



A Statewide Evaluation of Oregon District School Wellness Policies

Christine Pons, Barbara Mossberg PhD, Elinor Sullivan, PhD, Elizabeth Budd, PhD
 B.S Human Physiology '19, Prevention Science

Schools have been identified as effective settings to promote adolescents' healthy behaviors. Local school wellness policies (LSWP) are written documents designed to guide a school's efforts in promoting health and well-being.

Background

- Since 2001, obesity has increased by 75% among 11th graders in Oregon.¹
- Only about 1 in 4 Oregon 11th graders get the recommended hour of physical activity each day, while fewer than half of 11th graders in Oregon eat breakfast every day.¹
- To help students develop the necessary skills to make healthy choices, Congress passed Public Law 108-265 in 2004, requiring all school to establish a LSWP.²
- This study describes the quality (comprehensiveness of content and strength of language) LSWP.
- Examines how % of non-white students, % receiving free/reduced-price lunch at the school, rurality of school setting, walkability of area surrounding school) are associated with quality of the LSWP.

Methods

1. 161 policies were obtained and evaluated via the internet.
2. Demographics were obtained through the U.S. Department of Education³ and *WalkScores*⁴
3. Policies were evaluated by three trained researchers based on the Wellness School Assessment Tool (WellSAT: 2.0), which assesses how each policy addresses 78 policy items.⁵
4. Each policy item is divided into six categories; Nutrition Education, Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs, Nutrition Standards for Competitive & Other Food/Beverages, Physical Education & Activity, Wellness Promotion & Marketing, and Implementation, Evaluation, & Communication.⁵
5. For each item, the policy was given a score between 0-2, identifying whether the policy mentions the item, includes a weak statement, or meets/exceeds expectations.
6. A descriptive analysis of each policy section was conducted including mean, standard deviation, and mode.
7. A bivariate statistical analysis was run in SPSS, version 24. Pearson's correlations (r) were used for testing associations between the % non-white students, % students eligible for free/reduced lunch, school walkability score, and the total strength scores of each policy.

Descriptive Results

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mode	Points Possible
NEPE Comprehensive Score	6.48	1.189	7	7
NEPE Strength Score	4.55	1.725	4	7
SM Comprehensive Score	9.02	3.558	12	13
SM Strength Score	4.06	1.566	5	13
NS Comprehensive Score	17.01	5.931	17	25
NS Strength Score	9.46	8.112	0	25
PEPA Comprehensive Score	6.81	2.946	7	20
PEPA Strength Score	2.07	2.749	0	20
WPM Comprehensive Score	5.7	3.313	6	15
WPM Strength Score	3.61	2.862	4	15
IEC Comprehensive Score	5.23	2.879	4	11
IEC Strength Score	3.20	2.366	2	11

Note: NEPE: Nutrition Education; SM: Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs; NS: Nutrition Standards for Competitive & Other Food/Beverages; PEPA: Physical Education and Physical Activity; WPM: Wellness Promotion & Marketing; IEC: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication⁵

- Strongest section was nutrition education.
- Most commonly missed item was a link between nutrition education and the school food environment.

- Almost all 161 policies addressed access to the USDA School Breakfast Program and compliance with USADA nutrition standards.
- Most commonly missed items included ensuring adequate time to eat and scheduling recess before lunch.

- Almost all policies specified meeting nutrition standards for competitive foods
- Most commonly missed items included addressing food/drink containing non-nutritive sweeteners or caffeine.

- The weakest policy section was physical education and physical activity.
- Over half of the policies failed to mention whether the outlined curriculum met national and/or state standards, or had specific teacher-student ratios.

- On average, only 38% of items were addressed.
- Very few policies addressed encouraging staff to model physical activity behaviors.
- Most commonly missed items included encouraging staff to model physical activity behaviors and not withhold PE as a punishment.

- On average, only half of the items could be found.
- Of all the policies, very few wellness committees included community-wide representation.
- Roughly 60.9% failed to mention the committee altogether.

Bivariate Results

- % eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is positively, weakly associated with the NS strength score (r = 0.174, p < 0.05).
- % eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is positively, weakly associated with the PEPA strength score (r = 0.174, p < 0.05).
- % non-white and walkability were not significantly associated with the strength scores for any of the policy sections.

Evaluation

- In order to improve the overall health of students, more weight should be placed on the quality of LSWP in order to guide strong school wellness environments that promote healthy eating and physical activity of high school students.
- Many of the policies assessed developed their policy based off the same template, which included only the basic minimum requirements with vague language.
- This study demonstrated that while there is room for improvement in each category, more importance should be placed on physical education and wellness promotion.
- While there is not a strong correlation between these items and the demographics of each school, it is still important to consider areas with higher % of non-white students, higher % of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, and lower walkability schools.
- This study looks at quality of the policies and does not measure implementation of the content. This would be a good follow up step. It's possible that schools are doing things that are not reflected in the policy or things are in their policy that they're not doing.

References

1. "Place Matters Oregon," Oregon Health Authority, <http://placemattersoregon.com/>
2. "Oregon Local Wellness Policy Sample Statements ." Oregon Department of Education, www.ode.state.or.us/services/nutrition/nsip/wellness/statements.pdf.
3. "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data," National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/pseds/universe/>
4. "Walk Score" <https://www.walkscore.com/>
5. "WellSAT: 3.0 - Wellness School Assessment Tool," Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, <http://www.wellsat.org/>