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Be Me: A Health Education and Wellness Partnership between a University and Intermediate School

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A recent report by the Association of Academic Health Centers predicts difficulties recruiting and retaining an adequate health care workforce. As the world population ages and current practitioners retire from health care positions, shortages will only worsen while the demand for a well trained, highly qualified workforce will increase.

This project provides career education to 6th grade students in the area of health sciences. The project provides opportunities for ongoing interaction between current university students, practitioners and middle school students. Research indicates that students begin to make career plans and structure their education toward the fulfillment of those plans beginning in middle school.

Few of the middle school students engaged in this project come from homes in which parents have attended college. Often the parents do not encourage their child to pursue college because of perceived cost and numerous other barriers. Individuals within the community have reported lowered expectations of students who attend this school because of the geographic location. As a result, many of these students are never exposed to the possibilities of careers that require a college education, especially in the health sciences. Because of their high poverty level, many also suffer from poor access to health care and health information.

Expose occupational therapy practitioners and educators to a program developed to educate middle school students are career possibilities in the health professions

Discuss the benefits of this education & wellness program on addressing health & educational disparities found in marginalized populations.

The project from start to current status will be described. Benefits gleaned by all participants and changes to be made will be presented. Ongoing project development will be presented.

Increased knowledge of health careers, potential for college attendance and improved educational performance will be reviewed. This innovative project addressed health and educational disparities present in one community and could be applied to communities throughout the world to increase knowledge of the profession of occupational therapy and recruit future practitioners.

This project contributes to the body of evidence regarding knowledge of the profession of occupational therapy and innovative potential avenues for recruiting students in addition to addressing health disparities.