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GoKids Boston Youth Fitness, Training, and Research Center

GoKids Boston, University of Massachusetts Boston

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GoKids Boston embodies innovation and leadership in youth health through life-changing programs, groundbreaking research, exceptional training opportunities, and dedication to the community with a focus on eliminating health disparities.

**GoKids Boston Youth Fitness, Training, and Research Center**

**Mission**

GoKids Boston was founded at UMass Boston in 2008 in collaboration with Children’s Hospital Boston to advance the science relating exercise to youth health and wellness and to become a local leader in combating the obesity epidemic. Since opening its doors, GoKids has empowered over 1,600 youth to take control of their health.

**GOALS:**

1. Reduce the impact of obesity on children, families, and communities through research partnerships
2. Improve children’s lives through fitness
3. Serve more children and youth

**APPROACH:**

GoKids provides low income, multi-ethnic youth with engaging physical activity and nutrition education programs aimed at preventing and treating obesity and chronic disease in our safe and supportive environment.

GoKids embraces UMass Boston’s urban mission and focuses on reducing health disparities in underserved families. GoKids targets Boston youth at high risk for obesity and chronic disease. We have successfully integrated our programming, with annual statistics indicating that about 85% of participants identified as black or African American, 10% of Asian, 3% are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

**CURRENT COMMUNITY PARTNERS:**

Schools:
- Dorchester Academy
- East Boston Community School
- Fairacre Academy
- Quincy Public Schools
-- Charlestown High School

Community Health Centers and Hospitals:
- Bowdoin Street Community Health Center
- Dimock Community Health Center
- Southeast Martin Luther King Center
- Upham’s Corner Health Center
- Whittier Street Health Center
- Martha Eliot Health Center
- Children’s Hospital Boston
- Boston Medical Center
- Codman Square Health Center
- National Health Center

Community Organizations:
UMass Cooperative Extension SNAP-Ed
Harbor Point Community Action Committee

**SUMMARY:**

GoKids prides itself on being a strong training resource for UMass Boston students and Boston Public School students and empowers young adults to be health ambassadors. Currently, GoKids offers a Fit2Lead Program which trains Exercise Health Sciences (EHS) students at the GoKids Center and places students in exciting service-learning opportunities at Boston Public Schools.

**GOALS:**

1. Enlist youth and professionals as health ambassadors
2. Provide insight that UMass Boston and EHS students can share with their community on leading healthy lives.
3. Build leaders that are trained and educated on exercise facilitation and healthy eating.
4. Provide UMass Boston and EPS students with mentoring opportunities and service-learning opportunities that greatly impact their community.

**APPROACH:**

Fit2Lead

GoKids offers a Fit2Lead Program which empowers high school and middle school students to become mentors in their schools and teams in their summer program. Fit2Lead participants are trained every spring on anatomy, cardiovascular health, strength training, and nutrition.

GoKids also welcomes classes like EHS students to help mentor and train GoKids participants. Fit2Lead members become advocates of healthy living.

Health Ambassadors Program (HAP)

The health Ambassadors Program is built on partnerships between GoKids, Exercise Health Sciences faculty and students, and Boston Public Schools.

EHS students are trained by GoKids staff and within their PeerLeap: Exercise class on incorporating anatomy, cardiovascular health, and strength training into physical education sessions and then observe and lead actual physical education classes at local Boston Public Schools. HAP provides EHS students with exciting service learning projects and allows GoKids to reach more youth.

**APPROACH:**

GoKids offered the Fit2Lead Program to Boston youth and created the Health Ambassadors Program to engage high school and middle school students in their summer program. GoKids prides itself on being a strong training resource for UMass Boston students and EHS students can share with their community on leading healthy lives.

**CURRENT SCHOOL PARTNERS:**

EHS students are required to screen children for obesity, there are mandated physical education standards, and in 2013-2014 GoKids has made significant gains with primary care providers and families.

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Provide UMass Boston and EPS students with mentoring opportunities and service-learning opportunities that greatly impact their community.

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