

## **New Report Highlights Changes Needed to Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in U.S. Elementary Schools**

**Elementary school practices fall short of national recommendations for diet and physical activity.**

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A comprehensive new report from *Bridging the Gap* and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation shows that elementary schools across the nation commonly offer their students junk food and soda, serve meals that don't meet current dietary guidelines, and provide little time for physical activity.

The report, *School Policies and Practices to Improve Health and Prevent Obesity: National Elementary School Survey Results*, examined practices that affect nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention for tens of millions of students. Its conclusions are critical for informing the Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation, including policies related to competitive foods and school meals.

Among the key findings from the 2007–08 school year:

- Nearly two-thirds of public elementary school students were able to purchase competitive foods or beverages on campus. These items, sold or served outside of school meal programs, often included soda, candy, cookies and french fries.
- Meals served through the National School Lunch Program often included higher-fat items such as pizza, french fries, and 2% or whole milk.
- Only 20 percent of public school third-graders were offered daily physical education, and only 18 percent were offered at least 150 minutes of weekly physical education, as recommended by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

The report shows that many schools have not implemented the wellness policy provisions required by the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. That legislation called for school districts participating in federal child nutrition programs, such as the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, to adopt and implement a wellness policy by the start of the 2006–07 school year.

Results were based on surveys of school administrators during the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years, and findings represent about 21 million students in kindergarten through fifth grade each year.

The report highlights key findings, presents data in user-friendly figures and tables, and describes policy opportunities. An executive summary was released in June 2010.