

N.D. Schools Promote Healthy Lifestyles

The Associated Press

GRAND FORKS, N.D. - School officials from across the state are learning to take health care education beyond the classroom walls.

The University of North Dakota Center for Health Promotion has been training school officials through a program known as the Coordinated Approach to Child Health, or CATCH. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction also is participating.

About 80 educators and workers met in Bismarck this week to learn more about the program, which includes health education and new physical activity programs.

"For the most part, it's designed to get kids more active and to help them develop lifelong healthy choices," said Nancy Vogeltanz-Holm, health promotion director at the university.

Vogeltanz-Holm said the program asks classroom and physical education teachers, food service workers, administrators and community members work together to improve children's health. It also stresses parent and community involvement.

"The kids will have healthier food choices, fun physical activities and classroom education that stress lifelong health," she said.

Grafton elementary principal Ron Thompson said more parent involvement was a goal this year for his school. The new program has families walking together and watching children's weight, he said.

"It's good to go out and be active," he said. "Obesity is a major problem in our nation and it's not going to go away unless we help and do something, and we know education is with young kids."

The North Dakota schools taking part in the program have more than 2,000 students.