



The Delta H.O.P.E. Tri-State Initiative

MISSISSIPPI ALLIANCE FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Purpose

To combat the epidemic of children who are overweight and at risk for becoming overweight in the Delta Region of Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas

Target Population

30,000 students enrolled in grades K–5 and 1,500 of their teachers in the Mississippi Delta Region

Goals

- Address childhood obesity and children who are overweight
- Implement a comprehensive, school-based nutrition and activity program
- Educate children about healthy lifestyles before they become overweight or obese

Years in Operation

2003 – 2007

Results

- During the 2003–2004 school year, 185 classrooms (approximately 3,559 students) from schools in the Delta region utilized the *OrganWise Guys/Take 10!* materials, detailed below.
- Student knowledge assessments indicated that, in all grade levels, at least 50 percent of the students achieved full mastery of objectives on nutrition, physical activity, and general health and safety.¹⁰

Funding

- The program is funded by a four-year, \$1.57 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.¹¹
- Additional evaluation funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative.

Key Partners

Mississippi State University Extension Service Family Nutrition Program; Mississippi Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs; Mississippi Department of Agriculture; University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service; Louisiana State University AgCenter Research and Extension; International Life Sciences Institute's Center for Health Promotion

What Works and Why

The curriculum includes activities meant to help younger children focus and to reinforce learning skills. Children are encouraged to sing chants as they move to help them count, recite information, and practice beginning sounds.

The program also offers physical activity in a structured setting in schools that may not have a physical education teacher. Unlike recess, which is mostly free play, the program provides children with a fun way to learn how to exercise effectively.

The *OrganWise Guys* are an effective way for communicating health issues and inciting behavior change in an age-appropriate manner.

Structure and Operations

The Delta H.O.P.E. Tri-State Initiative uses the *OrganWise Guys/Take 10!* program to facilitate its goals of reducing childhood obesity and improving awareness of physical health among children. The *OrganWise Guys/Take 10!* program consists of innovative educational materials such as books, activity books, videos, CD-ROMs and more.

- The *OrganWise Guys* comprise a cast of characters that bring the body to life and facilitate the communication of important health issues in a manner understood by children.
 - They include such characters as Hardy Heart, Luigi Liver, the Kidney Brothers, Peter Pancreas, Madame Muscle and Calci M. Bone.
 - The “characters” reside in a large doll called Little Organ Annie or Little Organ Andy.
 - The *OrganWise Guys* are meant to teach children about the four roles of healthy living: low fat, high fiber, lots of water, and exercise.
- To best communicate the intended health information to children, *OrganWise Guys* are linked to grade-level expectations (GLEs).¹²
- *Take 10!* is a classroom-based, grade-specific educational tool that encourages short bouts of physical activity integrated with academic lessons. Teachers receive curricular materials and training for specific grade levels. The material includes learning activities that incorporate movement to reinforce academic concepts. The activity cards provided in the curricular materials are linked to the content standards and benchmarks established by the Louisiana Department of Education. The curriculum is currently being matched to GLEs.¹³
- The BodyWalk component is a 40 foot by 40 foot walk-through of the human body with learning stations that teach children how to make healthy choices. BodyWalk also includes take-home activity books, parent information sheets, and a school health kit, valued at \$1,200.¹⁴

Barriers to Success

One main barrier to success is allocating management resources to optimize program and staff assignments. Other barriers include procuring resources and material (state versus private-sector funding), providing funds for staff rewards, and having enough staff to implement the program.¹⁵

For More Information

Additional information is available online:

<http://www.organwiseguys.com/pdf/CooperInst.award.pdf>