

Press Release

U.S. Department of Education Awards More Than \$800,000 to the Eastern Upper Peninsula for Physical Education and Nutrition Education

Sault Ste Marie, MI, October 31, 2012:

Over \$800,000 was awarded to the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District to improve students' physical health. The PEP U.P. (Physical Education Program of the eastern Upper Peninsula) will expand and improve physical and nutrition education programs and policies for EUP students of all ages, kindergarten through high school. The majority of districts in Chippewa, Mackinac and Luce counties will be part of this exciting program.

The grant comes from the U.S. Department of Education, which awarded 56 grants totaling \$27 million to school districts and community organizations nationwide who plan to implement comprehensive physical fitness and nutrition programs for students through the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP). The EUPISD was the only recipient of this grant in the state of Michigan. "This is a huge honor, and very exciting after all the hard work of writing a grant of this magnitude," said Lisa Jo Gagliardi, PEP U.P. Director and EUPISD Regional School Health Coordinator. This grant comes at a time when across the nation people are becoming painfully aware of the childhood obesity epidemic.

And, it appears health is an academic indicator too. Large bodies of research are proving that physical fitness and good nutrition improve a students' academic success. "Exercise and good nutrition make for happier, healthier, more attentive and more productive students," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "These grants will help students strengthen their bodies and in so doing, inspire their minds to confront the challenges that face them both inside the classroom and out."

As a grant recipient, the EUPISD must guide school districts in implementing programs that promote Michigan's standards for physical education, as well as good nutrition. The program also aims to assist local schools in adopting more robust polices around physical activity and nutrition. "The more physically active kids are, and the more nutritious foods they eat, the more chance our kids have of being successful in school, and in life," said Ms. Gagliardi. "We are trying to prevent our children from having the same adult health problems related to obesity that many of us

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are grappling with. We want our children to have the best chance at a quality education, and to have a long, productive life.”

Among the types of activities that the grant supports, are instruction in motor skills that support a lifelong healthy lifestyle, increasing the total amount of physical activity students get a day, and promoting healthy behaviors around nutrition. A vigorous measurement plan is in place to track the program’s success and involves the use of pedometers and student self-reporting. “Students will wear pedometers at school and home, and recall their fruit and vegetable consumption over the past week during four testing windows each year,” said Andrea Caron, the PEP U.P. Program Coordinator. “This will allow the students, their families and the educators to track student progress throughout the course of the PEP U.P. project. It is a huge undertaking, but a great way for kids to set goals, and for the program to track that our efforts are working.” In addition to the many activities involving students within the program, PEP U.P. will also provide opportunities for extensive training for physical education teachers in the region, keeping them abreast of the latest research and trends in the field.

The EUPISD is excited to work with school districts through the PEP U.P. program, to interactively work to improve physical activity and nutrition in our students. Questions about the grant or objectives of the grant can be directed to Lisa Jo Gagliardi (lgagliardi@eup.k12.mi.us), PEP UP Director, or Andrea Caron (acaron@eup.k12.mi.us), PEP UP Coordinator, or by calling 906.632.3373.

The Office of Safe and Healthy Students, which manages PEP, supports efforts to create safe schools, ensure the health and well-being of students, teach students good citizenship and character, respond to crises, and prevent drug and alcohol abuse. For additional information on the PEP grant program, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html>.