



Overview

This is the first in a series of eight handouts summarizing the statewide results for each category of the School Wellness Policy Report. All handouts are available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322168>.

Background

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265) required that schools participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s child nutrition programs establish a school wellness policy by the 2006-07 school year. At a minimum, the district School Wellness Policy was required to:

1. include goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the local educational agency determines appropriate;
2. include nutrition guidelines for all foods available on the school campus during the school day, with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity;
3. provide an assurance that guidelines for school meals are not less restrictive than those set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture;
4. establish a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy, including the designation of one or more persons within the local education agency or at each school, as appropriate, charged with ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy; and
5. involve parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in development of the local wellness policy.

School districts could choose to include additional features or integrate student wellness with other ongoing programs, for example, coordinated school health initiatives and community-based programs. Since the federal requirements were general, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) developed specific guidance for districts regarding recommended policy components and language. CSDE’s *Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies* includes detailed information on the steps, strategies and resources involved in developing, adopting and implementing school policies (<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Action>). CSDE also conducted numerous statewide trainings, conferences and provided additional resources to assist districts with this process (see X at X).

During the 2007-08 school year, CSDE conducted a review of district school wellness policies in partnership with the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at Yale University. In June 2008, each district received a *School Wellness Policy Report*, which included district, state and District Reference Group (DRG) scores for comprehensiveness and strength in seven different policy categories: Nutrition Education; School Meals; Other School Food and Beverages; Physical Education; Physical Activity; Communication and Promotion; and Evaluation. These reports are available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#SW>.

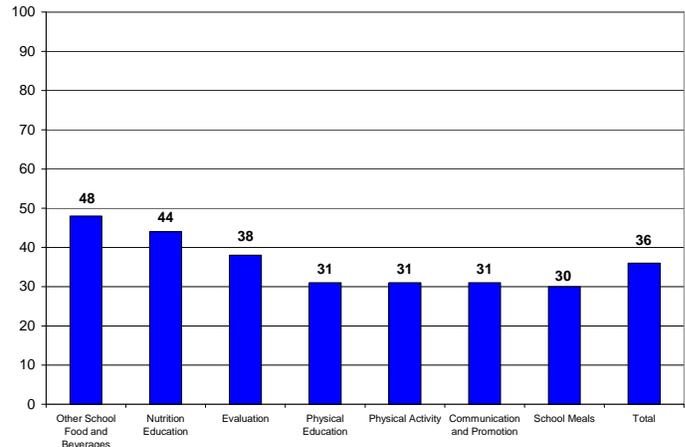
Results

The statewide results for the *School Wellness Policy Report* are based on 96 policy items in seven policy categories. For each policy item, districts received a rating of 2 (strong statement), 1 (weak statement) or 0 (item not mentioned). Weak statements are hard to enforce because they are vague and/or only recommended. These statements often use words such as *may, can, could, should, might, encourage, suggest, urge, some, partial, make an effort* and *try*. Strong statements include a concept followed by specific plans or strategies for implementation and wording that indicates action is required, such as *shall, will, must, have to, insist, require, all, total, comply* and *enforce*. Detailed information on the policy scoring is contained in the *Coding Tool for Connecticut School Wellness Policies* at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Student/NutritionEd/SWP/SW_CodingTool.pdf

As indicated in Figure 1, *Other School Food and Beverages* received the highest average strength score. This is due to the number of districts participating in healthy food certification. Figure 2 (see next page) shows the average, standard deviation and range of the strength scores for each of the seven policy categories. All scores were below the 50th percentile, indicating that Connecticut school districts have many opportunities to strengthen their school wellness policy language.

Figure 1. Average Policy Strength Scores*

* Based on a scale from 0 to 100



School Wellness Policy Report • Data Summary 1

Overview, continued

Key findings are summarized below. For more information on each policy category, see the Data Summary handouts at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322168>.

Nutrition Education

- Most policies (72 percent) contained strong statements that nutrition education teaches skills that are behavior focused, interactive and/or participatory and strong statements (72 percent) on nutrition education quality.
- Forty-two percent made strong statements that nutrition education extends beyond the school environment (e.g., involving families and community groups) and 37 percent of districts made strong statements regarding the coordination of nutrition education with the larger school community.
- Ninety-eight percent did not specify any number of nutrition education courses or contact hours. Only 1 percent contained strong statements.
- Only 29 percent used strong language to specify that the nutrition curriculum addresses each grade level. Twenty-five percent did not contain any language.
- Forty-seven percent of districts did not contain any language regarding the integration of nutrition education into other subjects beyond health education. Only 19 percent contained strong statements.

School Meals

- Forty-five percent of policies contained strong statements regarding the school meal environment (e.g., pleasant eating environment, adequate space/seating, appropriate supervision) but 49 percent did not contain any language.
- Most policies (71 percent) did not address optimizing scheduling of meals to improve student nutrition. Only 5 percent contained strong statements.
- Twenty-six percent contained strong statements regarding strategies to increase participation in school meal programs. Sixty-six percent did not contain any language.
- Only 17 percent contained strong statements regarding nutrition qualifications of school food service staff and 21 percent contained strong statements on training or professional development for food service staff.

Other School Foods and Beverages

- Few districts not participating in HFC included strong statements regulating a la carte foods (19 percent), vending machines (19 percent), school stores (15 percent) and fundraisers (6 percent).

Figure 2. Average, Standard Deviation and Range of Total Strength Scores*
* Based on a scale from 0 to 100

Policy Category	Average	Standard Deviation	Range
Nutrition Education	44	21	0 to 89
School Meals	30	17	8 to 92
Other School Food and Beverages	48	20	24 to 79
Physical Education	31	13	18 to 87
Physical Activity	31	21	0 to 100
Communication and Promotion	31	21	0 to 92
Evaluation	38	24	0 to 83

- Very few nonparticipating districts included strong statements regulating food sales before school (7 percent), after school (2 percent) or at events on school premises (2 percent).
- Districts not participating in HFC frequently did not contain any policy language addressing the nutrient content of foods. Strong statements were included by 14 percent for limiting sugar, 15 percent for limiting fat, 6 percent for limiting sodium, 4 percent for limiting calorie content, 10 percent for increasing whole foods and 8 percent for limiting the use of ingredients with questionable health effects.
- Only 5 percent of HFC districts contained strong statements regarding food served at class parties and other school celebrations. None of the nonparticipating districts contained strong statements.
- Strong statements regarding food not being used as a reward and/or withheld as a punishment were made by 23 percent of HFC districts and 10 percent of nonparticipating districts.

Physical Education

- Sixty-one percent of policies contained strong statements that physical education promotes a physically active lifestyle.
- Only 22 percent contained strong statements that the physical education curriculum addresses each grade level. Seventy percent contained weak statements.
- Fifty-seven percent did not address students' competency assessment (i.e., knowledge, skills, practice). Only 28 percent contained strong statements.
- Ninety-two percent of districts did not address requirements for daily physical education. No districts contained strong statements.
- Most policies (75 percent, 78 percent and 83 percent, respectively) did not contain any language addressing minimum physical education time per week for elementary, middle or high school students. Two percent included strong statements for elementary students, 2 percent for middle and 3 percent for high.

School Wellness Policy Report • Data Summary 1

Overview, continued

Physical Activity

- Only 17 percent contained strong statements regarding the provision of physical activity, outside of physical education, for every grade level.
- For districts with elementary schools, strong statements were made by 39 percent regarding recess frequency or amount (46 percent did not contain any language) and 32 percent on recess quality to promote physical activity (58 percent did not contain any language).
- Thirty-two percent of districts made strong statements about not using physical activity as punishment but 51 percent did not contain any language.
- Only 15 percent of policies contained strong statements regarding the provision of regular physical activity opportunities (not including recess) throughout the school day.

Communication and Promotion

- Only 17 percent contained strong statements regarding who is responsible for wellness/health communication beyond required policy implementation reporting. Sixty-seven percent did not address this issue.
- Forty-nine percent included strong statements on how the district will engage parents or community. Forty percent did not contain any language.
- Thirty-eight percent contained strong statements on staff role modeling of healthy behaviors but 57 percent did not contain any language.

Impact of Healthy Food Certification

Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that all public school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program must certify whether they will or will not follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Districts that choose to implement healthy food certification (HFC) receive a financial incentive and must follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all food sold to students separately from reimbursable school meals, including but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias and any fundraising activities on school premises. (Additional information on HFC is available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Standards>.)

Figure 3 shows the average policy strength scores for HFC districts versus nonparticipating districts. These scores are based on the 96 policy items in the seven policy categories of the *School Wellness Policy Rating Sheet* (http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/StudentNutritionEd/SWP/SW_RatingSheet.pdf) and include the federal school wellness policy requirements.

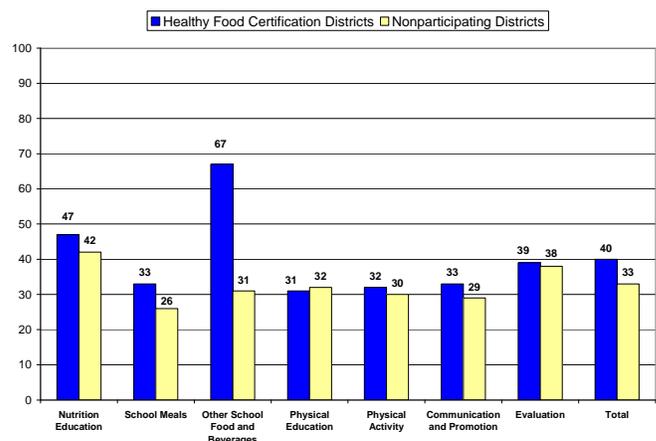
Districts participating in HFC made stronger policy statements and received higher average scores for all policy components except Physical Education. A statistically significant difference was found for the categories of School Meals and Other School Foods and Beverages. **What to say here** Districts participating in healthy food certification made stronger policy statements and scored higher than nonparticipating districts for both the School Meals component and the Other School Food and Beverages component

- Sixty-six percent did not contain any language on staff wellness programs. Only 18 percent contained strong statements.
- Forty-nine percent had strong statements on how the district engages parents or the community to meet wellness goals. This issue was not addressed by 40 percent of policies.
- Twenty-eight percent contained strong statements addressing consistency of nutrition messages but 53 percent did not contain any language.
- Most policies (87 percent) did not contain any language regarding the use of the Coordinated School Health model or other coordinated/comprehensive method. Only 8 percent contained strong statements.

Evaluation

- Strong statements were made by 56 percent of districts regarding a plan for policy implementation, 31 percent regarding the plan's evaluation and 33 percent regarding a plan for revising the policy.
- Twenty-five percent of policies contained strong statements addressing the audience and frequency of a report on compliance and/or evaluation. However, 46 percent did not contain any language.
- Only 1 percent of districts contained strong statements regarding identification of funding support for wellness activities or policy evaluation. Ninety-five percent did not address this issue.

Figure 3. Average Policy Strength Scores of Participating and Nonparticipating Districts*
* Based on a scale from 0 to 100



School Wellness Policy Report • Data Summary 1

Overview, continued

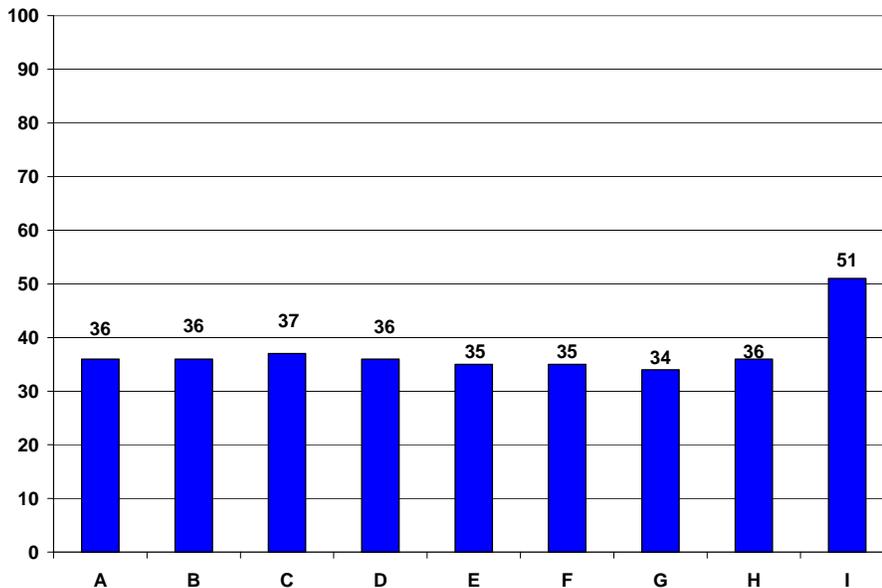
Impact of District Reference Group

District Reference Group (DRG) is a CSDE classification system in which districts that have public school students with similar socioeconomic status and need are grouped together. DRGs are based on the following seven variables: income, education, occupation, family structure, poverty, home language and district enrollment. They include nine groups, from group A (very affluent, low-need suburban districts) to group I (high-need, low socioeconomic urban districts). Charter schools, Connecticut Technical High Schools and Regional Educational Service Centers are not given DRGs. For additional information, see http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/databulletins/db_drg_06_2006.pdf.

Figure 2 shows the average total policy strength scores for each DRG. These scores are based on the 96 policy items included in the seven policy categories of the *School Wellness Policy Report*. Group I, the DRG containing the state's seven highest need districts (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham), made stronger policy statements and received a higher total average strength score than all other DRGs.

Figure 2. Average Total Strength Scores by DRG*

*Based on a scale from 0 to 100



Connecticut District Reference Groups

DRG A: Darien, Easton, New Canaan, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Westport, Wilton, Region 9

DRG B: Avon, Brookfield, Cheshire, Fairfield, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Greenwich, Guilford, Madison, Monroe, New Fairfield, Newtown, Orange, Simsbury, South Windsor, Trumbull, West Hartford, Woodbridge, Region 5, Region 15

DRG C: Andover, Barkhamsted, Bethany, Bolton, Canton, Columbia, Cornwall, Ellington, Essex, Hebron, Mansfield, Marlborough, New Hartford, Oxford, Pomfret, Salem, Sherman, Somers, Suffield, Tolland, Region 4, Region 7, Region 8, Region 10, Region 12, Region 13, Region 14, Region 17, Region 18, Region 19

DRG D: Berlin, Bethel, Branford, Clinton, Colchester, Cromwell, East Granby, East Hampton, East Lyme, Ledyard, Milford, Newington, New Milford, North Haven, Old Saybrook, Rocky Hill, Shelton, Southington, Stonington, Wallingford, Waterford, Watertown, Wethersfield, Windsor

DRG E: Ashford, Bozrah, Brooklyn, Canaan, Chaplin, Chester, Colebrook, Coventry, Deep River, Eastford, East Haddam, Franklin, Hampton, Hartland, Kent, Lebanon, Lisbon, Litchfield, Norfolk, North Branford, North Stonington, Portland, Preston, Salisbury, Scotland, Sharon, Thomaston, Union, Westbrook, Willington, Woodstock, Region 1, Region 6, Region 16, Woodstock Academy,

DRG F: Canterbury, East Windsor, Enfield, Griswold, Montville, North Canaan, Plainville, Plymouth, Seymour, Sprague, Stafford, Sterling, Thompson, Voluntown, Windsor Locks, Wolcott, Region 11

DRG G: Bloomfield, Bristol, East Haven, Groton, Hamden, Killingly, Manchester, Middletown, Naugatuck, Plainfield, Putnam, Stratford, Torrington, Vernon, Winchester, Gilbert School, Norwich Free Academy

DRG H: Ansonia, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Meriden, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford, West Haven

DRG I: Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury, Windham

Insert chart for mean, standard deviation and range?

District school wellness policy reports can be accessed online at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#SW>. For additional information, please contact Susan Fiore, Nutrition Education Coordinator, CSDE, at susan.fiore@ct.gov or (860) 807-2075 or Marlene Schwartz, Deputy Director, Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, at (203) 432-0662 or marlene.schwartz@yale.edu.

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is an equal opportunity/affirmative action entity. For more information, please call the Affirmative Action Administrator, State of Connecticut Department of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut 06106, (860) 713-6530.