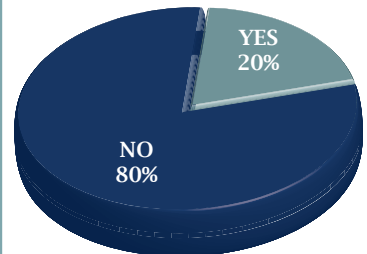


Wisconsin Department of Health Services & Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction School-Based Brain Health Curriculum

BACKGROUND

PERCENTAGE OF TEENS WHO HAVE PROVIDED CARE FOR SOMEBODY WITH DEMENTIA



When polled, one in five sophomores at Wausau West High School responded that he or she has provided care for someone with dementia.

FAMILY CAREGIVERS

In the United States, 26% of households providing care to someone with dementia also have someone under age 18 living in the residence.¹ These children are providing care for family members with dementia along with their parents. The number of individuals with dementia is estimated to increase greatly over the next two decades and family members will be providing the majority of care. Connecting students to information and support can assist families in providing that care.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Currently, there is no cure or successful prevention strategy for Alzheimer's and other dementias.

However, changes to lifestyle are thought to have made an impact in reducing the number of individuals that develop dementia.² Providing information about dementia and associated lifestyle risk factors at a young age can help to encourage healthy choices throughout the lifespan.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

There is estimated to be a shortage of available workforce in the United States to meet the care needs of individuals with dementia in the near future.³ Providing opportunities for students to experience elder care in long-term care settings or in research can spark interest in working in those fields.

1 http://www.alz.org/downloads/Facts_Figures_2011.pdf
2 <http://www.nbcnews.com/health/aging-some-good-news-dementia-rates-might-be-going-down-n516176>
3 <http://www.eldercareworkforce.org/issues-and-solutions/workforce-shortage/issue/workforce-shortage/>

DESCRIPTION

The Brain Health curriculum was created in partnership between the Wisconsin Departments of Health Services and Public Instruction, with support from the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute. The content includes information, classroom activities, and community engagement opportunities for students in middle and high schools in Wisconsin (ages 12-18). Topics include:

- The human brain
- Music and Memory™
- Normal aging
- Risks to brain health

- Dementia
- Family caregiving
- Reducing risks to brain health

The curriculum is flexible in length, from one class period to an entire semester, and is appropriate for inclusion in a variety of subjects including: health and psychology classes, consumer economics, music, physical education, general science, and others. The curriculum has been successfully piloted with two public schools in Wisconsin, the Clark Street Community School and the Wausau West High School.

"We focus so much of our attention on the adults who are sick and forget that the kids might be suffering too."

-Dr. Martha Nance, Chronic Disease Specialist at Hennepin County Medical Center⁴

4 Minneapolis Star Tribune, "Minnesota's invisible caregivers: A growing army of children take care of family members in need" June 24, 2016

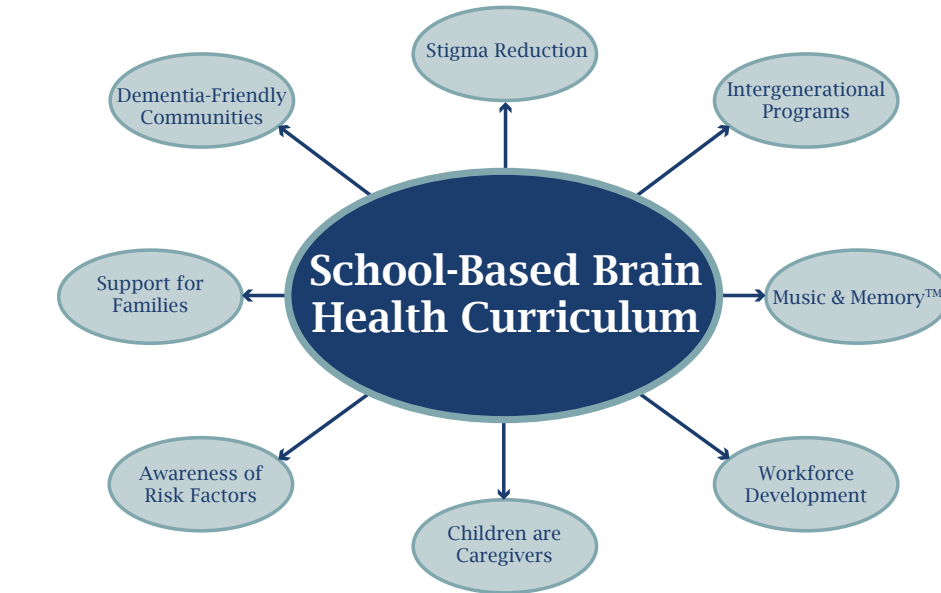
CLARK STREET COMMUNITY SCHOOL PILOT



In spring of 2015, the Clark Street Community School agreed to pilot the curriculum. The school is a public charter high school and provides a seminar-based curriculum. The Brain Health curriculum was selected by the students, who were keenly interested in the topic, particularly the connection between music and the brain. The contents of the curriculum were presented by the teacher and additional speakers and community engagement opportunities were provided to the students.

The Music and Memory™ program provided a connection to a local nursing home where the program has been implemented. The students were able to visit people with dementia who were using the program and connect with another generation around the love of music. A music therapist visited the class, sparking two students' interest in becoming music therapists. The Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute provided an opportunity to visit a research center to hear from the scientists studying dementia, including graduate students only a few years older than the students in the class. The students were also able to watch a brain autopsy and hold prepared human brains, activities that scored the highest in the post-class survey.

The topic was so popular, the Clark Street Community School offered the curriculum as a semester-long intensive seminar the following school year, and will be offering it again in the 2016-2017 school year.



GOALS FOR THE CURRICULUM

STIGMA REDUCTION

Introducing information about dementia through the school system will reach more people than any other campaign. Providing an understanding of dementia will reduce the stigma attached to it due to lack of knowledge.

AWARENESS OF RISK FACTORS

Healthy lifestyle habits formed in youth have benefits across the lifespan and can reduce individual risk for developing dementia.

DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Schools are at the heart of many communities and can be powerful leaders in creating dementia-friendly communities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Providing opportunities for students to explore careers in healthcare, especially dementia care, can promote interest in working in long-term care settings.

MUSIC & MEMORY™

This non-pharmacological intervention can easily be used by family caregivers to reduce anxiety or increase interaction and activity for family members with dementia. It can also provide a point of common interest between generations.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Information on dementia and family caregiving presented in class can be

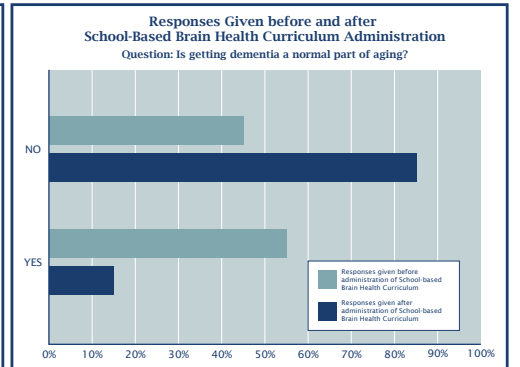
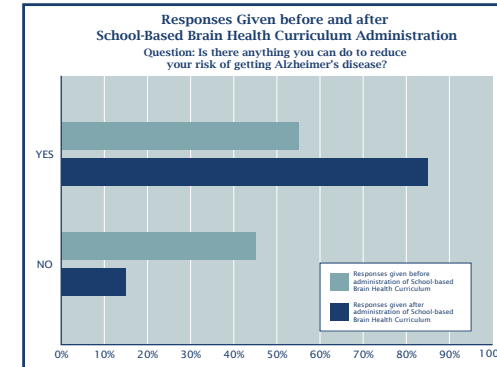
taken home and shared with family members, who may otherwise be unaware of what support may be available.

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Care facilities, libraries, civic organizations, student groups such as the Hosa Future Health Professionals, and others can become involved in community engagement activities through the curriculum.

CHILDREN ARE CAREGIVERS

Use of this curriculum will assist educators and families to recognize that children are also caregivers and provides information to support them in this important role.



RESULTS

The responses to the question "Have you ever spent time alone with a person with Alzheimer's disease or other form of dementia?" revealed that one in five students participating in the surveys have provided at least supervision, if not additional caregiving duties, for someone with dementia. Providing students with the understanding of dementia necessary to provide appropriate care for someone with dementia will benefit the student, the person with dementia, and the family as a whole. Information provided to the students may come home and be shared with the primary caregiver, and can extend the reach of information about dementia and caregiving learned in class.

Belief that memory loss and dementia are a normal part of aging makes it unlikely that individuals with this belief will seek information and diagnosis when they are experiencing the symptoms of dementia. Understanding that dementia is not normal at any age may encourage individuals to speak with a doctor about their concerns. Among the students at Wausau West, there was dramatic improvement in the responses to the question "Is getting dementia a normal part of aging?" Responses changed from roughly 45% responding in the negative to 85%, almost doubling the number of correct responses.

Awareness that the risk of developing dementia can be reduced through lifestyle choices promotes the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Providing this information to people at a young age allows for healthy habits to be established earlier and provides a way to actively work to reduce risk over the lifetime. Responses to the question, "Is there anything you can do to reduce your risk of getting Alzheimer's disease?" improved from 55% saying "Yes" to 85% providing the correct response.

When asked if they would recommend this curriculum to others, a student at Clark Street Community School responded, "Yes, it's cool to know how to take care of someone in your family with dementia/Alzheimer's disease."

"It's cool to know how to take care of someone in your family with dementia/Alzheimer's."

-Student from Clark Street Community School

CONCLUSION

Providing education on brain health, dementia, and family caregiving in the school system produces multiple benefits for individuals, families, and society. Providing awareness of lifestyle choices to reduce the risk of dementia supports individuals. Recognizing that children are also family caregivers, providing information on family caregiving and caregiving strategies specific to dementia provides support for families. Reducing the stigma around dementia, supporting the development of dementia-friendly communities, providing opportunities to explore careers in elder care and other intergenerational programming improves support within our society.

Widespread adoption of the brain health curriculum among educators is recommended and supported by the Wisconsin Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Dementia, a bi-partisan group of state representatives convened to examine issues facing dementia and their families. The Task Force final report states, "Chairperson Rohrkaste recommends that the Legislature promote involvement of the school system and engagement of young people in order to reduce stigma and build a dementia-friendly state. The Task Force's tour at the Clark Street School in Middleton highlights the importance of educating young people about dementia."⁵

⁵ http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/0614rohrkastereport.pdf

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Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Public Health
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WAUSAU WEST HIGH SCHOOL PILOT

In March of 2016, the curriculum was presented to two health classes of sophomores at Wausau West High School, a traditional public high school. The material was presented in the 50-minute class period, along with a five-minute description of volunteer opportunities presented by a local nursing home. Pre-tests and post-tests were completed by the 115 students in the two classes.

Questions included:

- Have you ever been alone with a person with Alzheimer's disease or other form of dementia?
- Is dementia a normal part of aging?
- Is there anything you can do to reduce your risk of getting Alzheimer's disease?