into everything that we do. Have 5 minutes health moments at the beginning of a meeting or 5 minute health reminders, or announcements on Tuesday because Mondays are busy. It's a lot easier to have somebody do all that work ahead of time then have it be nicely incorporated for you...So figuring out ways to do that in really easy, really accessible ways for teacher and parent.
- I think the wellness activities are a great way to start with some of these other groups to get people involved...and then once they are comfortable in those environments, then they are more likely to reach out and continue to get more involved. I think the wellness team is a great way to start because it's not very intimidating to come to a cooking class. And if we can get more people involved in those activities, I think that we can get more leaders on the campus for other things as well.
- Parent and teachers equally working together. I think events have been very successful here, I think it would be awesome to have more different focus events; that way participation part is brought in ,but to have a successful team you need to meet once a month, and you need to have the involvement of faculty and parents.
- Something that I think it would be very helpful for me for that part of things is to not just have a teacher coordinator but also a parent coordinator. So that there are 2 people in charge of the committee so that those 2 people can talk to connect two really important parties in the committee, and that way work around scheduling issues or communication issues.
- Making those connections. Building relationships with the faculty and getting them to incorporate them into the curriculum and building a relationship with the parent support specialist, PTA, and the parents.

Marathon Kids Wellness Team Initiative Best Practices

Based on our spring 2012 and spring 2013 focus groups, we developed a list of recommended best practices for school wellness teams that we present below. We recognize that school wellness teams are dynamic entities, each with their own social setting and context, level of implementation, and success. Their uniqueness and changing context notwithstanding, we identified key themes that emerged across the groups. These best practices are intended to further strengthen wellness team practice—including parent engagement—and institutionalize school wellness teams into a school culture of child and family health promotion.

School wellness team best practices:

1. *Create a core team that includes diverse membership of school faculty, staff, administration, and especially parents.*

Results generated from the spring 2012 SHMK focus groups illustrated that while school classroom teachers, staff, and even administration were present on their respective school wellness teams, recruiting and retaining parents was a challenge, especially for lower implementing school wellness teams (Pickle EL and Andrews EL). Conversely, all 3 MKWTI teams not only had high numbers of parent membership and participation, but also parent-generated activities (Zumba, gardening, etc.) and parent-supported events (CATCH family night and service day). It should be noted that a large majority of all participants from both the SHMK and MKWTI focus groups all shared similar values, motivations, and goals to live a healthy life style as well as to provide positive role modeling their children and/ or to the entire school.

2. *Administrators should take an active, committed role in supporting the wellness team rather than support the team only in a passive sense. Make wellness a priority and an official school committee.*

Findings from the spring 2012 wellness team discussions indicated that high implementing teams enjoyed some instrumental principal support (for example, principal excitement and encouragement for the building of gardens and promoting the wellness team in meetings and announcements). On the other hand, lower implementing teams found principal support to also be a challenge and they hypothesized that a successful wellness team includes strong principal support. Similarly, spring 2013 wellness teams reported the importance of administrator support, and this support was key in implementation of activities such as Zumba classes and other school-wide activities.

3. *Schools should provide a dedicated space for parents to meet and allow flexible and even multiple wellness team meeting times to accommodate everyone.*

Participants from the 2012 wellness team discussions expressed the value and utility of having a dedicated space for wellness team parents to meet. This idea and practice was rooted in the idea that a dedicated space would mean that schools value and welcome parent participation. Multiple wellness team meeting times to accommodate teacher and parent schedules were proposed and implemented in both sets of focus group discussions. Spring 2013 results found that parents often met on their own during the day to engage in wellness team activities (e.g., gardening, Zumba, and other activities).

4. *School wellness teams should communicate with parents primarily through face-to-face contact, with other forms of communication (telephone, flyers, email, internet/ social media) as supplement.*

In regards to communication, results from both spring 2012 and 2013 underscored the importance of face-to-face and personal communications as the most effective ways to communicate with parents. In 2012, this was seen through the help of VISTA volunteers and in 2013 through MK parent communicators. In addition to face-to-face communication, wellness teams also recognized that they needed to cast a wide net by also utilizing flyers, automated messaging, and even texting and social media.

5. *Make sure the wellness team has fun while promoting healthy living (school gardening, Zumba classes).*

In spring 2012 and spring 2013 wellness team activities that attracted parents in particular were found to be school gardening and Zumba. Gardening allowed wellness team members to share and even teach others on the how to garden. Indeed a few parents reported that they had gardens at home and that the school garden attracted them to the wellness team in the first place. Zumba also has been seen to very popular. This was most evident in 2013 with a parent wellness team member at School C who taught Zumba classes twice a day with an average of 35 attendants each.

6. *Continue to fund a MK parent communicator from the community to act as an effective wellness team recruiter and liaison to the school system. The MK parent coordinator has been particularly effective as a cultural broker, who helps bridge parents/ community members to the school system.*

The most salient difference between the wellness teams from spring 2012 to spring 2013 was the inclusion of the MK-funded MK parent communicator on the spring 2013 WTI teams. Again the success of each of the 3 WTI teams in regards to parent

recruitment and engagement is in no small part due to the MK communications coordinator. While parent recruitment and communication was a major barrier and concern from teams in spring 2012, this seems to have been mostly overcome through the MK parent communicator. From the discussions, the MK parent communicator was successful by not only being a community member with entrée to other parents but also as a person who could help broker or bridge parents to the school system, which was often cited by parents as being intimidating. So not only does the MK parent communicator act as a medium of information to parents but also plays a crucial role as a person who can help transition parents to the school, and ultimately, in this case, as a valuable wellness team member.

7. *Analogous to the MK parent coordinator, continue to support a strong lead teacher to coordinate school faculty, staff, and administration around the school wellness team.*

While much of the best practices center on communicating, recruiting, and engaging parents, the role of the lead classroom teacher in the wellness team should also be recognized and supported. Strong lead teachers coordinating and leading wellness teams have been described as “business-like” making sure that the wellness team keep track of their goals and helps to assure they are met. In tandem with a strong MK parent coordinator, wellness teams with a strong lead teacher should have a proper foundation to ensure success.

8. *Explore ways to incorporate wellness team messaging and activities into classroom curriculum to increase exposure to healthy practices and the school wellness team across the campus.*

As discussed above, wellness teams recognized the value of incorporating actions across the school setting, with the classroom teacher recognized as a valuable partner in child health promotion. As such, wellness team efforts should reach out to classroom teachers as key partners in incorporating health promotion activities into their daily classroom curriculum.

9. *Consider inviting school wellness teams or coordinators together on a regular basis to continue to share, discuss, and disseminate best practices.*

We found wellness teams really appreciated the opportunity to share what is working and their lessons learned to date. Several respondents expressed interest in learning what is working with other school wellness teams.

Evaluation of Marathon Kids In-a-Box Pilot Program

Evaluation Aim #3

Given community and organizational interest in expanding the reach of Marathon Kids program as well as organizational interest in increasing program reach, Marathon Kids staff created Marathon Kids In-a-Box (MKIB), a new model for establishing locally-driven efforts in small towns and/or large cities to organize and implement Marathon Kids. During the 2012-2013 school year, MKIB was piloted in selected communities in Texas. With the aim of learning more about the implementation of MKIB, we conducted a process evaluation of MKIB in three pilot sites: *Lubbock ISD*, *Marshall ISD*, and *Wichita Falls ISD*. The primary aims of the MKIB process evaluation were to: a.) assess the fidelity of program implementation in relation to key program components of the Marathon Kids model; b.) assess satisfaction of school coordinators in Marathon Kids' MKIB schools with regard to the overall program; and c.) identify lessons learned and recommendations for improving the program model and implementation from the three pilot communities' program site coordinators.

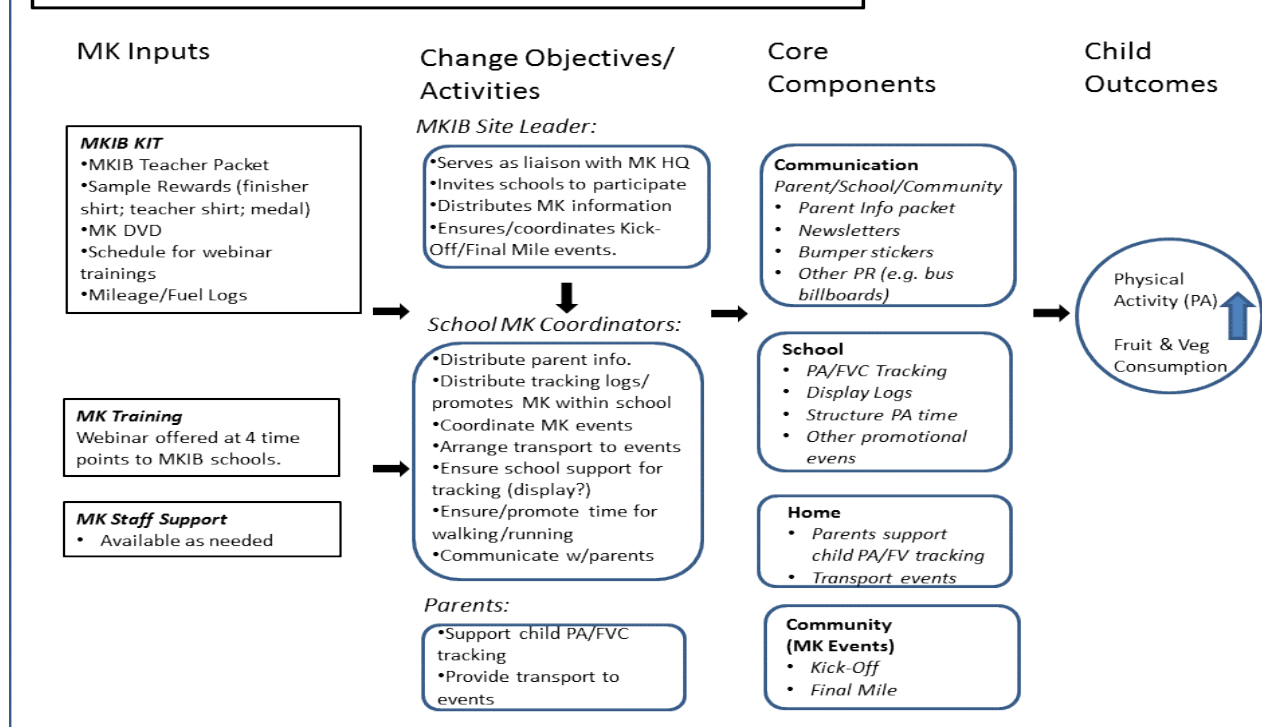
Program Description

Under the MKIB model, MK staff at the national headquarters in Austin, Texas provide training and ongoing support to pilot communities in the implementation of Marathon Kids. Pilot communities, in turn, are responsible for identifying PE teachers, classroom teachers and/or other community leaders to serve as the coordinators of MKIB. Coordinators also receive an MKIB kit that contains materials and instructions on how to successfully implement the Marathon Kids program in their school and community. Pilot communities are encouraged to implement signature components of the Marathon Kids program, which include celebratory events (Kick-Off and Final Mile), food and mileage logs, and a dedicated time for children to achieve their walking/ running goals at school. Table 8 (on the right) presents a list of 10 Indicators of Success for MKIB implementation, and Figure 10 (below) presents a logic model of MKIB, which guided our evaluation and organization of findings.

Table 8. Implementation-Related
MKIB Indicators of Success

1. MK Coordinator satisfaction with program.
2. MK Coordinator satisfaction with MK National Staff support.
3. Planning and implementation of Kick-Off & Final Mile.
4. Provision of transportation for students to MK events.
5. Communication with parents about Marathon Kids.
6. Structuring of school time for student running and walking.
7. Tracking of mile/FV at school.
8. Tracking of mile/FV at home.
9. Display of MK logs at school.
10. School recognition ceremony of student MK participants .

Figure 10. Marathon Kids In-A-Box (MKIB) Logic Model



Methods

Evaluation of Marathon Kids In-A-Box was based on a multi-method approach that included a *MK School Coordinator* survey with lead school faculty at participating schools who served as MK coordinators during the 2012-13 school year and *semi-structured interviews* with the three lead site coordinators for the three MKIB implementation sites. The [MKIB School Coordinator Survey](#) included 33 questions related to program implementation and satisfaction. The items were informed by previous evaluations of Marathon Kids' implementation as well as MK program staff. The [MK Site Coordinator Interview](#) aimed to elicit lessons learned and recommendations from program site coordinators regarding their experience implementing MK in the program sites described above.

Results

MKIB School Coordinator Survey

A total of 22 out of 28 total schools in the three MKIB program sites (Lubbock ISD, Marshall ISD, and Wichita Falls ISD) participated in the MKIB School Coordinator Survey, representing a response rate of 78.6 % (Appendix D, Table 1). Lubbock ISD had the largest number of schools participating (n=13), followed by Wichita Falls (n=5) and Marshall ISDs (n=4). Just over half of participating schools (55%) had a student population that was 50% or more

economically disadvantaged. Student ethnic composition of the school sample was comprised of white (45%), Hispanic/Latino (32%), African American (18%), and other (5%). The majority of the MK coordinator respondents were PE teachers (95%), with an average of 20 years of teaching experience (Appendix D, Table 2).

Summary of Findings

Below we present the key findings of the MKIB School Coordinator Survey organized by the *MKIB Indicators of Success* (Table 9). A more detailed presentation of findings can be found in Appendix D, Tables 3-6. **In summary, we found the pilot implementation of MKIB in these three pilot sites to be overall successful, with high ratings across the indicators of success related to satisfaction of the program among school MK coordinators and generally high level of fidelity and reach of core program components.** More than 90% of school MK coordinator participants reported being extremely or very satisfied with the program, and 100% would recommend Marathon Kids to other teachers (Appendix D, Tables 3b & c). MK school coordinators also reported high support and satisfaction received from Marathon Kids, including MK materials provided them, support provided to them to implement MK, MK reminder emails, ease of registering children on the MK website, and children's enjoyment of the program (Appendix D, Table 6a). A high level of implementation was also found for several of the core program components. Structuring time for running and walking during school hours (100% of schools) (Appendix D, Table 3b), support for implementation of mileage and fuel logs (>90% of schools) (Appendix D, Table 4b), and implementation of a Final Mile Run (91% of schools) had a high level of implementation across schools. It is also encouraging that 59% of schools included a recognition of students who completed Marathon Kids in an end-of-year ceremony (Appendix D, Table 4b).

Although program implementation was high for core components, some areas may merit further exploration and fine-tuning. While the majority of schools implemented a Final Mile Run event at school (64%) or via the district (27%), only 50% of schools were able to hold a Kick-Off event (Appendix D, Table 3a), which may be due in part to the pilot nature of the project. With regard to parent communication, some communication channels may be further activated. While PE teachers at the majority of schools distributed information to parents about MK (82%), only 45% sent reminders about Marathon Kids home during the program, and only 27% informed parents about MK in the school newsletter (Appendix D Table 5). Recognizing the pilot nature of this first year, Table 4b in Appendix D presents additional areas for exploring institutionalization of MK in the schools, including listing MK as partner program within the school (only 14% indicated so), recognition by school of MK coordinator role (45%), and securing support from PTA for Marathon Kids (32%).

Table 9. Findings on 2012-13 Implementation of Marathon Kids In-A-Box in 3 Pilot Sites in Texas, *MK School Coordinator Survey (n=22), spring 2013*

MK School Coordinator Satisfaction with Program (Indicator #1):

- 100% of MK school coordinators would recommend MK to other teachers.
- 91% of coordinators reported “extremely satisfied” or “very satisfied” with MK program.

MK School Coordinator Satisfaction with MK National Staff Support (Indicator #2)

- MK school coordinators reported a high level of satisfaction with the support provided to them for implementation of Marathon Kids, ease of use of materials and website, and children’s enjoyment of MK (mean score of >4 on a 5 point-scale, with 5=highest satisfaction).

Planning and Implementation of MK Kick-Off and Final Mile Run Events (Indicator #3)

- 23% of respondents planned and implemented a Kick-off Event at their school; 27% reported that their district held the event; 50% did not held event at school or district.
- 64% held Final Mile at school; 27% held by district; 9% did not hold at school or district.

Provision of Transportation for Students to MK Events (Indicator #4)

- 1 district provided transportation; 2 did not provide transportation (either via district or school) to events as schools in these districts either held events at school or didn’t hold events.

Communication with Parents about Marathon Kids (Indicator #5)

- 82% of PE teachers sent MK to parents via parents; 14% distributed MK information directly to parents.
- 45% of schools sent reminder notice about MK program to parents during year.
- 27% informed parents about MK via school newsletter.
- 45% of schools sent flyer, letter or email to parents.
- 41% promoted Marathon Kids on their school marquee.

Structuring of School Time for Student Running and Walking (Indicator #6)

- 100% of schools structured time for student running/walking.

Tracking of Miles and Fruit and Vegetable Consumption at School and Home (Indicators 7, 8 & 9)

- Where students complete mileage log: 14% at home; 50% at school; 27% at home and school; 9% do not complete.
- Where students complete fuel log: 27% at home; 32% at school; 27% at home and school; 14% of students do not complete.
- 23% of schools display mileage logs and 14% display fuel logs in classroom.

School Recognition of Students who Participate in Marathon Kids (Indicator #10)

- 59% of schools provide recognition of student completion of Marathon Kids in an end-of-year ceremony.

Included in our MKIB online campus coordinator survey were four open-ended questions exploring: 1) coordinators’ reasons for participating in MKIB; 2) barriers to implementing MK; 3) student motivators for attending MKIB celebrations; and 4) ways to strengthen the MKIB program. The top three reasons coordinators gave for participating in MKIB were: it was a good program to keep kids active while teaching them a healthy lifestyle; instilling how to make and achieve goals; and that the program was free. The main barriers coordinators cited were: difficulty

with returning registration forms; not having students in PE every day to accrue mileage; and teacher support. Motivators for attending MK celebrations included: receiving the medals and t-shirts, and the sense of pride that students felt for participating in the program. Finally, suggestions to strengthen centered on having back up plans for cancelled events (Lubbock ISD), and identifying ways on how to get more teacher support for the program.

MKIB Site Coordinator Interview

MKIB Program Implementation (Table 10)

All three district coordinators unequivocally enjoyed implementing and facilitating the Marathon Kids-in-a Box (MKIB) program (Table 10). In terms of program implementation and facilitation, district coordinator stated that while they kept in contact with their campus MKIB campus coordinators, they did not require their campus coordinators to adhere to a strict method of program implementation. Rather, each MK campus coordinator decided how to implement MK according to the context of their own respective campus.

All three district coordinators reported that the main ways in which campuses structured time for MK program goals were through PE class, recess time, and after school/ before school programs, all of which were reflected in the MKIB online campus coordinator survey. In regards to mileage tracking, the majority of tracking occurred at school with the PE teacher's supervision and/or classroom teacher's supervision. One notable PE teacher in Lubbock ISD tracked his students' miles by setting up a chart on his gym walls, which was received very favorable by students and teachers alike. In fact, many Lubbock PE teachers have stated that they will follow this model in the upcoming school year. The fruit and vegetable tracking, however, did not garner as much oversight from campus coordinators and teachers. While campus coordinators and teachers did encourage students to fill it out, the fruit and vegetable log was not generally utilized at school. Overall, it should again be noted that the majority of students' mileage accrual and tracking was conducted at school, which suggests that the MK program has or is becoming institutionalized at the school level.

"Fortunately Marathon Kids provide all information on how to administer the program in the schools. Marathon kids became part of the PE class, but then also there was one school where he (PE teacher) had a really good thing along his gym wall. He set up different mile markers, and every kid had a shoe with a name on it, and when they completed each of the mile markers, they would get to move their shoe along the gym wall to that mile marker until they completed a marathon. And he had a lot of kids that completed up to 3 marathons. So they were really involved. He was probably our best example; in fact that is who we use for the LISD reports."

Table 10. MKIB program implementation. *MK Site Coordinator Interview- Spring 2013 (n=3 respondents)*

- Fortunately Marathon Kids provide all information on how to administer the program in the schools. Marathon kids became part of the PE class, but then also there was one school where he (PE teacher) had a really good thing along his gym wall. He set up different mile markers, and every kid had a shoe with a name on it, and when they completed each of the mile markers, they would get to move their shoe along the gym wall to that mile marker until they completed a marathon. And he had a lot of kids that completed up to 3 marathons. So they were really involved. He was probably our best example; in fact that is who we use for the LISD reports.
- Yes, it was his idea and kids loved it. Most of the other schools' PE teachers came over and saw it, and they adopted it in their school too.
- One teacher even had math lesson with logging the miles. That was just things that they did on their own.
- Well, all of them had the log at school, and some of the kids wanted to log at home so they had those 2 options.
- Well, it (fruit and veggie log) is on the same page so really it went together, so I don't think it was a problem if teachers said it wasn't a problem. I don't know if all the information was 100% truthful with the kids eating fruits and vegetables.
- Well, I think it has to do with the emphasis that is put on by the teacher. If the teacher doesn't emphasize it (fruits and veggies), yeah I am sure kids would overlook it.
- I said you can run at home, you can take a sheet and track it but the marathon miles we do it at school. It is not that I don't trust you, but the more exercise you do the better.
- Yea, since this was our first year, we were just trying to figure out the bugs and everything of running it. The fruit, every once in a while we mentioned it, we especially tried to keep an eye on the lunch of the cafeteria.
- They do it at their own individual campuses because we don't have the same schedule. So they work it in into their schedule the best they can just like I did.
- Yes, it is just me as the head of the program. I do have other teachers that help if there's something else that needs to be done, because the music teacher and I work closely together with our schedules because we rotate the kids. So they've been times when we would do a walkathon, and all of our kids are out, but she is very helpful too.
- It was all done (running) through PE once or twice a week.
- I track the miles. I started out like I said, we had a Walkathon, and the kids had a certain amount of laps they have to make around the campus. They had little necklaces on during the Walkathon; they would get a whole punch every time the made a lap, and we already measured how many laps they have to make to get a mile. That was just for the Walkathon, but then we came back after the Walkathon was done I made index cards with their names on them and put the date. I track it that way, and I knew how many laps they did and miles.
- We just concentrated mainly on the tracking of the miles because I knew the cafeteria was doing their job. They have certain thing that they have to serve on their tray, and then like I said they were getting fruit 3 times a week through the school program.

Marathon Kids Events (Table 11)

The success of MKIB events and celebrations was mixed between the 3 pilot communities (Table 11). Only 1 district (Lubbock ISD) successfully planned and implemented a district wide celebration (Final Mile). As a result, campuses conducted their own kick off events during PE class. While they did plan a Kick-Off celebration, the event was cancelled due to inclement weather. The Final Mile though was an accomplishment with roughly 1200 attendants. Wichita Falls ISD and Marshall ISD both conducted campus-based Kick-Off and Final Mile events. Wichita Falls ISD implemented their MKIB program in late September and felt that they did not have time to organize a district-wide event. As a result, the Final Mile was also held as an event at each campus. For a Kick-Off, Marshall ISD schools had a “walkathon” where individual grade-level PE classes would walk around the campus and end with fresh fruits and water for refreshment. The Final Mile events were conducted as field days, but the district coordinator did state her desire to organize a Final Mile district-wide event next year.

“The Final (mile) was awesome. It was a central event held on a big stadium where all the schools came. We had attendance from every school, some more than others. We probably got around 1200 attendants.”

“Well we just sent the letters (home), and told the kids that we were going to have a walkathon (Kick-Off). The walkathon that we had this year was during their PE time. Our PE time starts from eight and, for example, they would go to the garden and they would do like a forty-five minute walk. Then we would give them fruit and water at the end.”

Table 11. Marathon Kids Events. Relevant quotes and responses, *MK Site Coordinator Interview-Spring 2013* (n= 3 respondents)

- Kick off ended up being school by school because we got rained out on that Saturday. I don't know if you remember the pacific hurricane that came through. So it started raining Friday evening about 7:00pm, and it rained until noon Saturday. So we got rained out for the kick off. The Final [mile] was awesome. It was a central event held on a big stadium where all the schools came. We had attendance from every school, some more than others. We probably got around 12,000 attendants.
- Individual Kick Offs were during PE time. I gave them all of the stuff, and I just did a run and had a little celebration after that. Some schools did better than others, but I think we got the point across to the kids that this is something we are going to do, and it's exciting and fun, and they enjoy it.
- We got back to school and we talked about trying to do a kick off, but some teachers haven't passed out their permission slips, and they didn't know about it yet. We were getting closer to the end of September, and you know so we just said ok we are just kick it off in our PE this day. I think most of the school did it through their PE classes. I know that one school it backs up to one of the junior highs, and they have access to a track and the junior band came, and they had balloons and everything.
- We did the Kick-Off through our PE classes. We saw that maybe this year we can do it before football and soccer got started and everything else these kids do.
- I think this year with everything happening at the end of the school year, you know last 4 or 5 weeks of school we were sitting on needles. We had Final Mile Monday the first Monday of May. We said this was going to be the final lap, and we are going to do 4 fitness laps for the marathon kids.
- About 50 parents did come out for the walkathon, and we used those miles. We had volunteers. Two colleges helped out with our kids, and motivated them, and ran and walked with them.
- The walkathon, that's the beginning, which is the Kick Off event.
- This year was school-based with the Final Mile, and I just announce that we reached our goal, and actually after we had reached our goal we continued to run. But my goal next year, especially if they are the same schools involved, is to try to have a big final mile celebration with all of the schools and to get to the high school and all of the schools in Marshall.
- Well we just sent the letters (home), and told the kids that we were going to have a walkathon. The walkathon that we had this year was during their PE time. Our PE time starts from eight and, for example, they would go to the garden and they would do like a forty-five minute walk. Then we would give them fruit and water at the end. Kindergarten, first, second, third and fourth.
- Yes, we did do a final mile. Each grade level did their final mile. The parent involvement on that one was not as successful as the first one, as the kick off one. But we did had a few come out.
- I thought the first year it would be better for each campus to do their own, and then next year, like I said, I feel pretty confident that the schools would do it again. And I don't think there would be a problem with us trying to get together for the Final Miles celebration. Actually we are having the PE teachers here at Marshall, we are having a workshop tomorrow so I am going to bring it up and put it in our agenda for when school starts.

Perceived Program Benefits (Table 12)

Again, MKIB district coordinators reported being strongly and extremely satisfied with the MKIB program, and they all reported that their student population also enjoyed participating in the program both throughout the year and during events (Table 12). Furthermore, the coordinators perceived that the program had the ability to instill lifelong, healthy habits in students as well as teaching students the importance of making and achieving goals. The site coordinator from District A believed that the program provided students with the motivation and encouragement to exercise more and make healthy food choices. The site coordinator from District B stated that the program gave kids a goal to achieve while. Finally, the site coordinator from District C noted the importance of MK keeping students healthy and exercising instead of sitting in front of the TV.

"I think if we can get the kids to adopt that healthy lifestyle now, and it just becomes a part of their life, and they will carry that in to their adult life and hopefully pass it on to their kids. And then hopefully things will get to start streaming in the right direction."

"Marathon Kids gives your students a goal to achieve. It makes the kids aware of the importance of exercise and healthy eating."

"The kids are moving more because, you know, now days we all have these toys, and they sit in front of the TV for hours and hours. And this way they get motivated to move. It's all about movement and getting the kids to enjoy what they do, and I actually think that some kids do enjoy it. 90% percent of the kids enjoyed it, and I was glad that they did because they got to move more."

Table 12. Perceived Program Benefits. Relevant quotes and responses, *MK Site Coordinator Interview- Spring 2013* (n= 3 respondents)

- Other than what you saw at the Final Mile celebration which was, you know, this extreme joy and pride of completing the program. And then getting the medal, getting the shirt and all of the goodies and rewards, and the parents were there, and all of that. I think if we can get the kids to adopt that healthy lifestyle now, and it just becomes a part of their life, and they will carry that in to their adult life and hopefully pass it on to their kids. And then hopefully things will get to start streaming in the right direction.
- Marathon Kids gives your students a goal to achieve. It makes the kids aware of the importance of exercise and healthy eating. And of course they love t-shirts and medals. I had 2 girls in third grade at recess. They would run, and they basically did 2 marathons because there were a couple of kids that I gave more than one sheet (mileage log) so they could run at home with their parents. There was a sixth grader, one of the little girls that I had, and she is not totally special aid, but she is a little slower than the other kids. But man that girl can run. This year with Marathon Kids we talked about cross-country so she is signed up to do cross-country next year. I think it is a great program
- Well, one, the kids are moving more because, you know, now days we all have these toys, and they sit in front of the TV for hours and hours. And this way they get motivated to move. It's all about movement and getting the kids to enjoy what they do, and I actually think that some kids do enjoy it. 90% percent of the kids enjoyed it, and I was glad that they did because they got to move more.

Barriers to Program Implementation (Table 13)

On the whole, there were not many reported barriers to the implementation of the MK program by the three district coordinators. The barriers reported included event management difficulties managing volunteers (Site A) and registration difficulties and district budget cuts (Site B). While the Final Mile event was successful and many volunteers were present to help run the

"The teachers were involved in the preparation, but on the day of the event (Final Mile) they were getting their kids there and getting the kids on the field ready to go. So really I couldn't rely on them to help me, so I needed someone who could coordinate all that while divisions were showing up. I also need someone who could coordinate the volunteers.

Well I know I need more people involved in the Kick Off and the Final Mile. I love volunteers but I would like more of like me times three. I think that would have made it a lot easier. I was running my ass off. We had a lot of volunteers but I need more chiefs."

event, the site A coordinator felt that there was not enough oversight of the volunteers. Basically, Site Coordinator A reported that he was the only one in charge and that he needed more people helping to coordinate the volunteers, which is something he hopes to better address in the future.

The only programmatic barrier at Site B noted by the site coordinator was the registration of her students. This site coordinator decided that all her students were going to run in PE regardless of having officially signed up for the MK program. She, like all the coordinators, sent home registration packets to her students to have signed but did not receive them all back. Inevitably, when t-shirts and medals were distributed, there were a number of students who did not receive one due to not turning in a registration form. On top of that, in the middle of the school year, her district cut the budget to PE, which put an additional burden of increased class size and less support for PE.

Table 13. Barriers to Program Implementation. Relevant quotes and responses, *MK Site Coordinator Interview- Spring 2013* (n= 3 respondents)

- The teachers were involved in the preparation, but on the day of the event (Final Mile) they were getting their kids there and getting the kids on the field ready to go. So really I couldn't rely on them to help me so I needed someone who could coordinate all that while divisions were showing up. I also need someone who could coordinate the volunteers.
- Well, I know I need more people involved in the Kick Off and the Final Mile. I love volunteers but I would like more of like me times three. I think that would have made it a lot easier. I was running my ass off. We had a lot of volunteers but I need more chiefs.
- We tried to explain it to the kids. You are going to be running no matter what. It doesn't matter if you signed up or not, you are going to be running so you might as well get something out of it. Not only for your body and your health. You guys love to get medals, and I know that you guys love to get t-shirts. We kept saying that if you don't sign up don't come crying to us when we hand out this cool t-shirt and medals. I think we need to keep a better record of kids coming in in the middle of the year who ran gang busters around our other kids, but because we didn't have our initial permission slip and stuff. We were just down in San Marcos and 2 of the other PE teachers were there. One of my old coworkers said, "I am not going to send out permission slips, I am just going to measure the kids for t-shirt" and I said, "I think I am going to do that too" because I mean it was good that we had a record of the kids but some missed out on t-shirts and medals.
- So basically the superintendent came out and said that our schools are over staffed and compared them to Waco and Lubbock. He said all elementary schools regardless of enrolment are going to have 1 PE teacher, and then they would hire an aid. So that came out this spring so a bunch of PE teachers were put back in the classroom. PE is my passion, and it just has taken the life out of us because we work our butts off trying to provide a quality program, and then this comes. And not only are we being cut personnel-wise, but then our class size increases. It is real frustrating.

Lessons Learned and Program Improvements (Table 14)

On the whole, MKIB district coordinators reported that the program was a success; however, each coordinator had his/her own ideas to improve the program next

year. The site coordinator from Site A, in addition to better coordinating volunteer efforts, has planned on working with the PTA in order to increase parent involvement in the program. The site coordinator from Site B has utilized the aid and supervision of classroom teachers to help students track their miles by leaving their mileage logs in the classroom and having students fill them out.

"I just like to get the teachers more involved, but I understand it from their side. I know they got their tests and things that they have to teach and all."

"I am going to put something around in the gym to let them (students) know how many miles they completed. It won't be for all the kids; it would be per class or grade level and how many miles."

However, not all teachers are on board with overseeing students track their miles, perhaps, due to their own time constraints. Finally, the site coordinator from Site C has planned on tracking student mileage using a chart on the wall of her gyms so students can see their progress.

"This coming year I am going to get PTA more involve this year. We have a new PTA president and the past president wasn't interested in running or physical activity. The new president, I know her. She is a runner so I know she is going to get the PTA involved so I think it will help to get more parents involve in the program. I am really excited about that change. I think that would help keep parents involved and more excited in the program. And of course if they get that support at home then the kids will just be getting more involved."

Table 14. Lessons Learned and Program Improvements. Relevant quotes and responses, *MK Site Coordinator Interview- Spring 2013* (n= 3 respondents)

- This coming year I am going to get PTA more involve this year. We have a new PTA president and the past president wasn't interested in running or physical activity. The new president, I know her. she is a runner so I know she is going to get the PTA involved. so I think it will helped to get more parents involved in the program. I am really excited about that change. I think that would help keep parents involved and more excited in the program. And of course if they get that support at home then the kids will just be getting more involved.
- (regarding mileage tracking) I tell the teachers, "you don't have to do anything just let them (students) go to their folder". Some of the teachers that are more flexible would allow it. They appointed a person to hand out the sheets (mileage logs) so that they didn't have mass confusion trying to get their sheet. Some teachers they just, I don't think they let them (students) color any of their pies. They were like, "we don't have time for that". I just like to get the teachers more involved, but I understand it from their side. I know they got their tests and things that they have to teach and all.
- I am going to put something around in the gym to let them (students) know how many miles they completed. [This] would be per class or grade level and how many miles.

Conclusions & Discussion

Our findings indicate several positive accomplishments and outcomes with Marathon Kids' program activities during the 2012-13 year, while at the same time highlight areas that may benefit from further fine-tuning and enhancement. Overall, we found that the additional support and inputs provided to the two enhanced parent communication conditions resulted in increased parent exposure to the MK program messages as well as enhanced program outcomes related to student tracking of miles and attendance at events. We also observed increases in parent instrumental support for children's physical activity (past 7-day participation in physical activity with child and taking child to a place to be active) across conditions, which provides some overall support for the program. With regard to the MK Wellness Team Initiative, we documented a higher level of activity taking place across MK wellness teams, and our parent communication study findings provide triangulation to support greater exposure to wellness messages and activities among parents in schools that had MK wellness teams. Despite 2012-13 being the first year of implementation of Marathon Kids In-A-Box (MKIB), we found a high level of program satisfaction by MK school and district coordinators as well as implementation of several key program components in the three school districts in Texas. These positive findings notwithstanding, some areas may merit further exploration in order to increase program effects, such as the need for further definition of the specific role of parents in supporting their children's tracking of miles and fruit and vegetable intake, the content of MK parent messaging around physical activity and FV consumption, further exploration to enhance implementation of specific components such as attendance at MK events and displaying MK tracking logs in school, and the creation of an overall checklist and best practice guide for implementing core components of the Marathon Kids program.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Results from Marathon Kids Coordinator Survey - Central Texas Elementary Schools

Table 1. Coordinator Demographics, MK Coordinator Survey, Austin-Spring 2013.

Coordinators	
	n
Total Responses	11
Basic	4
Enhanced	3
MK Wellness Team	4
Sex	
Male	3
Female	8
Position	
PE Teacher	10
Parent Support Specialist	1
Years in Current Position	
Average	9.09
Range	1-26

Table 2. Coordinator Satisfaction with Marathon Kids Program at their school, MK Coordinator Survey, Spring 2013

	Marathon Kids Contributes To Child Health & Fitness		Children Enjoy Marathon Kids		Marathon Kids Important Part of CSHP		Participate in Marathon Kids Again		Recommends Marathon Kids	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Coordinators										
Strongly Disagree	1	9	1	9	1	9	1	9	1	9
Disagree	1	9	1	9	1	9	1	9	1	9
Neutral			1	9						
Agree	3	27	2	18	2	18	2	18	2	18
Strongly Agree	6	55	6	55	7	64	7	64	7	64

Table 3. Percentage of Schools that Implemented Walking & Running Support Activities, MK Coordinator Survey, Austin- Spring 2013.

	Track Miles with PE Teacher		Track Miles with Classroom Teacher		Display Mileage Logs in Gym		Display Mileage Logs in Classroom		Participate in Kick Off/Final Mile Events		Provided Transport for Kick Off/Final Mile Events		School Event to Recognize MK Participation		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	9	82	8	73	3	27	3	27	8	73	7	64	4	36	0	0
Basic	3	75	2	50	1	25	1	25	3	75	3	75	3	75	0	0
Enhanced	2	67	2	67	0	0	1	33	2	67	1	33	1	33	0	0
MK Wellness	4	100	4	100	2	50	1	25	3	75	3	75	0	0	0	0

Table 4. Percentage of Schools that Implemented Fruit & Vegetable Support Activities, MK Coordinator Survey, Austin- Spring 2013.

	Track Fuel with PE Teacher		Track Fuel with Classroom Teacher		Display Fuel Logs in Gym		Display Fuel Logs in Classroom		Classroom Teachers Encourage FV Intake Before Lunch		Teachers Read Fun Food Facts of the Day		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	5	46	5	46	4	36	4	36	6	55	4	36	2	18
Basic	3	75	3	75	2	50	2	50	4	100	3	75	1	25
Enhanced	0	0	1	33	0	0	1	33	0	0	1	33	0	0
MK Wellness	2	50	1	25	2	50	1	25	2	50	0	0	1	25

Table 5. Percentage of Schools that Structure Time for Marathon Kids Walking and Running Goals, MK Coordinator Survey, Spring 2013.

	Recess Time		PE Class		Before School		Lunch Time		After School		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	10	91	10	91	4	36	1	9	3	27	0	0
Basic	4	100	4	100	2	50	1	25	2	50	0	0
Enhanced	2	67	2	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MK Wellness	4	100	4	100	2	50	0	0	1	25	0	0

Table 6. Percentage of Schools that Participated in Marathon Kids-Related Activities, MK Coordinator Survey, Spring 2013

	Farm to School		Taste-Tasting With Local Famer		Taste-Testing With No Famer		Parent Walking Club		Parent Cooking Classes		Student-only Vegetable Garden		Community Vegetable Garden		Field Trips		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	4	36	0	0	4	36	5	46	6	55	6	55	6	55	5	46	1	9
Basic	2	50	0	0	3	75	2	50	3	75	2	50	3	75	3	75	0	0
Enhanced	0	0	0	0	1	33	0	0	0	0	1	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
MK Wellness	2	50	0	0	0	0	3	75	3	75	3	75	3	75	2	50	1	25

Table 7. Percentage of parent communication messages and channels regarding Marathon Kids-Related Activities, MK Coordinator Survey, Spring 2013.

	School Newsletter		School Email		School Phone msg.		School mtg.		School Wellness Team mtg.		School Marquee		School Bulletin Board		School Website		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	10	91	2	18	5	46	8	73	6	55	8	73	8	73	5	46	0	0
Basic	4	100	0	0	1	25	3	75	3	75	3	75	3	75	1	25	0	0
Enhanced	2	67	0	0	1	33	1	33	1	33	2	67	2	67	1	33	0	0
MK Wellness	4	100	2	50	3	75	4	100	2	50	3	75	3	75	3	75	0	0

Appendix B: Parent Communication Study (Aim 1) Tables

Table 1. Parent social support scores for child physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption.
Marathon Kids Phase III Evaluation , Austin, Texas 2012-13.

	Baseline (October 2012) (n = 557)		Interim (Jan/Feb 2013) (n = 338)		Posttest (April/May 2013) (n = 337)		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline	
	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value
Physical Activity Social Support														
MK Basic	23.74	0.41	23.53	0.45	24.28	0.45	-0.210	0.628	0.541	0.213	--	--	--	--
MK Enhanced	24.22	0.51	24.49	0.66	24.89	0.58	0.269	0.699	0.668	0.278	0.479	0.559	0.128	0.754
Marathon Famili	24.24	0.45	24.64	0.48	24.50	0.48	0.403	0.444	0.266	0.615	0.613	0.369	-0.275	0.685
Fruit and Vegetable Social Support														
MK Basic	25.28	0.35	24.98	0.39	25.55	0.38	-0.297	0.488	0.274	0.514	--	--	--	--
MK Enhanced	25.85	0.43	25.71	0.60	26.05	0.52	-0.140	0.836	0.200	0.737	0.157	0.844	-0.073	0.730
Marathon Famili	25.45	0.40	25.50	0.43	25.87	0.43	0.042	0.936	0.418	0.426	0.338	0.615	0.145	0.672

Table 2. Parent instrumental support scores for physical activity.
Marathon Kids Phase III Evaluation , Austin, Texas 2012-13.

	Baseline (October 2012) (n = 557)		Interim (Jan/Feb 2013) (n = 338)		Posttest (April/May (n = 337)		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline	
	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value
On how many of the past 7 days did you...walk or run with your child for exercise? (q.24)														
MK Basic	2.61	0.25	2.89	0.26	3.24	0.26	0.287	0.176	0.633	0.003	--	--	--	--
MK Enhanced	3.23	0.31	3.44	0.37	3.38	0.34	0.207	0.544	0.151	0.616	-0.080	0.843	-0.483	0.189
Marathon Famili	2.56	0.27	3.21	0.28	2.94	0.28	0.654	0.013	0.385	0.143	0.367	0.277	-0.248	0.462
On how many of the past 7 days did you...take your child to and from his or her sports activities, a park, or other places for PA? (q.25)														
MK Basic	2.40	0.16	2.63	0.18	2.94	0.18	0.235	0.242	0.539	0.007	--	--	--	--
MK Enhanced	2.94	0.21	3.62	0.29	3.31	0.25	0.683	0.037	0.373	0.196	0.449	0.242	-0.166	0.637
Marathon Famili	2.46	0.19	3.00	0.20	2.75	0.20	0.539	0.031	0.292	0.244	0.304	0.341	-0.247	0.442

Table 3. Child engagement in physical activity as reported by parents from three study conditions.
Marathon Kids Phase III Evaluation , Austin, Texas 2012-13.

	Baseline (October 2012) (n = 557)		Interim (Jan/Feb 2013) (n = 338)		Posttest (April/May 2013) (n = 337)		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline	
	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value
In the past 7 days, how many times has your 2nd grade child done the following activities outside of school time? (Q29)														
Running or jogging for exercise														
MK Basic	2.94	0.13	2.94	0.14	3.13	0.14	0.003	0.984	0.193	0.172	-	-	-	-
MK Enhanced	3.11	0.16	3.21	0.21	3.06	0.19	0.103	0.651	-0.045	0.822	0.100	0.708	-0.239	0.332
Marathon Famili	3.01	0.15	3.11	0.15	3.05	0.15	0.108	0.533	0.048	0.783	0.105	0.639	-0.145	0.519
Walking for exercise														
MK Basic	3.01	0.15	3.17	0.16	3.26	0.16	0.153	0.266	0.249	0.069	-	-	-	-
MK Enhanced	3.29	0.19	3.16	0.23	3.22	0.21	-0.123	0.581	-0.067	0.732	-0.276	0.292	-0.316	0.185
Marathon Famili	3.12	0.17	3.40	0.17	3.23	0.17	0.274	0.107	0.108	0.526	0.121	0.579	-0.141	0.518
Sports, dance, or other PA														
MK Basic	3.13	0.13	3.13	0.15	3.21	0.15	-0.001	0.994	0.074	0.623	-	-	-	-
MK Enhanced	3.44	0.17	3.49	0.22	3.42	0.19	0.043	0.858	-0.020	0.926	0.045	0.875	-0.093	0.719
Marathon Famili	3.22	0.15	3.45	0.16	3.28	0.16	0.231	0.205	0.064	0.729	0.232	0.325	-0.010	0.967

Table 4. Child fruit and vegetable consumption as reported by parents from three study conditions.
Marathon Kids Phase III Evaluation, Austin, Texas 2012-13.

	Baseline (October 2012) (n = 557)		Interim (Jan/Feb 2013) (n = 338)		Posttest (April/May 2013) (n = 337)		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline		Diff. bt. Interim & Baseline Versus MK Basic		Diff. bt. Posttest & Baseline Versus MK Basic	
	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Mean Score	SE	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value	Diff.	p-value
Total amount of fruit your child eats each day? (Q30)														
MK Basic	2.40	0.11	2.52	0.13	2.75	0.13	0.121	0.384	0.346	0.013	-	-	-	-
MK Enhanced	2.59	0.14	2.74	0.20	2.63	0.17	0.143	0.531	0.034	0.862	0.021	0.936	-0.312	0.198
Marathon Family	2.45	0.13	2.59	0.14	2.79	0.14	0.142	0.407	0.347	0.044	0.020	0.927	0.001	0.996
Total amount of vegetables your child eats each day? (Q31)														
MK Basic	2.61	0.13	2.63	0.15	2.99	0.14	0.023	0.874	0.380	0.009	-	-	-	-
MK Enhanced	2.89	0.16	2.87	0.22	2.82	0.19	-0.016	0.947	-0.073	0.723	-0.039	0.889	-0.453	0.072
Marathon Family	2.67	0.15	2.95	0.16	3.05	0.15	0.276	0.121	0.384	0.032	0.253	0.271	0.004	0.985

Appendix C: Spring 2012 SHMK focus group results and discussion

Aim: To identify highlights and lessons learned for implementation of Parent-led Wellness Teams that formed part of Sprouting Healthy Marathon Kids project, a collaborative partnership between Marathon Kids and Sustainable Food Center.

Methods: Focus group interviews with four SHMK school wellness teams, two of which were high implementers and two were lower implementers. All focus groups were taped and transcribed. Content analysis was conducted to identify emerging themes. Data were collected in spring 2012.

Parent communication-face-to-face is best (Table1)

All schools regardless of implementation level cited face-to-face conversations with parents as the best way of communication as it relates to wellness team recruiting and activity participation. However, low implementing schools cited this more frequently and in more detail than high implementing schools. Teacher-to-parent; parent-to-parent; and even child-to-parent were mentioned. Face-to-face interactions maybe more useful than other forms of communication due to either 1) facilitating relationship building between people (parent & teacher; parent& parent) or 2) strengthening existing relationships (between parents). Also, parent-to-parent conversations regarding wellness topics may legitimize the topic. That is, parents may be more receptive to discuss wellness topics or even participate in wellness activities if approached by another parent rather than a teacher. However, it was noted that all flyers and phone calls also have their place.

Other ideas were also generated during the focus groups on increasing parent participation. A dedicated space for parents was cited (Graham-high) as an additional measure to increase parent participation. One strategy (Jordan) centered on having incentives for students whose parents participated in wellness activities. This way, other students and their parents will see prizes being awarded and want those for their own children. High and low implementing schools were split on morning (high) vs. afternoon (low) as convenient times for parents to attend hold meetings. Related to this, childcare (low) was also cited as a needed service in order for parent participation in wellness team meetings (afternoon).

Parent communication-mixed opinions on Internet and social media (Table 2)

Overall, there was no consensus among any (indeed each) school regarding using internet and social media an effective means of communicating with parents. Both teachers and parents said that parents who did get online would do so through various means (home, friend's house, library, or apt. complex). Smart phones and texting were viewed IMO to be more accessible than traditional internet access through a computer/ laptop. Finally, opinions on parents using the MK website as a resource was also mixed. Though it would definitely help if the website were also in Spanish.

Wellness team-personal motivation and positive role modeling (Table 3)

By and large, wellness team members from both high and low implementing schools shared the same motivations to joining, attending, and participating in wellness team meetings and activities. Mainly these motivations center on 1) a personal desire to lead a healthy lifestyle and 2) also to become a positive role model for children, friends, and family. In regards to leading a healthy lifestyle, team members were either motivated to continue to live healthy, or they were in the process of leading a

healthier lifestyle than they had before. Additionally, some parents (high) also mentioned that they wanted to learn to cook healthier meals as opposed to the traditional preparation of Hispanic foods.

Related to leading healthy (-ier) lifestyles, members believed that they could be a positive role model to their children/ students, friends and family. Overall, responses from both schools indicate that there is a lack of wellness role modeling in their schools and thus the need was high for positive role modeling. Some respondents, who are living healthier than before, have noticed positive changes in their own lives, and stated they want the same results for their children/ students. Parents and teachers stated their children/ students are becoming more aware and engaged in healthy living by observing their (parent and teacher) daily habits. Teachers have also used their knowledge of healthy living to enhance the classroom experience with their students by providing knowledge on food production and exercise. Similarly, some parents have been sharing their knowledge on gardening with wellness team members and even role modeling for the friends.

Table 1. Parent communication-face-to-face: quotes and responses, Spring 2012

High Implementers

- Reach out (asking if they can volunteer). With our garden club we have a couple of parents that got really involved. We got overwhelmed with some of this support. They worked for 2 weeks without being paid.
- One on one conversations with parents on what we learned from the leadership class. Show interest in the person not what they can do. Just get something you have in common like to get healthy. That would a way of inviting them in without harassing them. It could be an offense because you could be inviting them (to a meeting) because they're heavy.
- One on one. We already tried to do flyers. It's not worth the paper.
- The group is trained to talk to their friends.
- You have to do the phone calls, the face to face, and the flyers. Not just one way.
- We need our own space to meet and separate child care space. Like when we had our PSS with his own portable and it was very convenient. Some parents aren't as involved without that space.
- Sometimes it's us inviting the parents, but it might be better for teachers to talk to the kids and invite their parents. "dad, c'mon let's go to school." We as parents can find a way to give a prize. Teachers can give prizes to kids whose parents participate. If there is a prize they might go. Raffle or gift card might work. The parents may not always listen to their kids but if they see other parents winning they might get involved.
- We have to do it in the mornings because they don't have the kids it's so much easier to do things than after school or weekends when you have to be responsible for the kids.
- Have conversations with parents at the parent teacher conference.

Low Implementers

- Our last meeting one of our parents had a lot of energy. She was hoping to help us out by planning a meeting at an apt. complex. It's just a matter of planning it. Finding those parents and they know other parents. A ripple effect. Take a more individual approach with the parents. Teachers need to take time for that first parent teacher meeting and talk about general wellness and more importantly letting them know we have a wellness team and we would like to have parent input. Create a culture around it.
- Have conversations with parents at the parent teacher conference.
- Things that involve their kids. My gut reaction is whenever we have food here, everybody comes. But that's not really what it is. It's things that are really camaraderie building. Things that involve their kids. If we had a workshop for the kids and the parents went home really excited I could see that drawing more parents than "we need you to help". They'll prioritize over that. But if we build excitement in the kids and they bring the kids, I think that could be good motivation.
- Face to face through teachers. I think that's the biggest way people are doing stuff.
- Have meetings late in the afternoon and give them food.
- Providing child care.

Table 2. Parent communication-internet and social media: quotes and responses, Spring 2012

High Implementers

- I don't think so.
- I only speak to one person on email. One out of everyone in my class.
- I've worked here 6 years and at first no parents had computers but I see them getting more savvy.
- Parents say they get online. Some of them have Facebook.
- I've never heard of twitter. I know they use Facebook but we can't get on it here.
- I don't do texting. I'm good with teachers. I'm like an Indian using smoke signals.
- Parents don't get online much.
- Texting might be good, but person to person.
- If it were in Spanish they would use it.
- I think we only have a handful of parents who know how to maneuver this. I've had classes on computers and it's rough. It's very basic. I'm grateful they came to class.

Low Implementers

- No.
- I know they're on FB. But they don't have internet at their homes. They have it on their phones. I was telling one of my moms about some opportunities going on and she was like show it to me on my phone because I don't have internet on my phone. Maybe 4 out of 22 kids have internet at their house. Maybe only 6 actually have a computer.
- They may go to the library or their friend's house for internet.
- For sure, parents get online.
- I have parents that give me email addresses. 4 out of 22 so that's still a minority.
- They text.
- I'm not sure they use it for educational purposes. They might use it for themselves. From what I know, I think they go to the library and Facebook. I don't think they think of it as a way to communicate with the school.
- Maybe.
- If it had games for kids. There could be one that their parents would encourage them to do.

Wellness team-facilitators (Table 4)

Respondents from all four schools recognized their active parents as major contributing force to the continuation (survival) of their wellness teams and respondents seemed to sincerely share how proud they were to have parent support. However, high implementing schools stressed the importance of their parent team members more than low implementing schools. For instance, both high implementing school respondents also stated due to the wellness team that the cohesion between parents and teachers was greater now than in previous years. The cafeteria manager was mentioned in one low implementing school also mentioned how active and supportive their cafeteria manager was by ordering locally grown foods and conducting cooking demonstrations. Though, one factor that low implementing schools mentioned was how much they enjoyed the social interaction of the meetings. Simply, they liked being in the company of their wellness team.

Table 3. Wellness team-personal motivation and positive role modeling: quotes and responses, Spring 2012

High Implementers

- I've always been interested in nutrition and healthy eating habits. That's why I wanted the garden started and getting kids involved.
- With my life I haven't been too healthy. I took some classes in college and now I want to help kids realize what a difference healthy living can make.
- For me, it's teaching outside the classroom with a different perspective. Kids love it. The garden is participation and not the sit be quiet classroom.
- I've always been exercising. I've been in the military for 29 years. I see a lot of parents as less active than I've always been. I like the skills you develop from gardening.
- She wanted a garden and she sees how involved the kids are and she wants to learn from that for her daughters.
- She wanted to learn healthy eating and cooking and gardening. She tried last year but this year things have grown a lot more.
- Her kids taught her to separate waste for the compost. But she also noticed how her kids talk about fruits and veggies in a different way due to their involvement in the garden.
- I come on a personal basis. I'm Hispanic and I want a better way of eating. I want to incorporate exercise in my daily life. I also want other people to understand the importance of eating well, exercise, and taking care of yourself. I'm diabetic and I don't want this for any of them or their children. So I'm trying to help bring things to them that will help them later on and their children.
- I'm a newbie to it. It's personal interest. I enjoy cooking and eating healthy and gardening. Learning things that I can teach to my students and help their families. I've learned a lot from this group. You see her (parent) in the garden and she knows what she's doing. You learn so much from them and you build onto that for the kids.
- Trying to take care of my mom and tell her about healthy eating. I want to take care of my family.
- Parents kind of motivate each other too. Some of us try to do exercises on our own but we do it together.
- They want to eat healthy because there are so many kids getting diabetes.
- I like Zumba a lot. I bring my son to see if he can lose weight too. I like the meetings and I learn to eat healthier for my family and kids. There was a health fair on sugar and sodas and it made a big impact on me.
- To me it's trying to make a difference. Start with myself and somebody will see it and maybe try it.
- For my kids. My daughter is doing Zumba now.

Low Implementers

- To learn to eat healthy too. Pass it to the next person. If they don't want to do it that's up to them. You gave them the info and where they can look for more info if they want to change.
- I've lost a lot of weight in the last 4 years, health has been very important to me. Every student I get to see one on one I tell them my history and show them a picture. I taught a healthy living program after school. There are a lot of opportunities for the future.

- My kids loved it. They would create dishes and go to the habitat (garden).
- We like to be healthy. We eat more or less right. We understand it's important for our kids to eat healthy. With the type of life we have it's difficult hard to do groceries and cook every day. It's easier to pay for fast food. I try to model for my kids on how to eat healthy. They see that I eat any kind of fruit, fish, cereals.
- She (teacher) eats with her kids every day. She rewards them for eating healthy.
- Everything I eat in front of my kids I make sure it's healthy. They guess what I eat every day.
- For role modeling, I noticed that some of the purchasing decisions for our evening activities it's been nachos and hot dogs. It's not the most healthy options. Perhaps have an alternative as well.
- If they love us and see that we have a healthy life than they try to copy us. So we are good mothers or bad mothers for them.
- I'm relatively new (2 years), it would appear like a lot of kids here don't have role models who demonstrate the importance of wellness. It doesn't seem to be a focus of this community.
- I love seeing the kids connected with nature and thinking about more critically. Where their food comes from and what it does to the insides of their bodies. How to feel good with what they take in and put out.
- I have been more aware of kids not being outdoors enough or in very good ways. 4th graders write about their favorite place and its chunky cheese or somewhere you play arcade games. It's crappy games or video stuff and noise or movies and violence and overstimulation and garbage food. That's the things they know of and their limited experience. It just kills me and makes me very mad about the disparities in this city. There's a whole group of kids that grow up totally differently. What's the deal and how can we share with each other both ways? I feel like a lot of kids over here are so incredibly limited. I would like to expand things for them but I would also like to fight for systemic things that would change it more and maybe this is a little way for starting it.

Wellness team-barriers (Table 5)

The major barriers cited in the focus groups were 1) lack of teacher involvement (both high and low) and 2) difficulty in recruiting more parents (low). The lack of teacher involvement centered on a lack of time due to having too many duties and responsibilities. These include after school tutoring and serving on teacher committees, which wellness is not one of. Additionally, some responses suggested that the though wellness is an area that can affect the entire school and even the community, the responsibility of wellness is mostly on the shoulders of the wellness team members rather than as a collective group. Parental involvement was mostly cited as a barrier among low implementing schools. The lack of involvement centered mostly on the economic difficulties of parents in the community and that many are working multiple jobs. Wellness may not be a priority for these parents.

Wellness team-ownership and sustainability (Table 6a-b)

Unequivocally, all schools found that a vista helped tremendously in regards to the formation and facilitation of the wellness team. Specifically, respondents mentioned vistas helping in organizing meetings and activities, conducting trainings, and calling parents/ community members. Both low implementing schools highly suggested that without the help of vistas, their wellness teams may not have continued throughout the year. Be that as it may, both high and low implementing schools stated that they do have ownership of the wellness team, and that they would continue to meet without the help of vista next year.

Wellness team-recommendations (Table 7)

Several potentially effective recommendations were made by the schools on how they (and other schools) can improve their wellness team. Consistent with reported lack of teacher support barrier, one strong recommendation was to increase teacher participation by creating a core teacher group (or approved committee) that ideally included a teacher from every grade level as well as the librarian, art teacher, PE teacher (specials etc.). In order to form this core teacher group/ committee, there were suggestions that the wellness team should be present to all faculty and staff at the beginning of the year. Also suggestions were made that the principal should consistently make reminder announcements about wellness team meetings in order to maximize exposure.

The recommendations made towards forming a core teacher group/ committee seem to further establish the wellness teams' desire to continue to thrive. This is consistent with their reported sense of ownership and commitment to hold team meetings in the future. In short, institutionalization of the wellness team seems to be a near-future goal for most if not all four schools.

Table 4. Wellness team-facilitators: quotes and responses, Spring 2012

High Implementers

- I think the parents have been more inclusive with the teachers like with this group here than previously.
- There's been more cohesion with these teachers than with my child's teachers and also with MK.
- The core ladies. We have about 20 parents but some of them trickle off but we remind them and they come back.
- You have to know the community. When I first got here, people didn't even talk to each other and now people are all over the place. It's a network now. We're trying to get that to the rest of the school.

Low Implementers

- We even have fitness classes for teachers. 3 days a week for staff and friends. The more people we have the cheaper it is. Around 20 people show up.
- It's good to relieve stress.
- Especially with everyone else on the staff.
- The enthusiastic young women that are fit and interested in health.
- I like everyone on the team. That's not a very scientific answer. I feel like I am friends with everyone on the team. I want to come to the meetings because I enjoy their company. And also we want to do a good thing for these kids and ourselves.
- Having the cafeteria staff involved is really, really neat. Carter, our cafeteria manager, is really good about ordering local fruits and veggies.
- She's wonderful. She's usually not able to come to the meetings. She has two jobs.
- She's really supportive of cooking in the classroom too. Always even if it's really hard for her.
- I love the process we've been doing but we need to pare it down. Going through, reflecting and saying what have we done? That's been healthy. Is there anything new in your own life? What have you seen at school that's a positive wellness step? Rebecca or Molly introduced that. Reflect and encourage each other. Start with the positive. Look at all we've done instead of looking at our task list. We start off with joy and excitement and it energizes us to want to do our tasks.
- Seeing success breeds success.

Table 5. Wellness team-barriers: quotes and responses, Spring 2012

High Implementers

- We also have the garden club every Wednesdays with the students. They learn about nutrition and working in the garden. We have a lot of parental involvement with a different set of parents. The obstacles there have been getting more teacher involvement.
- Exactly. It's always us (teachers present).
- It feels very much still on our (teachers present) shoulders than on them (other teachers).
- It's a lot of work.
- Time is the obstacle for teachers. After school.
- Teachers have tutoring, afterschool meetings, and mandatory meetings.
- We noticed last meeting we saw a parent come but she didn't see a parent she recognized so they left and never came back. That was something I thought was kind of different. They didn't feel comfortable to stay or something.

Low Implementers

- Our parents have difficult economic situations. They don't have time to bring their kids to afterschool things like the free YMCA. The parents are working 2 or 3 different places. They don't do it because they don't have a ride. It's not a priority for them.
 - They're on survival mode. That's the thing about poverty. Learned helplessness. We can't say they're poor so they can't eat well. We have to say they're poor. They can't eat well; what are we going to do to fix it? No, you may not have hot Cheetos. That can't be your class treat. We can't tell parents what to bring their kid. If they bring their kids McDonalds we can't say sorry you can't do that. That's where it gets hazy.
 - I have a crusade! I used to be an organizer for Austin interfaith group and in schools as a teacher. I've attempted to do some of that here. There have been a couple of studies that the testing pressure has limited the space in which teachers can engage, organize with each other, and getting involved with something after school because it's so overwhelming. It burns people out. I feel that pretty strongly here. Every person that I approach is "I just don't have time. There's no way". We meet after school but there's also tutoring after school so there are a lot of demands because of testing.
- I've wanted to see the garden become more incorporated into lessons or making that a reward for classes or making that recess or WOW time. Exercise could easily be garden work. I think everyone is overwhelmed with I got to pack this in. I have to follow the curriculum. We don't have any time.
- If we want parent involvement we have to do a lot to get them here. That's something I really learned. Us talking about that here is really great but we're not the ones feeding them on weekends, summer, and holidays. What we're feeding them at school is healthy. They're moving. They have PE every 3 days and they're playing outside at recess. It's more important for me to get parents in here and hear why they're going to McDonalds or certain things. That's what I'm interested in next year. To get parents involved we need to change things.
 - They're the ones who are bringing all the McDonalds into the cafeteria.
 - If we want to see a change in that we need to figure out how to get the parents here.
 - We also need more teachers involved. The best way to do that is to give people lots of notice and put it on the principal weekly bulletin. If it's on there and we get a rep from each grade level. If it's on the bulletin teachers will write it down. We have committees on campus and we need wellness as a committee.
 - This year we were so freaking busy we didn't have committees. We have been overwhelmed.

Table 6a. Wellness team-ownership and sustainability: quotes and responses, Spring 2012

High Implementers

Vista help

- Yes. She helped us refocus ourselves, our goals, our accomplishments, and what we're trying to work on next.
 - She gave us focus on what needs to be done.
 - Every time there was an activity, I got a call (from her). If I don't get a call I don't come over.
 - I think she helped pull us together especially with the parents. To me, that's big.
 - She encourages me to talk to more parents.
 - They give us a lot of support and advice. Carmen and Rebecca gives us tons of advice. They've helped us get volunteers with Whole Foods work day. We can go on and on. They gave us money that first year. Without them we wonder if the garden would have gotten started. The principal has been pulled into the excitement and momentum of the gardens. I used to have a portable but now I don't. It's at the recreation center so I think that's drawing parents away.
 - They had classes on how to make compost. I didn't know these things. They taught us that. The principal also has buy in.
 - Especially with the principal talking about the garden to other teachers others are becoming more involved and wanting to be a bigger part of it.
 - Parents were a little more involved in the beginning learning about basic gardening and composting. Teachers then took a larger role and made it even more beautiful.
- With the garden we've been really active with SFC. They've been huge supporters. It's a huge benefit for us to be working with SFC giving us advice.

- SFC has also kept us together. They call meetings together. They do leadership training to help figure out how to bring more people to the meetings.

Ownership and sustainability

- We own it very much.
- I feel like we have a lot of ownership and what we're doing.
- We have ownership of our own parts. My nutrition classes.
- They (parents) met together with Carmen on what they could do in the community more. So they decided on a fitness program. They found a trainer and are talking to parents (12-15).
- I believe these ladies own it. They're here for the gardening. They're doing Zumba with other parents.
- For our gardens, if we stop meeting everything will fall apart.
- We need to teach the kids about nutrition. It is all a big circle and important for the kids.
- We sure will try (to keep meeting).
- They've made it clear. We're here to guide you to teach the rest. It's not deceiving. You can ask them for anything but they're trying to spread the word. Learn and pick up from there.
- A lot of parents want to be healthy but they have to make their own time to do it.

Table 6b. Wellness team-ownership and sustainability: quotes and responses, Spring 2012

Low Implementers

Vista help

- Yes (resounding)
- I'll be honest. I don't know if this would've happened. We would just be like we need to have a wellness meeting. Or have it later.
- She provided organizational support and knowledge. I wouldn't have known about the farmer's market.
- She provided me with a curriculum for the after school program. She did a great job. We wouldn't have had a lot of resources without her.
- We've been pretty dependent on outside organizers. Part of that is the same deal with time pressure. No one wants to completely take lead. We're taking leads and little pieces of it. We're passing the lead each time now for the meetings.
- We were almost overly dependent even though they've done a really good job of teaching us and encouraging us to have ownership.
- They know what they're doing when they're building leadership. They know the right things to do. It's like they've had a course in leadership or something! They know how to say this is as far as we're going to go so "how do you see yourself" and encouraging autonomy.
- Bianca was very diligent about monthly meetings. Wellness is a big priority on our campus. But, we are totally swamped and having that person on the outside being we need to meet and sending updates was very helpful.

Ownership and sustainability

- I know that we're going to do it next year. We just decided that right now. We'll do it next year, for sure. Now that we know what it is. We've been talking about making Mr. Blevins (VP?) the face of wellness. It hasn't happened yet, but it can. The ideas are there.
- Will meet without Bianca. It will be a committee. We just decide that.
- I can still volunteer occasionally.
- I think we're getting closer. The one big gap is Molly is the one contacting parents. We haven't gotten this to be really something with parents and teachers. We don't really have any other staff besides the librarian. I think it would be really cool if we had other staff. I don't know who could. Their hours don't fit. Custodians, cafeteria, office.
- I think next year if we step it up and hold each other accountable (we will have more ownership).
- Before the end of the year we should probably set a start date to kick off the new year.
- You (librarian) add to our spirit. We get real enthusiastic and support each other, and you probably express it to other people. The more people we have, the more emissaries we have.
- You know, I am trying to get more people knowing about Pickle and providing role models for these kids (like my dance group, Tapestry) and getting them excited.
- yes (we will continue to meet)
- Yes (we will continue to meet), because we are invested in the students.
- This school wants to be vested in the community. There is one person (VP?) here who wants commitment to the community but wants it his way (laughing). I don't doubt his commitment or dedication to that. Dr. H has been great about doing stuff for the garden and inviting parents and involving the community. There are a lot of separate entities and if we were like one united voice that would be amazing.
- Too many crusades. There's a parent coffee every Friday morning and that's pretty much the principal announcing to parents on how to make their kids do good. I've come in there before to make announcements or asking about volunteers. It always feels like I'm not part of this whole group that we're not altogether. It's like "Dr. H has this garden blah blah blah". It's not really integrated.

Table 7. Wellness team-recommendations, Spring 2012

High Implementers

- Get a core teacher group. It's difficult because of a busy schedule. Get this presentation in and let them feel it. It's a lot of work getting stuff together but if we have a core group on campus and then bring on them campus.
- Librarian and art teachers got involved and spread awareness to their students and teachers about the garden. Whenever you get someone involved like that it can really shake things up. They see more students than any teacher. I only see so many students in my classroom.
- I think the teachers would be really good. They're with the kids and can get them a little more involved.
- We used to have a staff meeting every Monday and we haven't as much because of testing but we're starting them up again. But maybe a short presentation to invite teachers. I know there's a lot of teachers that have those hobbies at home. We get so many emails, but when it's in your face when you're sitting there you may be able to learn a lot.
- If it's worked into a planning period, then teachers can meet and talk a little bit about it (wellness team). Or 10-15 minutes of a staff meeting, I'm sure, couldn't hurt to offer the programs and field trips.

Low Implementers

- The schools that are most productive have their administrators on board. It is hard due to the current environment teachers are under with testing and the whole perform movement. But health is always important. Everyone has to eat. In order to learn, we have to be healthy. I think that's really where the point can be made. What good are we doing if we're teaching all these kids these things but they're not learning because they're not being fed the correct food.
- I think they need to make it a part of their routine, their monthly meetings. If it's not, it's one more thing they have to do. We're already staying after school so it needs to be something that's already built in like committee meetings.
- Everyone has different talents they bring to the table.
- Like with the kids, have it be a routine and be faithful to the routine as possible.

Appendix D: Findings from Marathon Kids In-A-Box School Coordinator Survey

Table 1. Sample size and response rates, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) District Coordinator Survey - Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project, Spring 2013.*

School District	MK Participating Elementary Schools in the District	Participants Invited	Respondents	Response Rate ^a
	n	n	n	%
District A	17	17	13	76.47%
District B	4	4	4	100.00%
District C	7	7	5	71.43%
<i>Total Schools</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>78.57%</i>

^aResponse rate represents number of respondents divided by number of participants invited.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) School Coordinator Survey - Marathon Kids Evaluation Project, Spring 2013*

	Total Sample (n = 22)	District A (n = 13)	District B (n = 4)	District C (n = 5)	p-values
Classification of school composition of economically disadvantaged students (%)					0.4184
0 to 25%	13	23	0	0	
26 to 50%	32	23	25	60	
51 to 75%	23	31	0	20	
76% or more	32	23	75	20	
Gender of respondent (% Female)	91	85	100	100	
What is the majority ethnic composition of your school? (%)					0.1956
African American	18	8	50	20	
Hispanic/Latino	32	46	25	0	
White	45	38	25	80	
Other majority ethnic	0	0	0	0	
No one majority ethnic	5	8	0	0	
What is your current position ? (%)					
PE teacher	95	92	100	100	1.00
Other	5	8	0	0	
Number years teaching (mean)	20.29	17.50	20.25	27.00	
Number years teaching at current school (mean)	10.95	7.92	15.75	15.00	

Table 3a. Participation in and school support for Marathon Kids, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) School Coordinator Survey - Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project, Spring 2013.*

	Total Sample (n = 22)	District A (n = 13)	District B (n = 4)	Distict C (n = 5)	p-values
Did you participate in Marathon Kids this year? (% Yes)	100	100	100	100	
<i>Did you plan and hold a MK Kick-Off Event at your school?</i> (% Response)					0.0002
Yes, we planned and held a Kick-Off Event	23	8	50	40	
No, my school district organized a district-wide event	27	46	0	0	
No, neither my school or district held an event	18	0	50	40	
Yes, we planned the event but were not able to hold it	27	46	0	0	
<i>Which best describes the MK Kick-Off Event at your school?</i> (% Response)					N/S
Field day	0	0	0	0	
Family walk	5	8	25	20	
School presentation	5	0	0	20	
Other	11	0	25	20	
<i>Did you plan and hold a MK Final Mile Event at your school?</i> (% Response)					0.0442
Yes, we planned and held a Final Mile Event	64	46	100	80	
No, my school district organized a district-wide event	27	46	0	0	
No, neither my school or district held an event	0	0	0	0	
Yes, we planned the event but were not able to hold it	5	0	0	20	

Table 3b. Participation in and school support for Marathon Kids, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) School Coordinator Survey - Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project, Spring 2013.*

	Total Sample (n = 22)	District A (n = 13)	District B (n = 4)	District C (n = 5)	
	%	%	%	%	p-values
<i>Which best describes the MK Final Mile Event at your school?</i>					0.3188
(% Response)					
Field day	5	0	25	0	
Family walk	9	8	0	20	
School presentation	23	15	25	60	
Other	31	31 ^b	50 ^c	20 ^c	
<i>Among those participating in MK...^a</i>					
Attended Kick-Off event this year (% Yes)	14	15	0	20	0.8313
Attended Final Mile event this year (% Yes)	68	100	25	20	0.0005
Respondent volunteered at MK event final mile medal celebration? (% Yes)	68	100	0	40	0.0002
Respondent attended at MK event final mile medal celebration? (% Yes)	73	100	25	40	0.004
School provides structured time for MK's walking and running goals (% Yes)	100	100	100	100	
District provided transportation to Kick-Off event (% Yes)	14	23	0	0	0.593
District provided transportation to Final Mile event (% Yes)	14	23	0	0	0.1981
School provided transportation to Kick-Off event (% Yes)	5	8	0	0	0.5913
School provided transportation to Final Mile event (% Yes)	5	8	0	0	0.3883
Would you recommend MK to other teachers? (% Yes)	100	100	100	100	

^aValues may not add to 100% as respondent was able to check 'all responses that apply'.

^bFinal Mile event cancelled due to rain

^cFinal mile conducted during PE class

Table 3c. Participation in and school support for Marathon Kids, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) School Coordinator Survey - Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project, Spring 2013.*

	Total Sample (n = 22)	District A (n = 13)	District B (n = 4)	District C (n = 5)	
	%	%	%	%	p-values
<i>How does school structure time for running/walking? ^a</i>					
Class time dedicated to PA (e.g., "WOW")	18	8	50	20	0.0954
Recess time	18	15	0	40	0.4349
PE class	95	100	75	100	0.1818
First thing in morning-before class	0	0	0	0	na
Lunch time	5	0	0	20	0.4091
After school program	9	15	0	0	1
Other	14	15	25	0	0.7468
<i>How satisfied are you with the MK program?</i>					
Extremely satisfied	59	46	75	80	
Very satisfied	32	38	25	20	
Somewhat satisfied	9	15	0	0	
Slightly satisfied	0	0	0	0	
Not at all satisfied	0	0	0	0	

^aValues may not add to 100% as respondent was able to check 'all responses that apply'.

Table 4a. Process of implementing Marathon Kids at school, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) School Coordinator Survey - Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project, Spring 2013.*

	Total Sample	District A	District B	District C	
	(n = 22)	(n = 13)	(n = 4)	(n = 5)	
	%	%	%	%	p-values
How is MK implemented in your school? ^a					
Classroom teachers help students track miles walked or run	5	8	0	0	1.0000
Classroom teachers help students track fruit and vegetables	9	15	0	0	1.0000
PE teacher(s) help students track miles	95	92	100	100	1.0000
PE teacher(s) help students track fruit and vegetables	50	62	25	40	0.5135
Peer leaders help students track miles	0	0	0	0	na
Mileage logs are displayed in classroom	23	31	0	20	0.7828
Fuel logs are displayed in classroom	14	23	0	0	0.5442
PE/teachers reward students when 'milestones' reached	23	31	25	0	0.5286
PE/teachers encourage students to eat fruits and vegetables	64	77	50	40	0.3873
PE/teachers/cafeteria staff encourage students to eat fruits and vegetables	18	15	0	40	0.4349
Other	0	0	0	0	0.1818

^aValues may not add to 100% as respondent was able to check 'all responses that apply'.

Table 4b. Process of implementing Marathon Kids at school, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) School Coordinator Survey - Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project, Spring 2013.*

	Total Sample (n = 22)	District A (n = 13)	District B (n = 4)	District C (n = 5)	p-values
3rd-5th grade students fill in Mileage Log ?					0.3342
Completes at home	14	23	0	0	
Completes at school	50	38	50	80	
Completes at home & school	27	31	25	20	
Does not complete	9	8	25	0	
3rd-5th grade students fill in Fuel Log ?					0.005
Completes at home	27	31	25	20	
Completes at school	32	31	0	60	
Completes at home & school	27	38	0	20	
Students do not complete	14	0	75	0	
How is MK recognized and institutionalized at your school?					
MK included in website	27	31	25	20	1
MK promoted in parent newsletter	55	69	25	40	0.2968
MK listed as a partner program within the school	14	15	0	20	1
Does your school recognize students participating	59	62	75	40	0.7068
Your duties as MK coordinator are recognized by your school	45	46	50	40	1
Your school participate in fundraising to support MK	0	0	0	0	na
Other faculty and administration participate in MK	59	54	75	60	1
promoted on school marquis/sign	41	62	25	0	0.0369
Does the PTA support or volunteer with MK	45	46	50	40	1
Does your school implement additional activities to support MK activities or goals	32	31	25	40	1

^aValues may not add to 100% as respondent was able to check 'all responses that apply'.

Table 5. Communication channels for Marathon Kids, *MKIB (Marathon Kids in a Box) School Coordinator Survey* -

	Total Sample (n = 22) %	District A (n = 13) %	District B (n = 4) %	District C (n = 5) %	p-values
<i>Among those participating in MK...</i>					
How did you first hear about MK? ^a					
A regional school district presentation	36	46	0	40	0.3873
A presentation at my school	14	38	0	20	0.5442
Marathon Kids Website	0	0	0	0	na
My schools' participation in MK	0	0	0	0	na
A friend outside of school	0	0	0	0	na
A parent told me	0	0	0	0	na
A co-worker told me	23	15	100	40	0.0295
Other	18	15	0	0	0.4768
Did you receive and MK Box with materials? (% Yes)	95	92	100	100	1
How did your school communicate to students to participate in MK this year? ^a					
Classroom teachers distributed MK information packets to students	18	31	0	0	0.3282
PE distributed MK information packets to students	91	85	100	100	1
Other	5	8	0	0	1
How did your school communicate to parents about MK this year? ^a					
PE and/or classroom teachers distributed MK information to students. Students brought information home.	82	77	75	100	0.5913
MK info packets distributed to parents	14	23	0	0	
A flyer, letter, or email sent to parents	45	77	0	0	
Parents informed about MK at a school meeting	14	8	25	20	
Parents informed about MK via school newsletter	27	38	25	0	
Parents were sent reminder notice during course of MK program	45	77	0	0	
Other	0	0	0	0	

^aValues may not add to 100% as respondent was able to check 'all responses that apply'.

Table 6a. MK Coordinators on MK program teacher input, *Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project*, Spring 2013.

Teacher ratings on MK process, with 1= Strongly Disagree, and 5= Strongly Agree. (Summary score mean)	Total Sample (n = 22)	District A (n = 13)	District B (n = 4)	District C (n = 5)	p-value
MK instruction packet is easy to follow	4.18	3.77	4.75	4.80	0.2808
Reminder emails from MK have been helpful	4.36	3.85	5.00	5.20	0.0944
I feel sufficiently supported by MK at my school	4.32	4.08	4.50	4.80	0.5414
MK makes an important contribution to the health and fitness of children at our school.	4.50	4.15	5.00	5.00	0.2690
Children at our school enjoy MK	4.41	4.00	5.00	5.00	0.1707
MK is considered an important part of our coordinated school health plan.	4.41	4.38	4.25	4.60	0.8874
It was easy for me to register my students on the MK website.	4.41	4.15	4.75	4.80	0.5624

Table 6b. MK Coordinators on MK program teacher input (continued), *Marathon Kids Evaluation Phase III Project*, Spring 2013.

In terms of communication between MK and you, what communication channel best for you? (% works best)	Total Sample (n = 22)	District A (n = 13)	District B (n = 4)	District C (n = 5)	p-value
Information mailed to you at your school (% Yes) ^b	89	77	75	80	0.6784
Email sent to you (% Yes)	100	100	100	80	na
Phone Calls (% Yes)	29	23	50	0	0.1952
Other (% marking this response)	67	15	0	0	na
Did you attend a training conducted by MK staff on how to implement MK at your school? ^a					
Yes, training in person (% Yes)	36	31	0	80	0.0448
Yes, online training (% Yes)	59	46	100	60	0.2353
Other (% Yes)	91	15	0	0	1
Do you feel the need for more training on how to implement MK at your school? (% Yes)	14	23	0	0	1

^aValues may not add to 100% as respondent was able to check 'all responses that apply'.

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