

## ◆ **Recommended Component: Educate All Students**

All students—those with asthma and those without asthma—should be educated about asthma. Students with asthma are responsible, to varying degrees depending on age and maturity, for their own asthma management. Students without asthma should be aware of how the chronic disease affects classmates and teammates. They could be individuals with undiagnosed asthma; they could potentially be involved in schoolmates' asthma emergencies; and they can become involved in school-wide asthma and air quality awareness efforts. (See Sample Letter to Parents about Asthma Education, included with this hand-out.)

### **Educate Students Checklist**

- Teach students with asthma critical concepts and skills to manage their disease
- Reach all students

#### ► **Teach students with asthma critical concepts and skills to manage their disease**

- *Identify appropriate existing programs per age group and review goals or learner outcomes when selecting programs.* Again, what are the critical skills and concepts per age group? Select programs based on the audiences' needs, as well as the availability of proven interventions. Suggested programs include:

- ◆ American Lung Association's Open Airways For Schools for elementary school
- ◆ NHLBI's Asthma Awareness Curriculum for the Elementary Classroom
- ◆ Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America's Power Breathing for middle and high school
- ◆ Starbright Asthma CD-ROM Game: Quest for the Code (for children and families)

(See the Resources section of this Toolkit for ordering information.)

- *Identify alternatives for program delivery and staffing.* Offering inventive methods of program delivery that do not infringe on school resources and classroom time can help administrators remove critical barriers to establishing and maintaining asthma education. Student asthma education can be offered both during the school day as well as an option for after-school programs, for example. Some creative options include:

- ◆ creating local partnerships with volunteer agencies such as the YMCA and AmeriCorps, which could be brokered or managed by the local Lung Association or the community asthma coalition
- ◆ integrating asthma education into the current curriculum such as science or health classes (Note: This may be addressed in district- or state-specific asthma education policies.)
- ◆ recruiting volunteer health professionals or college or graduate students studying public health, nursing, medicine or respiratory therapy
- ◆ offering additional stipends for school nurses or other school staff
- ◆ adding videos and books about asthma to the school media collection
- ◆ offering lunch time, recess, or in-school "field trip" programs

#### ► **Reach All Students**

- *Assess current policies.* Is lung health and/or asthma education required at any educational level within the state and/or district? Determine if there are opportunities to

advocate for change at the district and/or state level and work within coalition and the American Lung Association to advance these advocacy issues.

- *Assess opportunities for implementation.* Can asthma and air quality education be integrated into a school district's existing curriculum? This would perhaps be the most effective way to ensure that asthma and air quality education programs are implemented, rather than proposing an additional education program for a district to implement.
- *Determine learner outcomes.* Take time to understand what, if any, general asthma education or awareness efforts have taken place within the district(s) you are targeting. Base your program efforts on specific learner outcomes. What key facts about asthma do you want students to know and understand? Are there asthma management skills, or asthma emergency response skills, that all students should learn? See the American Lung Association Tip Sheet: Sample Learner Outcomes, included with this hand-out. Also refer to NAEPP's suggested learner outcomes published in *Asthma Awareness for the Elementary Classroom* ([www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/lung/asthma/school/k3obj.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/lung/asthma/school/k3obj.htm)).
- *Identify appropriate existing programs per age group.* Review goals or learner outcomes when selecting programs. Again, what are the critical skills and concepts per age group? Select programs based on the audience's needs, as well as the availability of proven interventions. Suggested programs are:
  - ◆ American College of Chest Physicians, The Chest Foundation, and *Merck's Educational Guide on Lung Health for Elementary School Children*
  - ◆ NHLBI/NAEPP's *Asthma Awareness Curriculum for the Elementary Classroom*
  - ◆ Minnesota Department of Health's *Asthma Education: An Integrated Approach (Ideas for Elementary Classroom)*
- *Involve students in planning and implementation.* Students' involvement will be critical in their taking on the issue and deepening their understanding. Some ideas for students' involvement, particularly in middle and high schools, include:
  - ◆ *Recruit and involve school athletes with asthma.* These students are visible within the school community and may help heighten awareness by their very involvement.
  - ◆ *Tap into service-learning requirements.* Involvement in asthma awareness education can be used as a service-learning opportunity, such as:
    - peer education
    - middle/high school students' reaching younger students with asthma information and support
    - serving on an asthma curriculum development team
    - serving on a school health council
    - developing outreach programs and school-based campaigns, illustrating program/promotional materials, etc.
    - organizing/becoming involved in asthma advocacy issues/efforts within the school and/or district
    - becoming involved in the school's IAQ management team as a student representative
    - working with the school's IAQ management team to investigate potential environmental hazards via modules (see the Resources section for programs and ordering information)

- ◆ *Create an incentive program for kids' involvement.* Work with students to identify school-based and non school-based incentives.

## **REFERENCE MATERIALS**

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- ◆ Sample Letter to Parents Announcing Asthma Education
- ◆ American Lung Association Tip Sheet: Sample Learner Outcomes



## Sample Letter to Parents Announcing Asthma Education



Dear Parents:

The \_\_\_\_\_ (district name) will begin an asthma education program to reach everyone throughout our schools during the coming school year. While this is required under a new policy, it is part of our school's ongoing efforts to provide a safe educational environment for all students, faculty, and staff.

Asthma is a chronic illness that is a growing problem in America. In a classroom of 30 students, two are likely to have asthma.<sup>1</sup> Asthma can be life-threatening; it causes breathing problems called asthma "attacks" or "episodes" that range from mild to serious.

\_\_\_\_\_ (district name) is providing asthma education that will help minimize asthma episodes among students. We are also working to prepare all students and staff to respond to asthma emergencies, should they occur.

The new education program will include the following:

**Staff education**—All staff will learn the basics of asthma, managing asthma, and responding to asthma episodes.

**Student education**—All students will learn the basics of asthma, how it can affect their schoolmates, how to recognize signs of an asthma episode, and how/when to seek help. All students diagnosed with asthma will participate in focused asthma education programs. Elementary students will participate in the American Lung Association's *Open Airways For Schools*; middle and high school students will participate in the Asthma & Allergy Foundation's *Power Breathing*. Parents of these students will receive further information about these specific programs.

**Parent education**—The \_\_\_\_\_ (name) PTA will present the American Lung Association's Asthma 101 during its next monthly meeting. Our faculty and staff will talk to you individually and as a group throughout the year, to highlight asthma management issues as needed.

Thank you for your support of our asthma education program throughout the school district. Please contact us if you have any specific questions.

Sincerely,

<sup>1</sup> Akinbami LJ, Scheendorf, KC. Trends in childhood asthma: prevalence, health care utilization, and mortality. *Pediatrics*, 2002; 110(2):315-322.





## American Lung Association Tip Sheet: Sample Learner Outcomes

When selecting asthma education programs, pay close attention to goals and learner outcomes. Review the program's critical skills and concepts per age group. Ideally, you would want to select programs based on the audience's needs, as well as the availability of proven interventions.

The National Asthma Education & Prevention Program details specific learner outcomes for its elementary school curricula. You may want to compare other programs' content against this type of learner outcomes, which may help your coalition assess which program(s) to use.

### Learner Outcomes, Grades K-3

Learner outcomes define the educational goals of your program. NAEPP's Asthma Awareness Curriculum for the Elementary Classroom,<sup>1</sup> for example, defines the following objectives, or learner outcomes, for Grades K-3:

By the end of Lesson One, students will be able to:

1. Describe asthma as something that makes breathing hard for children with asthma
2. Explain that asthma can be controlled so that children can live active lives
3. Describe asthma as something that cannot be passed from one person to another like a cold
4. Identify two things that can make asthma worse, such as cigarette smoke, furry or feathered pets, colds, playing hard

By the end of Lesson Two, students will be able to:

1. State that people with asthma can stay healthy most of the time if they do these things: stay away from things such as cigarette smoke or furry pets that make their asthma worse, go to the doctor, and take medicine
2. Identify two things classmates can do to help a person who has asthma such as including him or her in activities, not teasing him/her, staying calm in an emergency, getting help if needed, and helping the student stay away from things that make his or her asthma worse

### Learner Outcomes, Grades 4-6

Learner outcomes define the educational goals of your program. NAEPP's Asthma Awareness Curriculum for the Elementary Classroom,<sup>2</sup> for example, defines the following objectives, or learner outcomes, for Grades 4-6:

By the end of Lesson One, students will be able to:

1. Define asthma as a condition that causes difficulty with breathing
2. Explain that asthma can be controlled to allow children to be active and healthy
3. Describe asthma as a condition that affects the airways in the lungs
4. Explain that asthma cannot be caught like a cold or infection
5. Describe the airways in the lungs as the part of the respiratory system affected by asthma
6. Describe four signs and symptoms of an asthma episode such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath, and chest tightness or chest pain

## American Lung Association Tip Sheet: Sample Learner Outcomes (cont.)

7. List four things that can make asthma worse such as exercise, cigarette or other tobacco smoke, pollens, animals, colds, flu, and cold air

By the end of Lesson Two, students will be able to:

1. State that asthma can be controlled when someone with asthma avoids the things that can make his/her asthma worse
2. Describe children with asthma as active, healthy people who can run, play, and go to school
3. Identify the things classmates can do to help a child who has asthma such as not tease, include the child with asthma in activities, remind the child to take his/her medicine, stay calm in case of an emergency, get help if needed
4. State that children who think they or a friend might have asthma can seek help from the people they live with, the school nurse, a doctor or teacher

<sup>1</sup> *Asthma Awareness for the Elementary Classroom*. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute/National Asthma Education and Prevention Program. NIH Publication No. 93-2894. September 1993. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/proflung/asthma/school/k3obj.htm>. Accessed September 19, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> *Asthma Awareness for the Elementary Classroom*. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute/National Asthma Education and Prevention Program. NIH Publication No. 93-2894. September 1993. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/proflung/asthma/school/47k3obj.htm>. Accessed September 19, 2002.