

## GRAYLING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EARNS SILVER SCHOOL WELLNESS AWARD

June 15, 2020- Recently, Grayling Elementary School (GES) was awarded the Silver School Wellness Award (SWA), an award that recognizes significant policy and environmental improvements related to healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco-free lifestyles within schools.

In preparation for the award application, GES staff and students partnered with District Health Department #10 to implement the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Program.

CATCH is a comprehensive, national initiative for students and families aimed at improving healthy eating and physical activity opportunities for students and families.

The goals of the CATCH program are to:

1. Create an enjoyable and safe environment that teaches, reinforces, recognizes and celebrates healthy behaviors.
2. Create an environment that provides motivation and opportunities for children, faculty and staff to adopt physical activity and healthy eating behaviors daily.
3. Teach children the knowledge and skills that support living a healthy lifestyle and provide opportunities for them to practice those healthy behaviors.

Grayling Elementary teachers have been using the CATCH Curriculum lessons, which educate and motivate students to adopt healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Students are learning to identify healthy foods and find creative ways to increase their daily activity. For example, CATCH uses language that students can relate to for identifying healthy food choices. These are: GO foods, SLOW foods and WHOA foods. This simple term—fashioned after green, red and yellow traffic signals—reminds kids that GO foods are nutritious and can be eaten every day, while highly processed and sugary WHOA foods should be eaten sparingly. SLOW foods fall somewhere in between. These types of labels are communicated not just verbally in classrooms, but on posters in lunchrooms, cafeterias and hallways.

“CATCH is a great program that enhanced our efforts at GES to provide health education to the students. The staff really engaged in the ideas of CATCH and the students caught on fast. Students at GES would run up to me in the hallway and tell me their GO food for the day” said Samantha Rogers, GES School Nurse.

As part of their plan to continue to change the school’s wellness environment, GES staff participated in a Bal-a-Vis-X training and purchased equipment to implement this program at the school. Bal-A-Vis-X is a series of Balance/Auditory/Vision exercises, of varied complexity, all deeply rooted in rhythm. It requires focused attention, demands cooperation, promotes self-challenge, and fosters peer teaching. Those staff members who attended are prepared to start teaching students on a one-to-one basis. Through peer-teaching and continued education/training GES staff will continue to integrate Bal-A-Vis-X throughout the school district.



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The School Wellness Award is sponsored by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Education, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, and Action for Healthy Kids.

CATCH is supported by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund through funding awarded to District Health Department #10. The Health Fund works to improve the health and wellness of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of healthcare, with a special focus on children and seniors. You can find more information about the Health Fund at [mihealthfund.org](http://mihealthfund.org).

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