



FIC 2010 — Health and Wellness

The health and well-being of students significantly impacts their ability to attend school, engage and learn in the classroom, and ultimately achieve academic success. Creating and sustaining a healthy student, school and community plays a critical role in providing high quality education to all children. Students with, and at-risk for, significant health problems, such as asthma, obesity and poor oral health, face numerous challenges and barriers to fulfilling their potential and achieving academic success.

- Chronically undernourished children attain lower scores on standardized achievement tests, are more irritable, have difficulty concentrating and have lower energy levels.
- Students participating in daily physical education exhibit better attendance, a more positive attitude towards school and superior academic performance.
- Students whose time in PE or school-based physical activity was increased maintained or improved their grades and scores on standardized achievement tests, even though they received less classroom instructional time than students in control groups.
- By the third grade, over 70 percent of children in California have experienced tooth decay – which results in school absences, difficulty focusing, interference with eating, speech difficulties and slowed social development.
- One-half of the nation’s 115,000 schools have problems linked to indoor air quality – which results in increased absenteeism and negatively impacts a child’s ability to develop and learn.
- The California Department of Health Services estimates that in 2001, schools lost almost \$41 million from preventable absences due to asthma from children ages 12 to 17 alone.

Combating this health crisis requires the collaborative work of all facets of our society, including school communities. Schools have a responsibility to create a healthy learning environment that will ensure all children have the opportunity to achieve success. By addressing the health and wellness obstacles of those students most in need, schools can simultaneously tackle the achievement gap and create and sustain a healthy learning environment that positively impacts all children.

Childhood Obesity

Obesity is a serious health concern for children and adolescents. *Healthy People 2010* identified overweight and obesity as 1 of 10 leading health indicators and called for a reduction in the proportion of children and adolescents who are overweight or obese, but the United States has made little progress toward the target goal.

Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) helps monitor the national prevalence of overweight and obesity. Data from NHANES I (1971–1974) to NHANES 2003–2006 show increases in overweight among all age groups:

- Among preschool-aged children, aged 2–5 years, the prevalence of obesity increased from 5% to 12.4%.
- Among school-aged children, aged 6–11 years, the prevalence of obesity increased from 4% to 17%.
- Among school-aged adolescents, aged 12–19 years, the prevalence of obesity increased from 6.1% to 17.6%.

First Lady’s “Let’s Move” Campaign

The “Let’s Move” campaign is intended to give parents the support they need, provide healthier food in schools, help children be more physically active, and make healthy, affordable food available in every part of our country. The First Lady will lead a national public awareness effort to tackle the epidemic of childhood obesity. She will encourage involvement by actors from every sector—the public, nonprofit, and private sectors, as well as parents and youth—to help support and amplify the work of the Federal Government in improving the health of our children.

To meet those goals, the administration states it must accelerate implementation of successful strategies that will prevent and combat obesity. Such strategies include updating child nutrition policies in a way that addresses the best available scientific information, ensuring access to healthy, affordable food in schools and communities, as well as increasing physical activity and empowering parents and caregivers with the information and tools they need to make good choices for themselves and their families.

CSBA’s Health and Wellness Efforts

For the past decade, CSBA has been assisting school board members to fulfill their role and responsibilities in creating healthy school environments. CSBA created the “Successful Students through Healthy Food and Fitness Policies” campaign that seeks to educate school board members on the critical link between nutrition, physical activity, health and academic achievement, and to provide districts/COEs and school board members with tools and sample policies to support a healthy school environment.

CSBA conducted a statewide research project in 2007, with funding from The California Endowment, to gauge the perceptions, challenges and needs of school district leaders in providing school health services. In early 2009, CSBA, in partnership with the California Endowment, surveyed school board members in California to identify barriers and opportunities to strengthening physical education and physical activity in schools. Together these research projects provide CSBA with guidance and direction in this work, and help inform the development of resources, materials and trainings for school leaders. In addition, CSBA has developed numerous policy briefs, fact sheets, articles, Webinars and workshops on issues such as nutrition standards, physical education exemptions, food safety requirements, wellness policies, oral health, indoor air quality, asthma management, influenza, mental health and diabetes.

In 2007, CSBA, in partnership with the California Department of Education and California Department of Public Health, co-hosted the inaugural School Wellness Conference that brought together a uniquely diverse group of stakeholders (school board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, nutrition directors and food service staff, nutritionists, physical education staff, district administrators, researchers, nonprofits, parents, students, school nurses, public health staff and other school and community stakeholders) to share best practices, resources and strategies for creating sustainable healthy learning environments. The second School Wellness Conference was held in the fall of 2009.