Logistics

- Use telephone or speakers
- Everyone is muted
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Students to Superintendents: Key stakeholders’ qualitative perspectives and experiences with local school wellness policies

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Outline

- Background on National Wellness Policy Study
- Methods – Qualitative focus groups & interviews
- Findings
  - Overall themes across stakeholders
  - Food and beverage marketing & fundraising
- Conclusions
  - Implications and recommendations
Background
Local School Wellness Policies

Final rule required revised policy for 2016-2017 school year including additional provisions

• Policies on marketing that allow advertising of only those foods and beverages that meet Smart Snacks standards
• Involvement of key stakeholders in policy development, implementation, periodic review, and update Inform and update the public on content and implementation
• Triennial assessments
• Update WP as necessary
• Make WP available to the public
• LEAs must establish WP leadership
National Wellness Policy Study

Examines the implementation of Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act school wellness laws and related policies on schools and students nationwide, from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective, in collaboration with:

• Action for Healthy Kids
• Boise State
• UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity
• USDA Food & Nutrition Services
Linking Policy to Outcomes

Examining the association of district wellness policies and related state laws with outcomes and practices at the school food authority (SFA), school, and student levels

- **State wellness policy requirements** are associated with more comprehensive district wellness policies, and both state wellness policy requirements and district wellness policy comprehensiveness are associated with wellness policy implementation.

- **State policy meeting Smart Snacks** is associated with lower student intake of calories from solid fats and added sugars (SOFAS) and saturated fat.

- **State policy** is associated with school required physical education (PE) classes and students taking PE daily.

- **District and state** policy are associated with implementation of nutrition standards for classroom/school celebrations.
People are **not passive recipients** of innovations. Rather,...they seek innovations, experiment with them, evaluate them, **find (or fail to find) meaning in them**, **develop feelings** (positive or negative) about them, challenge them, worry about them, complain about them, “work around” them, gain experience with them, modify them to fit particular tasks, and try to improve or redesign them often through dialogue with other users.²
Stakeholder Accounts of Implementation

What are stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of local school wellness policy implementation?

• Lessons learned/best practices & implementation challenges
• Awareness of wellness policy & initiatives
• Engagement with implementation
• Resources and technical assistance utilized
• Awareness and involvement with fundraising (superintendents/parents)
• Evaluation and reporting (superintendents)
• Food and beverage marketing on campus (superintendents)
Methods
## Series of Qualitative Studies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
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<tr>
<td>Food service directors</td>
<td>n=9 interviews (Spring 2015)</td>
<td>Revised school meal standards implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>High school students</td>
<td>n=5 focus groups; 15 respondents total (Summer/Fall 2015)</td>
<td>Revised school meal standards implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>n=6 focus groups; 39 respondents total (Spring 2017)</td>
<td>Local school wellness policy implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents of middle school students</td>
<td>n=30 interviews (Winter 2017-2018)</td>
<td>Local school wellness policy implementation</td>
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Sampling & Recruitment

- Food service directors – Asada dissertation
- High school students – Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing (FCYO)
- Superintendents – The School Superintendents Association (AASA)
- Parents of middle school students – Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK)

- UIC IRB (#2015-0720) and UConn IRB (H15-165)
Focus Group & Interview Instruments

- Designed from research questions, input from school wellness experts, and literature review
- Pilot tested for terminology and overall flow
- Focus on perspectives and experiences with implementation of standards
- Revised during data collection as appropriate
Data Collection

- Focus groups (60 mins) and telephone interviews (30-60 mins)
- Conducted by trained qualitative researchers
- Audio recorded and transcribed by transcription service and/or research assistant
- Participants received gift cards ($50)
Coding & Analysis

- Coding guide iteratively developed
- Team coding and analysis in Atlas.ti v8 Qual Data Analysis Software
- "Member checking" with high school students
- Preliminary themes shared and critiqued by experts outside the analysis team
Limitations

• Interviews capture one-time data collection efforts, not longitudinal accounts of implementation activities
• Qualitative samples are not meant to be representative of larger stakeholder populations
• Data collection methods did not include additional measurements to triangulate implementation activities e.g., changes to school wellness environments
Overarching Findings
Most stakeholders described initial implementation challenges and poor acceptance, followed by improvement over time.

- *It was actually my sophomore year when they changed it, and I remember when everyone introduced it, everyone was like, ‘What is this? Where is our normal food?’ And by our junior year, a lot of people liked it.* – High school student
Positive Outcomes

Each stakeholder group reported positive outcomes of implementation, for example:

• Improved fruit & vegetable consumption with school meals
• Enhanced awareness about nutrition and wellness
• Shifting culture and norms around wellness
• Improved partnership between Child Nutrition and district
• Potential for improvement in academic outcomes
Positive Outcomes

• I'm thrilled to death when I stand over here at the high school and I see the kids pile up on strawberries or blueberries and they eat it all. – Food service director

• But I think it really was a cultural shift, you see it in food service but also in the culture of your organization. The kids having the bottles with the school logo on their water, water fountains everywhere, and teachers embracing the ball chairs so the kids can move. - Superintendent
Wellness Committees as a Platform

Many stakeholders described wellness committees as an important entity or platform to facilitate implementation:

- FSDs who had a wellness committee reported more connection to district-wide implementation.
- Superintendents used the committee to ensure appropriate delegation of tasks.
- Parents used the committee as a platform to find “strength in numbers.”
Stakeholders described the critical role of partnerships with technical assistance agencies/organizations and resources in facilitating implementation:

- State Child Nutrition
- Non profit organizations (e.g., Action for Healthy Kids)
- Local health departments
- University and county extensions
- Local hospital and health foundations
- Health insurance agencies
My relationship with Action for Healthy Kids, especially at the state level, is probably the best...because there are links to many more resources and many more locations...And we just need more and more people who not only share your same vision but have ways to help you promote it better. - Parent
Challenges with measurement

- How do you determine whether or not it’s [LWP implementation] effective either to [improve] academic performance or to anything in general?...we feel like every time we are trying to decide whether that made a difference academically, we look back and go ‘yeah but we made these other 18 different changes.’

Interest in best practices, resources, and technical assistance for evaluation
School Wellness and Equity

Each stakeholder group described concerns about the economy, food insecurity, and hunger

- I know every parent loves their kid. The economy is not as great as they want us to think it is, and many people are working multiple jobs. They just don’t have time. – Parent

- ...I’ve met a lot of students that that would be the only meal that they had. Sometimes, they’re low income families where I live...that was one of the biggest meals that they would have... – High school student
Approaches to Address Food Insecurity

Superintendents described initiatives to address hunger

• Backpack programs
• Universal School Breakfast Program
• School food pantry

• We have pop-up food pantry where...we were able to get a grant from [company] to pay for this. They actually have a pop-up food pantry that comes every 2 weeks, but only once a month during the summer. During the school year, every two weeks and we rotate it between our schools. - Superintendent
Food Marketing and Fundraising in Schools
Food marketing in schools

• Logos on school equipment (e.g., scoreboards);
• Commercials during in-school educational programming;
• Fundraising using branded products;
• Coupons from food companies to be used as rewards in the classroom; and
• Branded educational materials.
Awareness and Perceptions of Wellness Policy Marketing Provision

• Most superintendents were not aware of the LWP food & beverage marketing provision

• Most superintendents described food & beverage marketing to students as a negative practice
  • ...insidious & evil and must be combatted
  • they’re getting a foothold in the school. If you want to make a lot of money, you get yourself in with the kids, with parents, and it’s junk food
  • I don’t think they [food companies] have students’ well-being in mind. I think it’s for profit.
Bans on food marketing

• Say we allow [candy company] to come in and put all their flyers out to market themselves, I also have to then let a group that I might not be in favor of come in and market. So a religious group or an anti-political group or a far-right or far-left group. If I let one in, I really can’t not let everyone else in. A zero tolerance policy to say, we don’t let anyone in.
A "means to an end"

- Obviously it [Book it] is a marketing tool for [fast food restaurant], but you know what, I just believe if we can get kids to read, it is important that to me especially K-1, 2 and 3 if you can read, you can conquer the world...so, yeah we are promoting [restaurant] pizzas, but yeah it is a means to an end for us that we are encouraging kids to read.
Restaurant Fundraisers

Restaurant fundraisers were the most common source of fundraising and often connected with PTA/PTO groups

- It’s attractive to kids and the power of media is obviously at play here. I don’t know many kids who don’t like [restaurant]. This [restaurant] night, we do it with some reservation. It’s hard to get the PTA to not to want to do this. When you work with parent-teacher organizations, they want to do this stuff. I think it’s bittersweet. - Superintendent
Restaurant Fundraisers

Fundraisers as ’implicit’ marketing

• ...We have to be very conscientious about the decision making... because it is too easy to say, ‘oh great PTO has got the [restaurant] fundraiser going’...I guess we are all going to implicitly endorse that...and look, ‘20% of all sales are donated to school’. Yay! What is that on a meal, somebody tell me, is that 12¢? That is awesome. Your budget problems are solved [laugh]. – Superintendent
Restaurant Fundraisers

Fundraisers as positive events in the community

- We’re just trying to bring back the camaraderie of families in our district. And again, this is PTO not our wellness committee doing it. You know, it’s the families that are supporting families...We felt that bringing people together over a meal or just seeing each other outside of the school day in a fun, relaxing atmosphere is going to build those relationships. - Parent
Conclusions & Recommendations
Conclusions

• Initial challenges but overall implementation and student acceptance improved with time
• Stakeholders experienced a range of positive outcomes
• Evaluation remains a challenge and superintendents sought technical assistance and resources
• Wellness initiatives intersect with and address equity
• Food marketing and fundraising policies varied widely despite overall negative perceptions of marketing in schools
Recommendations

• Many opportunities to provide directed technical assistance and resources for evaluation of local school wellness policies
  • Targeted to school administration (e.g., school boards and superintendents)
• More research needed on the ways that schools are addressing hunger and food insecurity concurrently with wellness
Recommendations

• Opportunities to Improve awareness about food marketing provisions (and other recent final rule requirements) beyond food service directors and Child Nutrition (e.g., superintendents)

• Opportunities to collaborate or and align efforts between parent groups and wellness committees to promote healthier fundraising and marketing
More great resources on our website!

http://www.go.uic.edu/NWPSproducts
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National Wellness Policy Study Products
http://www.go.uic.edu/NWPSproducts
This Month on ParentsForHealthyKids.org

It's Party Time
With the holiday season upon us, make sure your kids are celebrating the healthy way. Fun doesn't have to mean cupcakes and candy. themed snacks like pull popscicles and active games like musical snowflakes keep parties engaging for kids.

But...It's Cold Out There
It's getting to be that time of year when indoor recess is more frequent. But that often means kids get less physical activity than they would playing outside. Here are some tips for making sure your child's school is offering a more active indoor recess.

Not In Good Shape
When it comes to meeting the new federal physical fitness guidelines, which were released this week, Americans are not in good shape. Fewer than one in three adults and one in five teenagers are getting the recommended amount and types of physical activity needed to help stave off cancer, high blood pressure, and anxiety and improve learning and brain function. Read the full article to see why schools need to focus on fitness.

Stand out with this dish
Need something to bring to Thanksgiving that's not the same old salad or green bean casserole? Check out this recipe for roasted sweet potato and Brussels sprouts topped with pomegranate seeds. It's a sunny yet hearty dish that will have guests reaching for seconds!