


**Action for Healthy Kids**  
Healthy Kids Learn Better

### Action for Healthy Kids



- Develop cross-cutting networks
- Build support and public awareness
- Deliver tools, resources, and model approaches to improve schools
- Work to change the school health environment

Founded by David Satcher in 2002

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### Our Strength is Rooted in Dedication

*Action for Healthy Kids is a National Movement*



- > 10,000 volunteers
- 60+ national Partner organizations
- 51 Teams

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### What We Believe

**VISION**

- All kids develop the lifelong habits necessary to promote health and learning.

**MISSION**


- To engage diverse organizations, leaders, and volunteers in actions that foster sound nutrition and good physical activity in children, youth, and schools.

**GOAL**

- To create systematic and sustainable change in schools while engaging families and communities to improve eating and physical activity patterns in youth

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### Three Areas of Focus



**Improve children's eating habits**

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### Three Areas of Focus



**Increase children's physical activity**

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## Three Areas of Focus



**Educate about the connection between health and achievement**

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## Action for Healthy Kids, Skokie, IL

- National Staff
  - Develop resources and tools
  - Collaborate with Partner organizations
  - Provide technical assistance
  - Advocate for school wellness
  - Maintain web site and databases
- 51 Volunteer State Team Affiliates
  - Convene stakeholders
  - Fill in programming gaps
  - Avoid duplication of efforts and resources
  - Dairy Council Staff support and leadership

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## We Work Within and Across Systems



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## Coordinated School Health Model



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## Schools Can Make A Difference

- Evidence suggests that addressing student's health can help schools to meet performance goals and alleviate financial constraints
- Schools play a critical role in helping students and themselves by addressing nutrition and physical activity
- By collaborating with many stakeholders, schools can take immediate action that will help to address these issues.

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## Connection to Learning

- Poor nutrition has a negative impact on learning
  - Undernourished children attain lower scores on standardized tests, are more irritable, have difficulty concentrating and have less ability to resist infection and may miss more school
  - Well nourished students who skip breakfast perform worse on tests and have poor concentration
  - Poor nutrition and hunger interfere with cognitive function and are associated with lower achievement

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## Connection to Learning

- Being physically active has a positive impact
  - Regular physical activity is linked to stronger academic achievement, increased concentration, and improved math, reading, and writing scores.
  - Students participating in daily physical education exhibit better attendance, a more positive attitude toward school, and superior academic performance.
  - Physical activity among adolescents is consistently related to higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety and stress—each of which has been associated with better academic performance.
  - Moderate physical activity has positive impact on immune function...this can help to prevent colds and flu.

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## Overweight and Learning

- Associations between weight problems and achievement do not imply causation, as there are a number of relating factors
- Underlying cause of overweight -- poor nutrition and inactivity -- affect learning
- Being overweight can impact a student's health and leads to increased absenteeism
- Overweight children face more psychological problems and studies show these student's may be victims of bullying or be bullies...this can interfere with readiness to learn

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## Reduced State Funding

- In nine states, that collectively serve more than one-third of all students in the U.S., state funding for schools is determined by average daily attendance.
- In these states, a single-day absence by one student can cost a school district between \$9 - \$20 dollars.
- To estimate the potential cost of poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems might pose on these districts, The Finance Project made projections based on percent of American children that are overweight to a degree that affects their health (16%)

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## Reduced State Funding

- If there was one day missed per month by 16% of students,
  - An average-size school district in Texas has the potential to lose \$95,000 per year
  - An average-size school district in California has the potential to lose \$160,000 per year
  - New York city could lose about \$28 million each year, Chicago could lose \$9 million in funding
- These are estimates...actual costs could be more as, in some areas, there is a much higher percentage of students suffering from maladies associated with poor nutrition/inactivity – New York, 24% students overweight to a degree that can effect their health

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## Indirect or Hidden Costs

- Significant costs are associated with increased staff time and money for programs designed to help underachieving students and those with behavior problems
- A wide variety of physical and emotional problems associated with poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems can lead to medication needs and places a significant burden on schools
  - Staff time to dispense medications
  - Schools that can not afford professional staff use other staff – keeping them from their work and potentially putting student and school at risk in the event of an error
- Like most employers, schools are burdened by rapid rise in staff healthcare costs, absenteeism, and lower productivity associated with staff suffering from the consequences of poor nutrition, inactivity and weight problems

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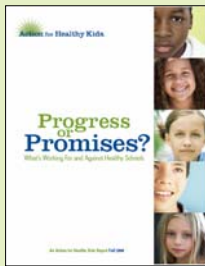
## Costs of the Status Quo

- Current practices and policies include selling and promoting low-nutrient, high-calorie foods in an attempt to generate revenue
- Some school practices and policies have cut back on physical education, recess and other physical activity opportunities to increase classroom time as a way to boost achievement
- These strategies are not proven to meet those objectives and, unknowingly, are counterproductive

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## Progress or Promises? What's Working For and Against Healthy Schools



- Published Fall 2008
- Downloadable PDF of report, executive summary and supporting documents at: [www.ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org)

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## Progress or Promises? Key Messages

- Progress has been made
  - Need for broader, system-wide changes
  - Inadequate resources
  - Out with the “junk”, in with nutrient rich foods
- Perception and awareness gaps
  - School administrators
  - Parents
- Parents part of the solution

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## The Report

- Status of efforts to improve nutrition and physical activity in schools
- New research with 2,000+ diverse stakeholders nationwide
- Analysis of existing and new data
- Interviews with and commentary by authorities in education, children's health, and school wellness

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## Gaps in perception

- Some school administrators minimize problem.
- Parents – who are critical to solution – are often unaware, uninvolved.

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## What Do School Administrators Think?

- Over 60% of superintendents and principals say schools have effective wellness policies; most community health professionals disagree.
- Two-thirds of superintendents and half of principals feel that most school effectively engage wellness teams; over 60% of almost all other stakeholders disagree.

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## What Do School Administrators Think? *cont'd*

- Over 80% of superintendents say schools *do* provide access to healthy, youth-appealing foods; most teachers, parents, and health professionals disagree.
- Half of school administrators and board members say most schools provide quality daily physical education and physical activity for all students; over 70% of P.E. teachers and parents disagree.
- Over half of administrators and board members believe schools have effective policies to encourage daily physical activity; two-thirds of P.E. teachers, parents, students, and community and state education and health professionals disagree.

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## What Do Parents Think?

- 82% say schools should provide more nutritious, appealing meals.
- 80% say more opportunities for physical activity needed during the school day.
- 96% say they themselves should play a role in school wellness.

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## What Do Parents Think? *cont'd*

Although 73% of parents say their schools welcome parental involvement...

- Only 24% have contacted schools to request improvements in meals.
- Only 24% have done so regarding physical education and physical activity

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## Monitoring and Tracking

Insufficient monitoring and tracking of school wellness.

- Disagreement among stakeholders on progress.
- Most schools/states: no systems in place to measure.
- Policy mandates meaningless without monitoring.

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## The Good News

- We are **LEARNING** how to inspire parents
- We are **MOBILIZING** students
- We are **ENGAGING** school leaders

### Our Challenge:

- Continue to **DEMONSTRATE**
- **EXTEND** the reach of information available

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## The Hurdles

- Parents, Schools, & Communities = **MUTUAL** reinforcement
- Finding a voice within competing mandates and priorities
- Nutritional Quality
- Daily, quality physical education

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## Call to Action

- Continue to advocate
- Recognize the small success that lay groundwork for sustainable change
- Focus beyond the “cheap fixes”
- Help integrate wellness into continuous school improvement plan
- Grow our tent and cast a wider net

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**Action for Healthy Kids  
Campaign for School Wellness**  
Providing tools and resources to help build healthy schools



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**Campaign for School Wellness**


- Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge
  - Framework to implement wellness policies
- ReCharge! Energizing After-school
  - After-school curriculum
  - Developed in partnership with the National Football League (NFL)
- Parents Advocating for School Wellness Toolkit
  - Engage and mobilize parents
- Students Taking Charge Toolkit
  - Engage and mobilize students



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**Campaign for School Wellness**

- Wellness Policy Tool
  - Assess wellness policy
- Wellness Policy Tracker
  - Track and monitor policy implementation
- Resources to Improve Schools Database
  - Fact sheets, materials, resources, event ideas, model programs



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**Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids  
Healthy Kids Learn Better**

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**Goals**

- Be a Massachusetts primary provider of education, resources, information and technical assistance for nutrition, physical education and physical activity.
- Promote and support efforts to advance physical education and physical activity in Massachusetts schools.
- Promote and support improvements to the nutrition environment in Massachusetts schools.



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**Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids**

- Awareness
  - Understanding of Mass Team goals
  - Child wellness
- Technical Assistance
  - Workshops, mini-grants, tools and forums
  - Development and implementation of school wellness policies
- Policy
  - Educate decision makers
  - Resource to decision makers
  - Monitor pending legislations' impact



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## Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids

- Co-chairs
- Steering Committee
- Active state Team Members: Sub committees
  - School Nutrition
  - Youth Engagement
  - Physical Education
  - Membership
  - Communications

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## Massachusetts Team Projects

- Nutrition
  - Nutrition Standards: vending and a la carte
  - Speakers Bureau: partnership with MA Dietetic Association
- Physical education and activity
  - Best practices recognition program; Gold Medal Project
  - ReCharge! Energizing after school
  - Daily PE and hydration pilot project in Worcester
- Wellness
  - Student advocacy project
  - Annual legislative educational event
  - Fact sheets

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## Key Partners

- American Heart/American Stroke
- Cambridge Public Schools/Cambridge Health Alliance
- Children's Hospital, Boston
- Framingham State College and John Stalker Institute
- Harvard Prevention Research Center/HSPH
- MAHPERD
- MA ESE and DPH
- New England Dairy and Food Council
- Project Bread
- New England Ice Cream
- Massachusetts School Nutrition Association

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## The Gold Medal Project

The Gold Medal Project is a grant which will enable schools in Metro West to assess their Physical Education programs.



## Building on what works

- Using the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (PE-CAT)
- CDC School Health Index (Module #3)
- Provide recommendations to strengthen and improve physical education program and promote best practices
- Create an advocacy network
- Aligns with the Metro West Community Health Care Foundation's initiative to target childhood obesity through quality physical education programs

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## Three components

- **Assessment** of school physical education programs
- **Recognition** of quality programs
- **Advocacy** of physical education programs

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## Assessment

- Gold, Silver and Bronze Medal Winners
- The Gold Medal Winners are promoted as resources for neighboring schools to explore exemplary instruction and practices
- The evaluator and PE/A Sub-Committee of MASS AFHK have developed the standards for the three rankings
- Participation in this evaluation awards \$1000 to the Physical Education Department

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## Recognition

- Metro - West Health Care Foundation and Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids hold recognition ceremony
  - All physical education teachers in Metro- West schools are invited
  - \$1000 award to the participating School's Physical Education Program

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## Advocacy

- Asked to become advocates for quality Physical Education Programs
- Assist colleagues to improve their programs
- Attend training program to build advocacy skills
- Promoted as resources for neighboring schools to explore exemplary instruction and practices.

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## 2007 Metro-West schools

- Needham High School
- Medway High School
- Holliston High School
- Adams Middle School, Holliston
- Newman Elementary School, Needham

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## To become involved in this project contact

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Health & Wellness Consultant  
[mjalterio@comcast.net](mailto:mjalterio@comcast.net)

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## Massachusetts Leadership

- Co-Chairs
  - Janet Schwartz, MS, RD, LDN  
Consumer Science Chair, Framingham State College
  - Allyson Perron  
Advocacy Director, American Heart/American Stroke Association
- State Team Liaison
  - Sarah Brooks, MS, RD, LDN  
Director, Nutrition Affairs  
New England Dairy & Food Council

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“The catalyst for improving school wellness is leadership. Whether it’s a superintendent, a principal, a motivated school board member, an active and interested parent, or all of the above, school wellness has to start with one committed individual or constituency.”

— *David Satcher, MD, PhD, 16th U.S. Surgeon General and Founding Chair of Action for Healthy Kids*

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