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# Working Well at School

**CREATING HEALTHY WORKPLACES FOR  
ALL OREGON PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES**

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# Healthy School Workplaces

EVERYONE WINS



## CREATING HEALTHY WORKPLACES FOR ALL OREGON PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Workplace wellness programs support employees' health in the place where they spend the majority of their days — at work. In the demanding world of education, wellness is especially important. National research shows that school workplace wellness programs offer tremendous benefit and directly support educators' goals.

OEA Choice Trust helps all employees — including administrators, teachers, faculty and staff members — across Oregon create healthy worksites that support their physical, emotional and social health. We know that if school workplaces are dedicated to wellness, they create a culture of health and a healthier environment that benefits both school employees and the students they serve.

*Our employee wellness grant allowed us to bring everyone together and launch our wellness program for everyone at the same time. And from the very beginning, it's been an employee project. The employees have built it. It's been a really positive change.*

— Jessica Bach, Technology Assistant, Southern Oregon Education Service District

## HEALTHY SCHOOL WORKPLACES BENEFIT STAFF, STUDENTS, ADMINISTRATORS AND COMMUNITY

- Healthy workplaces help all school employees manage stress, stay energized and find better balance in life. This lets them keep doing the work they love, and increases job satisfaction and morale.
- When school staff members are healthy, they are better able to focus and are more engaged and effective in their work. That's a win for employees and a boost for educational outcomes.
- Healthy workplaces support students' educational success. When school employees are healthy and work in a healthy environment, they take fewer sick days. That means more quality time in the classroom and robust relationships with students and families.
- Healthy school employees are influential role models for students, demonstrating healthy behavior and showing their commitment to wellness. And when students are physically, emotionally and mentally well, they can get the most out of their education.
- Because educators have strong ties to their communities, they are catalysts inspiring wellness and nurturing a culture of health that extends beyond the school.

*For a full list of evidence and sources, please visit [www.OEAChoice.com/resources](http://www.OEAChoice.com/resources)*



# Three School Workplaces

## PROMOTING WELLNESS



Wellness programs look different in every school. Some start small and build upon successes, while others begin with a comprehensive program. Each one is as individual as the employees it serves. Here are three different examples of school employee wellness programs supported by OEA Choice Trust:

### 1 SMALL STEPS, BIG DIFFERENCE

#### Jefferson School District

Wellness started small in the Jefferson School District with a wellness committee, Weight Watchers and “Wellness Wednesdays.” Backed by buy-in from administrators, principals and board members, the offerings have since flourished — fitness rooms, challenges, even a disc golf course funded partly by OEA Choice Trust — and now nearly 60 percent of employees participate in the wellness program. The long-term goal is to support a culture that helps employees sustain or improve their well-being and, as a result, improve students’ classroom experiences.

*We see this as more of a lifestyle, not just a grant. OEA Choice Trust wants us to be able to sustain it and make it something that is ingrained in our whole philosophy around health and well-being and helping students learn. So we are making it part of our district’s lifestyle. I’m a firm believer that if you want your classroom to be better, you have to be better yourself.*

— Kent Klewitz, Superintendent, Jefferson School District

### 2 MAKING WELLNESS A PRIORITY

#### Baker School District

Baker School District was first awarded an OEA Choice Trust school employee wellness grant in 2009. It used the funds to sponsor karate, yoga, Zumba and healthy cooking classes to help employees fit exercise and healthy meals into their hectic schedules. The district credits its employee wellness program with an 11 percent savings in substitute teacher costs as a result of fewer sick days, an increase in the number of staff who are at a healthy weight, and a drop in staff hypertension and bad cholesterol.

*We have built a culture of wellness that results in happy, healthy teachers who come to school energized and excited. That means our kids are getting the best education our educators can provide.*

— Barry Nemeec, Special Education Director, Baker School District

### 3 A NEW GYM SPARKS A CULTURE OF WELLNESS

#### Port Orford/Langlois School District

In Port Orford, residents had to drive 30 minutes to get to a gym. So when the school district received a school employee wellness grant from OEA Choice Trust, it knew exactly what its community needed: to convert an empty classroom into a gym. The new gym renewed a focus on wellness among school employees and throughout Port Orford, inspiring employees to form a weight-management group, bring fresh water and fruit into staff rooms, and open nutrition workshops to their community.

*I am very, very excited about some of the wellness opportunities we’ve offered — things like exercise incentives, stress relief, massages and the exercise room; fresh fruit delivered once a week to each school; and water in the staff rooms. I had a secretary tell me that she hears lots of laughter coming from her school’s staff room these days. That never happened before our OEA Choice Trust grant. It’s been a huge change.*

— Nanci Johnson, Personal Trainer and Wellness Coordinator, Port Orford/Langlois Public School District

## Ready to get started? We can help!



Wherever you are on your journey, OEA Choice Trust can help. We are an organization with expertise, passion and dedicated funding for school employee wellness. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you and create the culture of wellness that supports your unique needs and priorities.



#### Funding for employee wellness programs

OEA Choice Trust provides grants, scholarships and professional development for custom-built wellness programs in all Oregon Public K–12 schools, education service districts and community colleges. Between 2009 and 2014 we funded 36 programs, supporting more than 18,000 school staff members across the state. We’ve seen what works and can help you develop the school employee wellness program that fits your school.

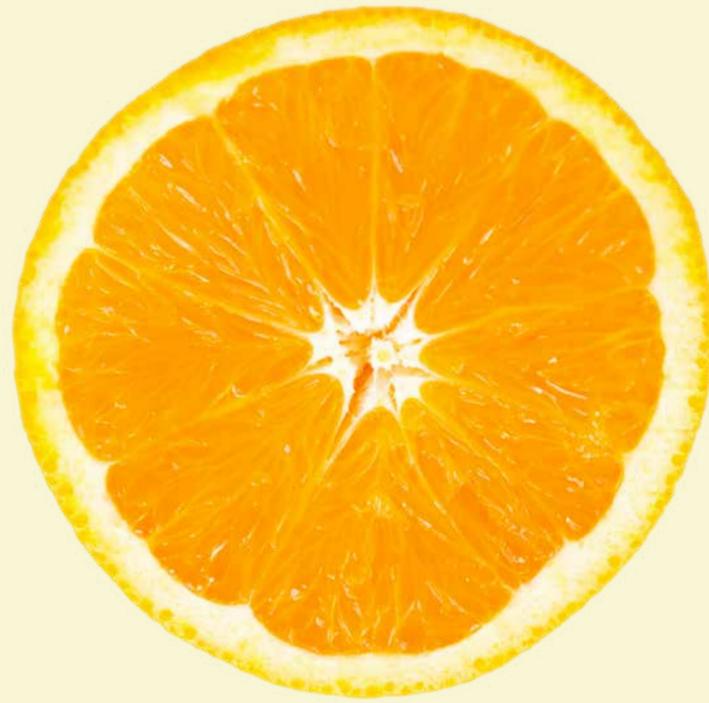


#### Resources

We also offer free information, healthy workplace proven strategies, and best practices and tools to any school that is interested. Each year, we hold a statewide conference and other gatherings that bring together school employees, health advocates and administrators to network, learn from each other and explore how to create school employee wellness programs that benefit their colleagues, their students and their communities.

## Make Healthy Food & Beverages Readily Available

Your work environment has a big influence on your food choices,<sup>5</sup> and staff break rooms are often stocked with unhealthy snacks that can be tempting during the mid-morning or afternoon slump. As an alternative, make fresh fruits, whole-grain snacks and water available in staff rooms, in vending machines, and at staff meetings and events.



## Create An Outlet For Stress

Stress affects employees' minds, bodies and relationships. Feeling overwhelmed? Close your eyes, and breathe slowly and deeply. Calm breathing relaxes the body and mind and prevents impulse reactions.<sup>4</sup> Other great stress busters: a brisk five-minute walk, stretches in the classroom with students or even just a minute of silence, or break your isolation by connecting with colleagues, friends and family.

## Take Your Staff Breaks

Ensure that staff members schedule and — most importantly — take their break time to be active, connect with other colleagues or simply rest. Incorporating a five- to 10-minute break into the work day helps lower stress and increases concentration and alertness.<sup>3</sup>

## Hold Walking Meetings

Instead of sitting around a table, turn your next administrative or planning meeting into a walking meeting. Exercise and fresh air promote better ideas, boost energy levels and support collaborative discussions and planning.<sup>2</sup>

# Five Tips

## FOR HEALTHIER SCHOOL WORKPLACES



## Provide & Drink Clean, Free Water

Dehydration can lead to muscle fatigue, loss of coordination and tiredness.<sup>1</sup> Promote healthy hydration by holding a water challenge. As an incentive, provide water bottles to employees. Don't have access to clean, free water? Raise funds for a portable water cooler and keep it at a central location, such as the staff room.



*OEA Choice Trust is the only organization dedicated to workplace wellness for all Oregon public school employees. We offer expertise, experience across Oregon and grant funding to help schools create employee wellness programs that support their employees' specific goals. Together with teachers, school staff and administrators we are building a culture of wellness in Oregon schools.*

**Please join us.**

visit us at **www.OEAChoice.com**

<sup>1</sup> "Healthy Hydration," [www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org), April 3, 2013, accessed Aug. 6, 2014, <http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/fitness-fact-article/173/healthy-hydration/>

<sup>2</sup> M. Oppizzo & D. L. Schwartz, "Give Your Ideas Some Legs: The Positive Effect of Walking on Creative Thinking," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, April 21, 2014, advance online publication, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036577>

<sup>3</sup> "Five Minutes or Less for Health Weekly Tip: Take a Break," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Feb. 5, 2014, accessed Aug. 07, 2014, <http://www.cdc.gov/Family/minutes/tips/takeabreak/index.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Mathias, Rolando, "Relieve Stress With Just a Breath," [www.greatist.com](http://www.greatist.com), June 23, 2011, accessed Aug. 6, 2014, <http://greatist.com/health/relieve-stress-just-breath>

<sup>5</sup> "Healthcare Can Lead the Way: Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice," <http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/MN.healthcare.Healthcare%20Can%20Lead%20the%20Way.pdf>, Public Health Law Center, Mar. 1, 2013, accessed Aug. 7, 2014.



## GET TO KNOW OEA CHOICE TRUST

OEA Choice Trust is the only organization dedicated to workplace wellness for all Oregon public school employees. We believe that no matter the role, all school employees should have the support they need to be physically, mentally and emotionally well. Healthy worksites reduce employees' stress, boost energy and morale, and promote better balance in life — a win for teachers, staff, administrators and students. We've partnered with schools all across the state, and we understand what works. We work with administrators, faculty and staff of Oregon's Public K–12 schools, education service districts and community colleges. We provide grants, information, gatherings and coaching, all focused on nurturing a culture of wellness.

*The LCSD No. 7 staff wellness program enhances the work environment by clearly communicating that the district is interested in staff well-being and health. Employees regularly express excitement about participating in the program and see it as a tremendous asset. Thank you OEA Choice Trust for helping to support this wonderful benefit for our employees.*

— Sean Gallagher, Superintendent,  
Lake County School District No. 7



To learn more, please visit [OEAChoice.com](http://OEAChoice.com)

Inspiring Schools To Create Healthy Workplaces For All Staff