Success Story.

Mileage Clubs®: Promoting Physical Activity in Maine Elementary Schools

SUMMARY

Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators collaborate with community partners to implement **policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change initiatives** that build healthy communities. **Mileage Club® is a national running club for elementary students** that can be implemented by school staff, parents, or community partners as a before- or after-school program or as part of the school day. **This school-based systems change increases physical activity for youth while providing fun activities and milestone incentives.**

Strong partner support and a school staff champion allowed for successful SNAP-Ed implementation of the **Mileage Club® in one City of Bangor elementary school in 2024. A community-based Nutrition Educator** partnered with **Abraham Lincoln Elementary School** to implement a **Mileage Club®, providing approximately 188 students at the school with movement and physical activity** during the school day.

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY CONTEXT



Increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behavior improves well-being. In Maine, 43% of youth report that they exercise, dance, or play sports for at least 60 minutes 5 days a week. Evidence shows that school based physical activity clubs, such as **Mileage Club®, increase physical activity opportunities for elementary school students without reducing students' participation in physical education classes as part of the regular school day.**[1]

COLLABORATIVE ACTION

The SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator provides direct nutrition education programming at the City of Bangor elementary schools, and she built upon her existing relationships with teachers, staff, and parents to implement the Mileage Club®.

In Maine, the educator applied an **accessibility lens to her physical activity access work**. Mileage Clubs can accommodate both runners and walkers, and the Nutrition Educator and the school's Physical Education teacher designed the club in a way that was inclusive and motivating to all students, regardless of their fitness level. The 2024

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Maine SNAP-Ed is a **USDA-funded program** that offers nutrition and cooking classes and supports projects that address food and physical activity needs in the community. Trained Nutrition Educators reach Mainers in all 16 counties. Nutrition Educators are integrated into the communities they serve and work where Mainers eat, live, learn, play, shop, and work.

For more Success Stories from Maine SNAP-Ed or to get in touch with your local Nutrition Educator, please visit **mainesnap-ed.org**.

Data sources are available upon request by emailing **mainesnap-ed@une.edu**.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Maine SNAP-Ed is funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which is administered by the Office for Family Independence (OFI) at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and implemented statewide by the University of New England (UNE) through contracts with local community organizations. Maine SNAP-Ed educates families experiencing low income on low-cost healthy eating and active lifestyles. Contact mainesnap-ed@une.edu or 207-221-4560 for more information.

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Mileage Club® was part of the school day and scheduled before a free break for students, allowing students to either rest after the club or continue running, providing the opportunity for students to opt in or out, making the program accessible to all fitness and interest levels.

BUILDING ON STRENGTHS

In 2024, at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, **188 students participated** in the pilot Mileage Club®. In-person Maine SNAP-Ed **nutrition education curricula reached all 188** (100%) of those youth, increasing the program's impact through multi-level programming.

Community partners are ready to help ensure the success long term, with **sustainability efforts in process or partially adopted for the Mileage Clubs®**, including support from the community partners and development of a monitoring system.



In 2025, the Mileage Club® **project expanded to a second City of Bangor public school – Vine Street Elementary School – as an afterschool program**, reaching an even greater number of elementary students through the multi-level programming of participating in the Mileage Club® and in-school Maine SNAP-Ed nutrition education. Vine Street School is a recipient of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Afterschool Snack Service, a federally-assisted snack service that assists schools in serving snacks to children after the regular school day, allowing these students to participate in afterschool programming.

A survey was distributed to parents of students participating in the clubs at both schools, with parents noting that their child enjoyed the extra time to run around during the school day and were motivated by the incentives. Some respondents noted that due to their child participating in the Mileage Club®, **their child encouraged or prompted more family walks and movement time.**

CONCLUSION

Throughout Maine, SNAP-Ed is working to support community efforts to increase healthy living through accessible physical activity opportunities. Community-driven PSE change initiatives such as Maine SNAP-Ed's Mileage Club® collaborations with elementary schools aim to increase access to physical activity opportunities, specifically for youth before, during, and after the school day.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Successful implementation of Mileage Clubs in elementary schools is dependent on collaboration with and support from school staff and administrators. The Physical Education teacher at Abraham Lincoln acted as the champion for this program in the school, working collaboratively with the SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator. In recognition of his leadership, he received a Public Health Champion Award. Research has consistently shown that successful social change movements need leaders who "champion" the cause over a long period as it develops and grows over time.[2]

WHAT PARENTS SAY

"Love that my child enjoyed the Mileage Club and we were happy to see him become more physically fit because of it."

"It really helped her feel healthier and encouraged her to try more physical things and make healthier choices."

"[My child] is playing frisbee because of the Mileage Club"

1. Stylianou, M., van der Mars, H., Kulinna, P. H., Adams, M. A., Mahar, M., & Amazeen, E. (2016). Before-School Running/Walking Club and Student Physical Activity Levels: An Efficacy Study. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 87(4), 342–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2016.1214665

2. ST6: Champions. (n.d.). SNAP Education Connection. https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/framework/components/st6