

## 1. Purpose:

a.) **Goal:** **Healthy Youth: Strong and Connected (HYSC)** is a partnership of Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Fire Department, Project Ujima-Children's Service Society of Wisconsin, and Medical College of Wisconsin. By improving interpersonal communication, promoting conflict resolution and the understanding the roots of violence, **Healthy Youth: Strong and Connected** will decrease intentional injuries and promote mental health.

**Scope of the Problem:** **Youth violence is a public health epidemic** that adversely affects the physical and emotional well-being of the victims. Our youth are at risk for violent, intentional injuries and death as well as psychosomatic problems such as headaches, abdominal pain, post-traumatic stress, suicidal ideation and school avoidance caused by fighting and verbal threats from their peers. (Fekkes, 2004; Swearer, 2001) Other clinical health issues include bed-wetting, obesity, sleep difficulties, anxiety, depression, feelings of insecurity, loneliness, and other somatic symptoms. (Salmon, 1998; Janssen, 2004) Tragic events such as those at Columbine suggest that victims of fighting and threats at school are also at greater risk for suicidal and other aggressive behaviors resulting in injury or death. (Kim, 2005) According to the National Crime Victimization Survey released in August 2006, another youth perpetrated four out of five juvenile victimizations. (BJS, 2007)

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is the 29<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the nation and the largest school district in Wisconsin serving nearly 91,000 students. Milwaukee students report high rates of risky behavior stemming from fighting and poor communication. According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey specific to MPS *middle school* students, 76% of youth reported being in a physical fight in the past 12 months with 47% being in a fight on school property. Seventeen percent reported that they had been threatened with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property in the past 12 months. Nine percent of students reported that they did not attend school on one or more of the past 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or to and from school. Thirty-two percent of Milwaukee students reported feeling suicidal, with 14% of them having a suicidal plan and 11% having attempted suicide. (CDC, 2006) Milwaukee students reported risks that are 1.5 to 2 times higher than those reported by Wisconsin students overall on the 2005 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey. According to the 2006 MPS District Incidents and Actions report there were 80,794 suspensions at MPS of which 76.6% were for classroom disruptions. The MPS elementary student suspension rate has risen from 3.1% in 1998-99 to 14.7% in 2006-07. 421 MPS staff reported they had been physically assaulted at school in 2006-07, with 69 assaults occurring in elementary or middle schools.

Violence affects the schools and the community. According to the FBI's Annual Uniform Crime Report for 2006, violent crime in Milwaukee increased 27.7% from 2005, one of the highest increases nationally. Milwaukee's homicide rate rose from 87 in 2004 to 122 in 2005. Most Milwaukee youth victims of violence live in ZIP Codes of the targeted schools for this project. (Melzer-Lange, 2007)

**Compelling evidence: School-based youth violence prevention initiatives are effective in decreasing violence and improving mental health.** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Task Force on Community Preventative Services has reported that universal school-based programs to prevent violent and aggressive behavior are effective (CDC, 2007) after carefully reviewing published reports and meta-analyses. One intervention program designed for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, *Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways* (RIPP), (Farrell, et al. 2001) has been shown to improve knowledge of conflict resolution and participants had fewer disciplinary violations for violent offenses and in-school suspensions at post-test compared with the control group. RIPP participants also reported more frequent use of peer mediation and reductions in fight-related injuries at post-test that approached significant at 6-month and 12-month follow-up. The program's impact on violent behavior was more evident among those with high pretest levels of problem behavior.

**The overall goal of Healthy Youth: Strong and Connected (HYSC) is to support healthy communication and relationships among youth attending MPS in order to prevent intentional injury and death and improve health indicators for mental health.**

## ***b) Health Improvement Model***

**Address major areas of health risks:** HYSC will address intentional injuries, homicides, suicides, and mental health and social and economic factors that influence health among youth. In a study examining the effects of violence exposure on urban youth, younger adolescents suffered internalizing symptoms immediately and then externalizing behaviors two years later, when exposed to violence. (Schwab-Stone, 1999) Fighting among youth may lead to serious mental health disturbances such as intrusive thoughts, sleeplessness, low self-esteem, learning difficulties, school avoidance and substance abuse. The impact of violence on the social and economic factors that influence health is significant, particularly in struggling communities. In Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) students come from neighborhoods with higher numbers of youth victims of violence, that have 63% higher rates of poverty, 47% lower rates of head of household completion of high school, and 34% more grandparent head of households. (Thatcher, 2004)

**Focus on specific populations:** HYSC will serve the predominantly poor, MPS African-American and Hispanic students and their families in schools struggling with concerns about safety and academic achievement. Current MPS demographics reflect the following diversity: 57.8% of students are African American, 21% Hispanic; 12.8% White; 4.4% Asian; 0.8% other non-White. Over 78% of the students are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, an indicator of the number of children living in poverty.

**Emphasize prevention of causes of death and disability:** HYSC seeks to prevent intentional deaths, both interpersonal and self-inflicted, mental sequelae, such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress, and interpersonal, intentional injuries among youth.

**Transform health improvement efforts through capacity-building and systemic programs:** This innovative project promotes systemic change in violence prevention activities by raising teacher and principal awareness of a violence prevention strategy. A secondary, capacity building asset of this program is the exposure of MPS students to future career role models in the prehospital health care system: first-responder firefighters and paramedics. By exposing medical students, during a dedicated externship, to HYSC, we also build capacity in public health and violence prevention among medical students.

## 2. Plan

a.) Program Overview: Firefighters and paramedics are often the first responders to young victims of intentional injury such as shootings, stabbings and assaults. They see firsthand the destruction caused by mismanaged anger. Positive outcomes resulting from the “Survive Alive House”, a very successful fire safety program taught by MFD firefighters and paramedics to MPS students aged 7-12, prompted firefighters’ to initiate talks with stakeholders in the community to expand their efforts into intentional injury prevention. In 2006, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Injury, Violence and Poisoning Prevention, funded a planning project through the Wisconsin AAP Chapter, for “Staying Alive”.

“Staying Alive” is a multidisciplinary asset-building program that provides children with the resources they need to understand how to deal with their anger so that it does not accelerate into fighting. The curriculum was developed in collaboration among firefighters from the Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD), teachers and Life Skills trainers from Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) district, community liaisons from Project Ujima, Project Ujima and MPS youth, and faculty from the Medical College of Wisconsin Department of Pediatrics. The curriculum provides youth with an interactive small-group, psychosocial learning experience in which positive communication skills, understanding of anger and violence, attitudes of conflict and conflict resolution, relaxation techniques and the physiology of anger are covered. Portions of “Staying Alive” curriculum are modeled after the *Resolving Conflicts and Coping with Anger* modules of the evidence-based curriculum, *Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP)* (Farrell, et al. 2001). Violence researchers found in a controlled study among 6<sup>th</sup> grade, African American students that RIPP participants had fewer disciplinary actions for violent offenses and lower rates of violent injuries than non-participants, which persisted 12 months following the intervention.

“Staying Alive” was piloted in six 6<sup>th</sup> grade MPS classrooms during 2006 and 2007. Results from the pilot and subsequent interviews with teachers, principals and firefighters were used to refine the curriculum to better meet the needs of students and teachers. The pilot program used a pre- and post-survey instrument adapted from the *Student Violence Prevention Curriculum* (Prothrow-Stith, 1987) along with the curriculum adapted from RIPP. Initial sampling of pre-post data from the pilot of “Staying Alive” indicates a positive increase in knowledge and understanding. Examples include:

Measure	Pre-test	Post-test
Students said they would always walk away until they calmed down from a potentially violent situation	7.4%	25.9%
Students indicated they could always avoid a fight	3.7%	25%
Students indicated they could always calmly explain what they wanted from the other person	0%	22%
Students indicated they could always count to ten in order to calm down	14.8%	22.2%

In addition, for the past year, HYSC team members participated in the CDC-sponsored violence prevention training program, PREVENT Institute in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Team members interviewed Milwaukee Public School teachers and principals as well as MFD to identify desirable attributes and potential barriers in implementing “Staying Alive”. They found:

#### Teachers

- Noted that violence in their schools and communities was increasing but were unsure as to how to best address the topic with their students;
- Were supportive of “Staying Alive” and recommended 6<sup>th</sup> grade students because they are experiencing changes such as getting lockers and going to multiple classrooms;
- Recommended that the program expose students to activities that they normally would not have, be interactive, include multiple sessions and be flexible to the needs of individual schools;
- Believed “Staying Alive” would prompt more teachers to become involved in violence prevention in their classrooms;
- Suggested appropriate times during the year to carry out the program;
- Recommended that the program be developed with teachers’ time constraints in mind.

#### Principals

- Noted concerns about the number and severity of violent acts increasing in MPS, the new phenomenon of students phoning relatives to come to school to help with a fight, and increasing exposure to violence outside of school;
- Recommended the involvement of teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists and technology teachers;
- Predicted teachers would be supportive of the program;
- Suggested the program address violence as a ‘spectator sport’;
- Requested that “Staying Alive” be for a specific, well-defined number of weeks, be flexible so that it can be implemented around competing academic demands and calendars, be ‘real’ in the eyes of the students, and be delivered in a culturally sensitive way by role models;
- Identified firefighters as a good choice for facilitators because the students consider them positively.

#### Firefighters

- Identified interactive sessions with students, discussions about feelings and anger, and the audience response system as positive attributes of “Staying Alive”;
- Believe community resources should be available to the “Staying Alive” team for those students who need additional assistance with their exposures to violence.

Adjustments were made to the implementation proposal to accommodate the suggestions provided by these stakeholders and the findings of the pre-/post-tests. “Staying Alive” curriculum will be taught over a three week period to approximately 30 students per classroom. Parents will receive information about the sessions prior to their provision. Discussions include information on violence and positive ways to prevent violence. Discussion about the presentation, communication skills, scenarios, role play and problem solving will then occur. Students provide their opinions and share their knowledge concerning both good communication skills and how to avoid fighting through discussion and an audience response system. Classroom consensus on good communication skills and avoidance of fighting is reached at the end of the session through group discussion. Following the program, students’ parents will receive written violence prevention information from the *AAP Connected Kids* Program to encourage family discussion. (Sege, 2005)

**Summary of “Staying Alive” Curriculum:**

Session	Facilitators	Length	Topic	Activities
1	Teacher	30 minutes	Introduction to “Staying Alive”	Didactic, introductory video
2	Firefighters Teacher School counselors	2 hours	Roots of Violence Student opinions of violence	Student response via audience response system; small group discussions
3	Teacher, Project Ujima liaison	1 hour	Exploring Feelings	Didactic, student diary exploration, Complete Anger Trigger Assessment Practice anger management strategies
4	Firefighters Teacher School counselors	2 hours	Communicating how you feel. How does your body react?	Small group discussions, audience response system-student input, hands-on pulse checks during anger triggers
5	Teacher	1 hour	Anger, how do you deal with it?	Role play anger management strategies in small groups Staying calm strategies and plans

MPS has assigned Patricia Kirby, a Senior Teacher, to act as the HYSC Teacher Liaison. Ms. Kirby will promote “Staying Alive” through conversations with principals and teachers. MPS has identified 50 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in 12 schools that would benefit from “Staying Alive” and will be required to utilize this program: 35<sup>th</sup> Street School, Auer Avenue, Hi-Mount Boulevard School, Holmes, Hopkins Street School Metcalfe, Mitchell, Story, Urban Waldorf, and Victory Italian Immersion School, Allen-Field and Brown Street School. These schools serve a high percentage of low income students including a significant number who are academically non-proficient in core content areas based upon locally identified academic achievement standards. They are located in areas of the city that have high concentrations of low-income families, high levels of drug use, teen pregnancy, and violent crimes.

A HYSC Steering Committee, made up of representatives from each partner, teachers, and parents, will oversee the program activities, advise the evaluators, and review evaluators’ reports. The group will invite student representatives from sixth grade classrooms on an ad hoc basis.

**Objective 1: By September 2010, train 30 MFD firefighters to lead the “Staying Alive” curriculum to MPS 6<sup>th</sup> graders.**

**Activities:** A cohort of 10 firefighters will be trained each year by experienced firefighters, the MPS Safe Schools, Healthy Students Initiative Coordinator, and the Project Ujima Liaison to lead the “Staying Alive” curriculum. They will attend 16 hours of training over two days in August and receive a written training manual describing program goals, objectives, activities and timelines. Pre and post-tests will be administered to determine knowledge and attitudes related to violence prevention. Firefighters will also be asked to provide feedback on the training and manual that will be used to continually modify and improve both the training and manual.

**Objective 2: By January 2011, train 150 teachers to co-teach the “Staying Alive” curriculum with the Project Ujima Liaison and MFD firefighters.**

**Activities:** At the start of each semester, experienced firefighters and the Project Ujima Liaison will provide a one-hour curriculum training to 50 teachers annually. In addition, Project Ujima will provide violence prevention mentorship to these teachers in the classroom during their co-taught lesson. Teachers will receive a written manual describing the goals, objectives, activities and timelines for “Staying Alive”. Teachers will complete an evaluation of the training session and manual. These evaluations will be used to continually modify and improve both the training and the manual.

**Objective 3: By June 30, 2011, provide the “Staying Alive” curriculum to 4,500 targeted 6<sup>th</sup> grade MPS students.**

**Activities:** 1,500 sixth grade students (50 classrooms) will receive the five-session module in their individual classrooms. Twelve middle school and K-8th grade schools, containing approximately 50 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes, have been selected by MPS teachers and principals to receive the “Staying Alive” Curriculum, based on the schools’ risk for violence and fighting, and low academic scores. Utilizing a continuous quality improvement strategy, we will update the curriculum during the course of this project. Feedback from students, families, teachers, firefighters, principals, Project Ujima Liaison and other stakeholders will shape these curriculum updates.

**Objective 4: By June 2011, provide violence prevention education materials and resources to parents of targeted 6<sup>th</sup> grade MPS students.**

**Activities:** Parents of 6<sup>th</sup> grade MPS students participating in “Staying Alive” will receive information about the program prior to its implementation at each school as part of the school orientation. Following the program, Students’ parents will receive written violence prevention information from the *AAP Connected Kids* program to encourage family discussion about topics covered in the “Staying Alive” curriculum. Materials include an outline of “Staying Alive”, and evidence-based *AAP Connected Kids* handouts entitled “Bullying” and “Staying Cool When Things Heat Up”. The medical student extern will research other family-friendly violence prevention resources. Parents will receive these resources through their school’s orientation, parent-teacher conferences and weekly home folders.

**b.) Expected changes as a result of implementing HYSC** In the targeted schools we expect the following changes: decreased suspensions for fighting, decreased referrals to the school nurse for violent injuries, improved parent, teacher and student scores on the safety and environment subscales of the annual *MPS School Climate Survey*, increased knowledge of the causes of violence on the 6<sup>th</sup> graders’ audience response after the program as compared to baseline, decreased absenteeism for 6<sup>th</sup> graders, decreased suicidal concerns on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and increased referral to social and behavioral resources for troubled 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. We also expect to see improvement in the “Attitude Toward Interpersonal Peer Violence” and “Self-Concept-Individual Protective Factors Index” surveys. Lastly, we anticipate that MPS teachers will increase their involvement in violence prevention in their classrooms after experience with “Staying Alive”.

**c.) Relationship with Existing Programs** MPS received funds in 2007 from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) for their proposal *Milwaukee Public Schools Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative* to create safe, respectful and drug free schools and to promote pro-social skills and healthy childhood development. “Staying Alive” was selected as an evidence-based, best practices or promising program for implementation in the *Safe Schools/Healthy Students* initiative. As a result, a portion of the funds awarded from the DOE will be used to support successful implementation of “Staying Alive” as noted in the budget and budget narrative.

Healthy Youth: Strong and Connected also links with three other initiatives that MPS is providing: “Characteristics of a High Performing Urban Classroom” in which active engagement of student learners is developed, the “Comprehensive School Health Program” in which violence prevention and safety are goals, and “Restorative Justice in MPS”, in which students facilitate support between victims and classroom offenders. It also complements violence prevention efforts through the YMCA, the Community Learning Centers, the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission, and the Gang Reduction Project that target MPS students. HYSC expands linkages between the victim-support program of Project Ujima and students in MPS who may have been victimized since the Project Ujima Liaison will be in the school building. In addition, a faith-based initiative in conjunction with Project Ujima seeks to promote healthy mentorship of African-American and Hispanic youth in Milwaukee.

**d.) Involvement of the Affected Community** The existing program is already a result of the feedback provided by students, teachers and principals during the pilot “Staying Alive” project. Students, parents, teachers and school principals will be key decision makers in expanding “Staying Alive” in MPS schools. They will provide formative feedback for updating “Staying Alive” curriculum. Students, parents, teachers and school principals will also deliberate on the methods of evaluation in conjunction with the project evaluator. In addition, they will be key in promoting the sustainability of the project. Project Ujima is a non-

profit, community based advocacy agency with a long history of providing a voice to youth who are victims of interpersonal violence and youth who are receiving violence prevention information.

Project Timeline

Activity	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline In Months					
		1-6	7-12	13-18	19-24	25-30	31-36
Develop Steering Committee	Dr. Melzer, MFD Coordinator, & MPS Representative	X					
Hold monthly Steering Committee meetings	Dr. Melzer	X	X	X	X	X	X
Train & evaluate firefighters	Experienced firefighters; Project Ujima Liaison, MPS Safe Schools Coordinator	X		X		X	
Train & evaluate teachers	Experienced firefighters; Project Ujima Liaison	X		X		X	
Incorporate firefighter/teacher feedback into trainings and curricula	Dr. Melzer	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop hard-copy educational materials and resources for parents	Medical Student Extern	X					
Disseminate hard-copy educational materials & resources to parents	Teachers, principals, and MPS web-master	X	X	X	X	X	X
Schedule “Staying Alive” at targeted MPS 6 <sup>th</sup> grade classes	MFD Coordinator	X	X	X	X	X	X
Conduct “Staying Alive” at targeted MPH 6 <sup>th</sup> grade classes; Collect audience response data pre- and post- training	Firefighters, teachers, Project Ujima Liaison	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enter data into the HYSC database.	Medical Student Extern; Research Assistant	X	X	X	X	X	X
Analyze MPS “School Climate Survey”	Project Evaluator		X		X		X
Administer and analyze “Attitude Toward Interpersonal Peer Violence” and “Self-Concept-Individual Protective Factors Index” surveys; Achenback Youth Self-Report	Project Evaluator; Medical Student Extern		X	X	X	X	X
Track suspensions and referrals to school nurse for violent injuries	Project Evaluator		X		X		X
Compile annual reports and disseminate to stakeholders	Dr. Melzer, MFD and Steering Committee		X		X		X

**3. Partnership**

All partners will work together through regularly scheduled meetings and the HYSC Steering Committee to promote integration of violence prevention activities and “Staying Alive”. Commitment from the leadership of all partners will advance the project systemically. MPS, MFD, and Project Ujima will expand and manage “Staying Alive”. Dr. Marlene Melzer-Lange, a violence prevention specialist, Dr. Dawn Zahrt, a psychologist and the TBA Evaluator, will provide organizational, process, and outcomes expertise. Each partner has

contributed their expertise in designing this project, demonstrating their understanding of the environment for partnerships, commitment to partnership principles and the development of the partnership. Each partner is committed to the success of this project. Detailed roles and responsibilities are delineated below.

Each HYSC partner has a unique set of skills, expertise, interests, and background that contribute to a highly skilled and experienced partnership, and will lead to the success of this project.

**Children's Services Society of Wisconsin - Project Ujima:** Started in 1995, Project Ujima, a community project sponsored by Children's Hospital and Children's Services Society of Wisconsin, is committed to helping stop the cycle of violent crimes by providing violence prevention services and reducing the number of repeat victims of violence. Since violent injuries are associated with psychological trauma, poor school performance, criminal detention and repeat incidents of violence, Project Ujima establishes a network of the services that provide physical, psychological and social recovery from violence. Project Ujima combines hospital-based services, home-based services, youth development activities, and community education to foster youth violence prevention. Roles: The Project Ujima Liaison brings youth development skills training, community advocacy and family support to the project. The Project Ujima Liaison will be responsible for assisting in training the firefighters and teachers the "Staying Alive" curriculum and providing feedback on the "Staying Alive" sessions. He will co-teach with MPS teachers one lesson of "Staying Alive" per classroom. He will also serve as a member of the HYSC Steering Committee.

**Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD):** The MFD is the largest fire department in Wisconsin and provides fire services, fire safety curriculum, and injury prevention through many community outreach programs. All firefighters in Milwaukee are Emergency Medical Technicians. Milwaukee firefighters are required to be City of Milwaukee residents; many have children enrolled in Milwaukee Public Schools. Roles: MFD firefighters will co-facilitate the training of the trainers for the HYSC program, provide ongoing continuous improvement of the HYSC program, and provide two 2-hour lessons for the classroom students. MFD will assign MFD Lieutenant David Anderson, HYSC Program Coordinator, to manage all aspects of the "Staying Alive" curriculum, including scheduling of all firefighter and teacher trainings as well as all classroom sessions. Ten firefighters will receive the 16 hour "Staying Alive" curriculum training in each project year. Deputy Chief Michael L Jones will provide MFD administrative leadership for the project.

**Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS):** MPS is the largest school system in Wisconsin providing education to 6,500 sixth graders and nearly 91,000 students in all grades. 57.8% of students are African American, 21% Hispanic; 12.8% White; 4.4% Asian; 0.8% other non-White. Over 78% of the students are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, an indicator of the number of children living in poverty. There are 26 middle schools and 55 kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade schools in MPS. Roles: MPS will serve as the primary community partner. MPS has assigned Ms. Patricia Kirby as Liaison to the HYSC program. In her role as Liaison, Ms. Kirby will promote use of "Staying Alive" to principals and teachers in the 12 identified schools, answering questions, and facilitating scheduling of classrooms in conjunction with the MFD HYSC Program Coordinator. MPS will provide space for HYSC activities. Kristi Cole, director of MPS's Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, will coordinate those grant activities with those of the HYSC Director, Marlene Melzer-Lange; Ms. Cole will serve as the HYSC primary community contact.

**Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) Department of Pediatrics:** The Department of Pediatrics at the MCW specializes in educating and training physicians desiring to serve the health care needs of children, youth, and families. **Marlene Melzer-Lange, MD** is Medical Director for Project Ujima, Professor of Pediatrics at MCW, a pediatric emergency medicine specialist, and has expertise in the medical and psychosocial care of victimized youth, trauma victims and adolescent parents, particularly in urban populations. Dr. Melzer-Lange is active in community coalitions including the Wisconsin Violence Prevention Workgroup, the Gang Reduction Project, Injury Free Coalition for Kids-Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Coalition on Domestic Violence and the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Injury, Violence and Poisoning Prevention. As a graduate of MPS Custer High School, she is sensitive to the problems facing Milwaukee students. Dr. Melzer-Lange has published articles pertaining to youth violence and coalition building. Roles: Dr. Melzer-Lange will oversee all aspects of the project and coordinate efforts among partner organizations. She will share outcomes with all partners and with the HYSC Steering Committee. **Dawn Zahrt, PhD** Dr. Zahrt is Assistant Professor in Pediatrics, is a psychologist, and a

member of the Child Development Team at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. She provides developmental assessments of children with behavioral and learning disorders at the Child Development Clinic and has extensive experience in treating youth victims of interpersonal violence. Roles: Dr. Zahrt will lead the evaluation: collecting baseline information, devising the evaluation plan, keeping the partners updated on evaluation activities, and protecting the confidentiality of families, staff, and agencies. She will work closely with TBA evaluator. **TBA evaluator** will hold a PhD in social sciences and have extensive experience in community-based participatory research, especially relating to community violence and high risk youth as well as experience in youth violence prevention curriculum and evaluation. Role: TBA evaluator will work closely with Dr. Zahrt and the HYSC Steering Committee on both process and outcome evaluation of this project. **Medical Student Extern** will participate in a focused project of the HYSC team and gain experience in this HYSC community-based public health project.

Our HYSC partnership plan capitalizes on these strengths and skills: MPS’s staffs’ expertise in violence prevention, evaluation, assessment, and existing data related to the School Climate Survey, record of suspensions and expulsions; MFD’s experience in providing fire safety education and pilot violence prevention skills to students in conjunction with MPS classrooms; Project Ujima’s expertise with youth violence prevention and victim support; MCW’s Drs. Melzer-Lange’s and Zahrt’s organizational skills, violence prevention and mental health expertise and evaluation in the community setting; and an evaluator with expertise in community based participatory research. The HYSC Steering Committee, comprised of Lieutenant Anderson, Ms. Kirby, Ms. Cole, Drs. Melzer-Lange and Zahrt, and 3-4 parents of 6<sup>th</sup> graders from targeted classes will meet monthly throughout the school year to provide program oversight, monitor status of program activities, troubleshoot challenges as they arise, and ensure on-going communication between partners. This team will also be charged with developing a sustainability plan to ensure the survival of the HYSC project beyond the 3-year life of this grant. By joining together in this partnership, we join our unique skills through our dedication to collaborate to promote HYSC to achieve impact.

#### **Community-Academic Partnership Model.**

Environment for Partnerships: HYSC partner organizations have been working together for over four years as a workgroup to develop “Staying Alive”. MPS and MFD have worked together for over 12 years on the successful Survive Alive House fire safety project. Project Ujima and MCW’s Dr. Melzer-Lange have worked on a community and K-8th grade school violence prevention project over the past 5 years. Community-based and academic partners have established an effective working relationship by focusing on the priorities of the MPS community and emphasizing the strengths and expertise of each partner. All partners have had experience with evaluation and feedback and the need for efficient use of resources. Partnership Principles: Given the long-standing relationship between many of the partners, trust and respect are significant. Partners have developed a collaborative work relationship that encourages open communication, constructive feedback, and shared credit. We have carefully considered the objectives of this plan so that they are measurable and attainable. The partnership continues to address community-identified concerns, build on community strengths, and benefit all partners. Stages of Partnership Development: Over the past four years, partners have assessed student and family strengths and needs, developed “Staying Alive” program to address community concerns, and evaluated outcomes. In addition, the 2007 PREVENT team collaborated with all partners to study systematically the opportunities and barriers for this project from all stakeholders. The partnership has also expanded to include new organizations and to address expanding goals/objectives. Throughout the partnership process, organizations have made a commitment to work together for the long-term, and strive to sustain and enhance partner activities. We are committed to sustain the work of Healthy Youth: Strong and Connected.

#### **4. Evaluation**

The overarching goal of this initiative is to: decrease intentional injuries and promote mental health by improving interpersonal communication, promoting conflict resolution and understanding the roots of violence. Distinct outcomes will be measured for each of the objectives cited to reach this goal.



**Objective 1: By September 2010, train 30 MFD firefighters to lead the “Staying Alive” curriculum to MPS 6<sup>th</sup> graders.**

1. Provide 16 hours of training in the provision of the “Staying Alive” program to 10 firefighters in each of Years 1 - 3. Track participation through attendance records.
2. Increase firefighter understanding of peaceful communication strategies by 10% over baseline as measured by pre- post-test survey.
3. Hold “Staying Alive” feedback sessions with firefighter and Project Ujima trainers following 75% of these sessions.

**Objective 2: By December 2011, train 150 teachers to co-teach the “Staying Alive” curriculum with the Project Ujima Liaison and MFD firefighters.**

1. Provide one hour of training in the provision of the “Staying Alive” program to 50 teachers in each of Years 1 -3. Track participation through attendance records.
2. Conduct two focus groups of teachers in each of Years 1 – 3 to obtain teacher feedback about curriculum and suggestions for improvement.
3. Increase teacher understanding of peaceful communication strategies by 10% over baseline as measured by pre- post-test survey.

**Objective 3: By June 30, 2011, provide the “Staying Alive” curriculum to 4,500 targeted 6<sup>th</sup> grade MPS students.**

1. Implement “Staying Alive” for 1,500 students in each of Years 1 – 3. Track participation through attendance records.
2. Improve by 20% rates of suspension and expulsion for violence or fighting for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students participating in the “Staying Alive”, as compared to baseline and control classes. Track suspension and expulsion rates annually.
3. Improve by 10% rates of attendance in classrooms participating in the “Staying Alive” as compared to baseline and control classes. Track daily attendance.
4. Decrease by 10% the number of safety incidents reported for classrooms participating in “Staying Alive” as compared to baseline and control classes. Track safety incident reports.
5. Decrease by 10% the number of physical fights on school property that “Staying Alive” participants report as compared to baseline and control schools.
6. Survey 95% of intervention and control students utilizing three surveys pre- and post-intervention: a) “Attitude Toward Interpersonal Peer Violence” (violent attitudes), b) “Self-Concept-Individual Protective Factors Index” (youth resiliency) and c.) “Achenbach Youth Self-Report” (mental health). Improve by 10% student responses to surveys as compared to baseline and control groups.
7. Improve by 10% student responses to the MPS School Climate Survey on questions related to safety and school environment for 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms participating in “Staying Alive” compared to baseline.
8. Improve by 10% teacher responses to the MPS School Climate Survey on questions related to safety and school friendliness for those 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms participating in the “Staying Alive” compared to baseline.
9. Improve by 10% parent response to the MPS School Climate Survey on questions related to safety and school friendliness for those 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms participating in the “Staying Alive” as compared to baseline.
10. Decrease by 10% suicidal ideation on Youth Risk Behavior Survey over the three years for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in targeted schools as compared to baseline.

**Objective 4: By June 2011, provide violence prevention education materials and resources to parents of targeted 6<sup>th</sup> grade MPS students.**

1. Provide violence prevention materials to all parents/guardians of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students participating in “Staying Alive”.
2. Track number of packets sent home to parents.

Evaluation methods: We will utilize block intervention, where students receiving the “Staying Alive” intervention during the second semester of every year, will act as a control to the students who receive the same intervention during the first semester. Many of our process indicators will be measured using simple tracking tools, such as attendance and training records. Change in other indicators will be based on pre- and post-intervention measures. For instance, number of suspensions and expulsions will be recorded prior to students’ participation in “Staying Alive” and then again after completing the program to determine level and significance of change in these two indicators.

Process evaluation will focus on the extent to which HYSC is being implemented as outlined in the project plan. The evaluator will use the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) continuous quality improvement process to identify aspects of the project that are working effectively and those that need improvement, and develop strategies for improvement.

Outcome evaluation will be measured utilizing established, validated evaluation methods and instruments whenever available. We have used some of these instruments in a previous, school-based projects on violence prevention. Specific measurable outcomes sought will include lower rates of suspension and expulsion, school safety incidents, improved rates of school attendance, and improved ratings on the “Attitude Toward Interpersonal Peer Violence” survey, completed by students, the “Self-Concept—Individual Protective Factors Index” completed by students, (Dahlberg, 2005), the “Achenbach Youth Self-Report”, (Achenbach, 2001) completed by students and the “MPS School Climate Survey” completed by staff, students and parents annually at all MPS schools. (MPS, 2006)

**Involvement of affected community in evaluation.** Students, families and teachers will provide feedback through the MPS School Climate surveys before and after participation in “Staying Alive”. The HYSC Steering Committee, including students, families, principals and teachers will review evaluations of the program and the collaborative survey results and give input in the evaluation process as well as interpret the evaluation results.

**Connection to state health plan.** *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010* (Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, 2001) identifies intentional injuries and violence as one of eleven top health priorities for the state. This project will prevent future intentional injuries and violence, including assaults, homicides, and suicides in our African-American and Hispanic youth population, a population that is most at risk for these injuries and deaths. Mental health is also one of the top eleven priorities of the plan: this project targets mental health disorders through students’ understanding of healthy communication skills and pro-social development. In addition, exposure to youth violence increases a youth’s risk in other *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010* priority areas including alcohol, substance abuse and addiction; and, poor access to primary and preventive health services. HYSC will indirectly address these risk factors.

## **5. Sustainability**

In the training of 30 firefighters and 150 teachers, HYSC activities will continue. In future years, we plan to expand “Staying Alive” activities to students in seventh and eighth grade. We anticipate expanding trainers to include community volunteers, medical students and firefighter recruits. By holding the “Staying Alive” curriculum in schools over the three years of this grant, a culture of violence prevention and positive communication will prevail. MPS has made the commitment to implement the curriculum in all 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes throughout their district in the future. MPS, MFD, MCW and Project Ujima are forming a private non-profit foundation to support ongoing “Staying Alive” activities, similar to the one that exists for the successful Survive Alive House for fire safety. The partners will also work to sustain the project through writing grant applications to private and public funding sources, as well as through working with the Medical College Foundation and the Children’s Hospital Foundation.

## **6. Dissemination**

Six-month status reports will be provided to the HWPP program office as required and will also be shared with program stakeholders. HYSC activities will be disseminated through websites, newsletters and other publications of the partner organizations. Project results will be presented at state and national conferences, and be submitted to professional journals for publication. The “Staying Alive” training manual and program information will be made available to fire departments and school districts throughout Wisconsin via professional associations and newsletters.