

SASSY STUDENTS FIGHT OBESITY

Patty Tanner's sixth grade students attend Morningside Elementary School in Salt Lake City. They brainstormed important issues and decided to select one that affects many young people today. Their problem was childhood obesity! Students researched the issue and found that more than 30 percent of school-aged children are considered overweight. They learned that there are many health problems that come with obesity. Diseases caused by obesity include heart disease, stroke, cancer, and type-2 diabetes. Dental cavities can also result from poor eating habits. Students researched the issue of obesity and decided to do something about it.

The class decided to focus on reducing childhood obesity. This was the problem that they wished to solve: "Since childhood obesity has grown from 4 percent in 1960 to 15 percent today, and adolescents today have a one in three chance of developing diabetes, how might we educate the public about making healthy choices in spite of all the non-nutritional foods that surround us in our community?"

The students brainstormed possible solutions to this problem and then decided to:

- **Take a survey of vending machines in schools to identify healthy food.**
- **Inform the school board of healthy vending machine food.**
- **Become experts on the subject through research.**
- **Have students address adult groups to inform them about the problem.**
- **Learn methods of effectively advocating the cause to the public.**

Students decided that they needed to know more about the subject of obesity. They began reading and inviting speakers to the class. The speakers told them about a bill in the House of Representatives that would limit the type of foods that may be sold to elementary students from a school vending machine. The problem-solving team decided to make vending machines the focus of their plan and to help promote the bill. Other student activities included the following:

- **Students studied food labels and invited guest speakers to class.**
- **Students prepared and presented a speech to the Health and Human Services Committee at the state capitol and emailed legislators on the importance of supporting House Bill 47.**
- **Students had a booth in the state capitol health fair sponsored by "Action for Healthy Kids."**

Students called their team "Students Against Sugar in Schools for Youth" (SASSY). Many gave interviews for television, radio, and newspapers. Students lobbied for House Bill 47 and were disappointed when the bill was not approved. Did that mean that they stopped their efforts? No, students submitted an application to become part of a Vending Pilot Program. They will keep an eye on the legislature to see if a new bill will be submitted for the next session.

