The Role of Schools in Promoting Physical Activity and Healthy Eating

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Overweight Children and Adolescents*

*95th percentile for BMI by age and sex based on 2000 CDC BMI-for-age growth charts.

National Center for Health Statistics.
U. S. Children Born in 2000

1 in 3 will develop Diabetes during lifetime
Why Schools?

- Most young people are enrolled in school
- Health programs have long been part of the school experience
- School health programs can improve students’
  - Health knowledge, attitudes, and skills
  - Health behaviors and health outcomes
  - Social outcomes
  - Educational outcomes
Relationship Between Health and Education

“No educational tool is more essential than good health.”
Council of Chief State School Officers

“Health and success in school are interrelated. Schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not healthy and fit physically, mentally, and socially.”
National Association of State Boards of Education
“Nutrition is central to our children’s physical and academic development. Therefore, it is essential to academic achievement.”

Dr. Ronald Epps
Superintendent
Richland One School District
Columbia, SC
Participation in the School Breakfast Program and Academic Performance

- Compared to peers who do not participate in the School Breakfast Program, low-income elementary school students who do participate have:
  - greater improvements in standardized test scores and math grades
  - reduced rates of absenteeism, tardiness, and psychosocial problems

Physical Activity and Academic Performance

- Physical activity among adolescents is consistently related to higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety and stress.¹

- Physical activity can positively affect concentration, memory, and classroom behavior.²

- Spending more time in physical education class did not have a negative effect on students’ standardized test scores, even though less time was available for other academic subjects.³

Opinions of U.S. Adults About School Health Programs

- 65% believe schools should play a major role in fighting the obesity problem
- Adults strongly support:
  - Healthier school lunches: 84%
  - Health classes: 82%
  - More physical education: 76%
  - Prohibiting sale of unhealthy foods in school vending machines: 42%

Source: Survey by Lake Snell Perry and Associates for Harvard University, based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,002 adults, May-June 2003
Opinions of Parents of Adolescents About Health Education

- **82%** said that health education is either more important than or as important as other subjects taught in school.

- **74%** said schools should spend more time or the same amount of time teaching health education as they do teaching other subjects.

Source: Gallup Organization for the American Cancer Society, national telephone survey of 1,003 parents of adolescents enrolled in U.S. public schools, 1993
Opinions of Parents of Children in K-12 About Physical Education

- 81% want their kids to receive daily physical education.
- 15% believe that children should concentrate on academic subjects at school and leave the physical activities for after school.

Source: Survey by Opinion Research Corp. based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,017 adults, February 2000 (margin of error = ±6%)
What Can Schools Do?

Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People

Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating
The State Education Standard

December 2004

The Obesity Epidemic

What Schools Can Do

INSIDE: Understanding Childhood Overweight • Seven Steps to an Effective School Wellness Policy • The Role of School Physical Activity Programs • Developing District Nutrition Standards • What States Are Doing in Obesity Prevention

Make a Difference at Your School!

CDC Resources Can Help You Implement Strategies to Prevent Obesity Among Children and Adolescents

CDC

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Ten Priority Strategies for Schools to Promote Physical Activity and Healthy Eating

- Coordinated School Health Program
- School health council & coordinator
- Assessment of policies and programs
- Health promotion for staff
- High-quality health education
- High-quality physical education
- Increased physical activity opportunities
- Quality school meal program
- Appealing, healthy food and beverage choices outside of school meals
- Strong health policies
Strategy #1

Address student wellness through a coordinated school health program approach
Coordinated School Health Program

- Health Education
- Physical Education
- Health Services
- Nutrition Services
- Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services
- Healthy School Environment
- Health Promotion for Staff
- Family and Community Involvement

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Characteristics of a Quality Coordinated School Health Program

- Effective coordination, with strong support from administrators
- Annual plan featuring use of multiple, evidence-based strategies
- Professional development for staff
- Strong involvement of students, families, and the community
Strategy #2

Designate a school health coordinator and maintain an active school health council
School Health Council or Team

- Includes school, family, and community representatives; meets regularly
- Helps plan, implement, and improve school health policies and programs
- Monitors critical health-related risk behaviors
- Promotes the coordination of the multiple components of a school health program
- Promotes integration of school and community health programs and services
Strategy #3

Assess the school’s health policies and programs and develop a plan for improvement
The School Health Index Enables Schools To:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of health promotion policies and programs
- Develop an action plan for improving student health
- Engage teachers, parents, students, and the community in promoting health enhancing behaviors and better health
Sample Changes Made As A Result of Using SHI

- Hired a PE teacher for the first time
- Increased time spent in PE
- Build walking trails on campus
- Developed a walking club and other wellness programs for school staff
- Added healthy choices to vending machines
- Added another lunch line and moved healthy choices to the front of the line
Strategy #4

Implement a high-quality health promotion program for school staff
Benefits of an Employee Wellness Program in Schools

- Lower health care and insurance costs
- Increased productivity
- Fewer worker compensation and disability claims
- Prospective employees more easily attracted
- Image in the community more positive
- Employees can be healthy role models for students
Elements of a Comprehensive School Employee Wellness Program

- Focus on skill development, lifestyle changes, and supportive environments
- Includes physical activity, nutrition, and weight management services
- Links to related programs (e.g., EAP, medical)
Strategy #5

Implement a high-quality course of study in health education
Health Education Requirements by Grade

CDC School Health Policies and Programs Study, 2000.
Quality Health Education

- Taught by appropriately prepared and credentialed teachers
- Uses scientifically and medically accurate instructional materials
- Provides students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for adopting health enhancing behaviors
- Based on national health education standards
- Assesses what students know and are able to do
Evaluation of Planet Health

- Fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity for girls
- TV time for boys and girls
- Obesity prevalence for girls

Intervention was cost effective and cost saving

Strategy #6

Implement a high-quality course of study in physical education

* 5 days in an average week when they were in school; \(^1\) Significant linear decrease and quadratic change, \(P < .05\)

Range and Median Percentage of High School Students Who Attended Physical Education Classes,* Across 37 States and 21 Cities, 2005

* On ≥ 1 days in an average week when they were in school
Source: State and Local Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2005
Quality Physical Education

- Emphasizes knowledge and skills for a lifetime of regular physical activity
- Is based on national standards that define what students should know and be able to do
- Provides many different physical activity choices
Quality Physical Education

- Meets the needs of all students, especially those who are not athletically gifted
- Keeps students active for most of class time
- Is an enjoyable experience for students
Quality Physical Education Requires

- Adequate time (150 min/week for elementary; 225 min/week for secondary)
- Appropriately trained teachers
- Adequate facilities and supplies
- Reasonable class sizes
Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PECAT)

- Assess how closely a written curriculum aligns with national and/or state PE standards, guidelines, and best practices
- Use assessment results and PECAT action plan template to improve curriculum
Strategy #7
Increase opportunities for students to engage in physical activity

- Activities in the classroom
- Recess
- Extracurricular physical activity programs
  - Interscholastic
  - Intramural
  - After school
- Walk to School programs
Physical Activity Opportunities

- 71% of elementary schools provided daily recess\(^1\)
- 99% of middle/junior and senior high schools offered interscholastic sports\(^1\)
- Only 49% of all schools offered opportunities to participate in intramural activities and physical activity clubs\(^1\)
- In 2003, only 15% of students walked or bicycled to school\(^2\) (vs. nearly 50% in 1969\(^3\))

\(^1\) Burgeson et al. J Sch Health 2001 (from CDC’s School Health Policies and Programs Study 2000).
\(^2\) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Travel and environmental implications for school siting. 2003.
Resources to Help Schools Promote Physical Activity
Strategy #8

Implement a quality school meal program
Quality School Meal Program

- Breakfast and lunch are accessible to all students
- Variety of appealing, healthful foods
- Energy and nutrient adequacy
- Consistent with Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Adequate time to eat
- Dining room is a clean, safe, and pleasant learning laboratory
Green Bay Area Public School District, Wisconsin

- Replaced low-nutrient items from a la carte lines with healthful alternatives (e.g., fresh fruit and veggie trays, baked chips)
- Replaced some a la carte space with additional lunch lines
- More baking, less frying; introduced whole wheat flour blends in baked products

RESULTS: À la carte revenue decreased 18%; school meal participation increased 15%; new revenue from additional school meals sold more than doubled the lost à la carte revenue
Strategy #9

Ensure that students have appealing, healthy choices in foods and beverages offered outside of the school meals program.
Percentage of Schools with Specific Competitive Food Venues, By School Level, 2004-2004

SCHOOL HEALTH PROFILES

Percentage of Secondary Schools in Which Students Could Buy Chocolate Candy, by Selected State, 2004

* Among schools which allowed students to purchase foods or beverages from vending machines or at the school store, canteen, or snack bar
School Nutrition Improvement Strategies

- Establish nutrition standards
- Influence food and beverage contracts
- Make more healthful foods and beverages available
- Adopt marketing techniques to promote healthful choices
- Limit student access to competitive foods
- Use fundraising activities and rewards that support student health
Fayette County Public Schools
Lexington, KY

- Used knowledge of a parent from the food industry to write an RFP to increase healthful options and increase revenues
- Paid a higher commission for healthful items
- Priced healthful items advantageously

RESULTS: Increased up-front payment from $500,000 to $900,000; increased revenue
Vista Unified School District
Oceanside, California

- Child Nutrition Service took over all school food options; began by conducting market research with consumers.
- Purchased new vending machines; replaced candy and chips with crackers, pretzels, granola bars, peanuts, dried apricots, etc.
- Started selling milk, 100% juice, smoothies, water, and sports drinks in vending machines in addition to soda

RESULTS: School district commissions and bonuses were more than twice as much as it received before CNS took over the vending operation.
Effect of Nutrition Improvements on School Revenue

- 17 of the 32 schools/districts reported revenue information
  - 12 increased overall revenue
  - 4 experienced no change
  - 1 decreased revenue slightly
Marketing Healthful Choices

- Involve students in selecting healthful products
  - Surveys, focus groups, food samples
- **Promote** products so students will try them
  - Banners, flyers, announcements, logos
- **Price** products to give healthful items a competitive advantage
  - Lower prices for healthful items
- **Place** products so they are easy to choose
  - Healthful items at eye level
Students are most likely to make the healthy choice when . . .

. . . it’s the easy choice!
Strategy #10

Strengthen the school’s health-related policies
Federal Requirements for a Local Wellness Policy

✓ Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other wellness activities
✓ Nutrition guidelines and guidelines for school meals
✓ Plan for measuring implementation; designation of a coordinator
✓ Must involve parents, students, community members, and others
✓ In place for 2006-07 school year
Tools to Help School Districts with Wellness Policies

The website provides tools and resources to help school districts develop and implement wellness policies. The page includes a section on Local Wellness Policy, which describes how to develop a local wellness policy at the school level. The policy should address student nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities. The website also offers implementation tools and resources, including a Wellness Policy Tool that helps school districts create a local wellness policy that meets the district's goals for nutrition and physical activity.

The Wellness Policy Tool is designed to help school districts develop a local wellness policy that is tailored to their specific needs. The tool provides guidance on how to create a policy that is effective and sustainable. The website also includes a guide on how to improve childhood nutrition and physical activity by joining the Action for Healthy Kids State Team or by making a contribution to the organization.

To use the Wellness Policy Tool, school districts should first download the template document. The document includes guidance on how to develop a policy that is aligned with the district's goals. The template also includes a resource list of recommended policies and practices. School districts can use the template to create a policy that is tailored to their specific needs and goals.

For more information, visit the website at [http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.html](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources.html).
Policy Process

- Initial Homework – Current Status
- Form Policy Team
- Assess Needs
- Draft Policy
- Build Awareness & Support
- Adopt Policy
- Implement Policy
- Monitor & Evaluate
- Build Awareness & Support

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Keys to Success
Keys to Success

- Collaboration/team approach
- Involving students and families
- Persistence/gradual approach
- Positive attitude/enthusiasm
Keys to Success

- Marketing techniques / customer focus
- Data collection
- Developing quality first
- THE LOCAL CHANGE AGENT
Challenges for School-Based Obesity Prevention

- “Students should have choices”
- Testing, testing, testing
- Financial pressures
Responses to Challenges

- Schools educate by the choices they present
- Health is academic
- In our school, the children profit

You Can Do It!
We Must Do It!

- Health of our future workforce
- Health care costs
- National security
- Health of our children
- Enabling our children to reach their academic potential