

## ASTHMA GAZETTE



### **Open Airways For Schools:**

#### **A School-based asthma management program for children with asthma**

The American Lung Association's Open Airways for Schools (OAS) is a school-based curriculum that educates and empowers children through a fun and interactive approach to asthma self-management. It teaches children with asthma ages 8-11 how to detect the warning signs of asthma, avoid their triggers and make decisions about their health. Children who complete the Open Airways for Schools program should be able to:

- Take steps to prevent asthma symptoms.
- Recognize the symptoms of asthma when they first occur, and carry out appropriate management steps.
- Discuss and solve problems related to asthma with parents, medical professionals, teachers, and friends.

We train volunteers from college nursing programs or other sources to conduct OAS in your schools. If you prefer, we can train school nurses or other school personnel to conduct OAS. We provide all the resources for it!

OAS is six sessions (weeks), 40 minutes per session.

Children who can improve management of their asthma will have fewer missed school days, and hence, more time in the classroom!

If you are interested in taking advantage of this valuable resource, call us today at 914-347-2094 x20.

### **Fall into Good Habits this School Year**

It's that time of year again. The temperature is cooling and the colors are changing to beautiful hues of orange gold and red. However, this can be a dangerous time for your students that have asthma. Please make sure to do the following to avoid potential problems:

- Asthmatic students should have an Asthma Action Plan in the school nurse office
- Medications should be in the nurse's office with permission from the child's parent/caregiver for the nurse to administer or for the child to carry
- Encourage parents to ask for double and triple prescriptions when they bring their child to the doctor. Insurance should cover for meds in school and at home
- Encourage students to get flu vaccinations
- Implement the Open Airways for Schools program!



Nancy Levine with North Main OAS students



### How Asthma-Friendly Is Your School?

Students with asthma need proper support at school to keep their asthma under control and be fully active. Use this checklist to find out how well your school serves students with asthma:

- Are the school buildings and grounds **free of tobacco smoke** at all times? Are all school buses, vans, and trucks free of tobacco smoke? Are all school events, like field trips and team games (both “at-home” and “away”), free from tobacco smoke?
- Does your school have a policy or rule that allows **students to carry and use their own asthma medicines**? If some students do not carry their asthma medicines, do they have quick and easy access to their medicines?
- Does your school have a **written emergency plan for teachers** and staff to follow to take care of a student who has an asthma attack? In an emergency, such as a fire, weather, or lockdown, or if a student forgets his/her medicine, does your school have standing orders and quick-relief medicines for students to use?
- Do all students with asthma have updated **asthma action plans** on file at the school? An asthma action plan is a written plan from the student’s doctor to help manage asthma and prevent asthma attacks.
- Is there a **school nurse in your school building during all school hours**? Does a nurse identify, assess, and monitor students with asthma at your school? Does he/she help students with their medicines, and help them be active in physical education, sports, recess, and field trips? If a school nurse is not full-time in your school, is a nurse regularly available to write plans and give the school guidance on these issues?
- Does the school nurse or other asthma education expert **teach school staff about asthma**, asthma action plans, and asthma medicines? Does someone teach all students about asthma and how to help a classmate who has asthma? (Please note that Nancy Levine, Hudson Valley Asthma Coalition, Asthma Educator is available to train school staff on Asthma 101 and other asthma educational programs).
- Can students with asthma fully and safely join in **physical education, sports, recess, and field trips**? Are students’ medicines nearby, before and after they exercise? Can students with asthma choose a physical activity that is different from others in the class when it is medically necessary? Can they choose another activity without fear of being ridiculed or receiving reduced grades?
- Does the school have **good indoor air quality**? Does the school help to reduce or prevent students’ contact with allergens or irritants, indoors and outdoors, that can make their asthma worse? Allergens and irritants include tobacco smoke, pollens, animal dander, mold, dust mites, cockroaches, and strong odors or fumes from things like bug spray, paint, perfumes, and cleaners. Does the school exclude animals with fur?

If the answer to any question is “no,” then it may be harder for students to have good control of their asthma. Uncontrolled asthma can hinder a student’s attendance, participation and progress in school. School staff, healthcare providers, and families should work together to make schools more asthma-friendly to promote student health and education.

*Excerpted from the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program of the National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute*

**Thanks for Reading!** For further information on asthma or to find out how you can implement the Open Airways for Schools program in your school, call **NANCY LEVINE**, Asthma Educator – Hudson Valley Asthma Coalition at the American Lung Association in New York at **914-347-2094 x22**.