

What's New in School Health?

Data and Research

New national children's health data

Healthy children learn better, so you may want to know the health status of children across the nation or in your state. Check out the recently released [2007 National Survey of Children's Health \(NSCH\)](#). Conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the survey examines the physical and emotional health of children, with an emphasis on family interactions, parental health, school and after-school experiences, and safe neighborhoods. The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative's (CAHMI) [Data Resource Center website](#) offers "point-and-click" access to the survey's national and state-level findings, and allows users to compare state-level data on over 100 child health indicators as well as view findings by household income, race/ethnicity, insurance coverage and health status.

Report shows childhood obesity continues to be a problem, particularly in the South

[F as in Fat 2009: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America](#), a new report from Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, reports that 30 states have childhood overweight and obesity rates of 30 percent or greater. Mississippi has the highest rate of overweight and obesity among children ages 10-17 (44.4%) and the highest obesity rate among adults (32.5%). Eight of the ten states with the highest rates of childhood overweight and obesity are in the South. One of the report's key recommendations involves increasing access to programs that help make nutritious foods more affordable and accessible in communities, schools and child-care settings, as well as providing safe places for people to engage in physical activity.

Two new studies: local wellness policies could be strengthened

Two new reports indicate that the local wellness policies developed in response to the federal requirement in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 could be strengthened, and also that implementation and evaluation of existing policies could be improved:

- [Local School Wellness Policies: How Are Schools Implementing the Congressional Mandate?](#), a new research brief released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, summarizes the evidence to date on the status of implementation of local wellness policies since the 2004 Congressional mandate.
- [Local School Wellness Policies: Assessing School District Strategies for Improving Children's Health, School Years 2006-07 and 2007-08](#) was released by Bridging the Gap, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. It is the most comprehensive ongoing study of local wellness policies that has ever been published.

Both reports indicate the quality of wellness policies vary greatly from district to district, and that implementation and evaluation are not strongly addressed. Additionally, both reports recommend allocating more resources for wellness policy implementation. To learn more about local wellness policies, access NSBA's School Health Programs ["Addressing Wellness Policies 101"](#) packet.

New resource on health disparities among black students

The CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health has developed a [health disparities webpage](#) to help school leaders and educators better understand the relationship between health and education, particularly among racial/ethnic minorities. This webpage now includes a new resource, "[Health Risks and Disparities Experienced by Black Youth](#)," which includes information on the health risks that black high school students face and action steps to address health and education disparities.

Policy and Guidance

Historic new law to regulate tobacco products

The [Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act](#), recently signed into law by President Obama, is one of the strongest actions the federal government has ever taken to reduce tobacco use. The new law is intended to, among other things, stop illegal sales of tobacco products to children and give the Food and Drug Administration the authority to require changes in tobacco product formulations. However, the law is not meant to replace successful tobacco prevention work. Schools can do their part by ensuring their tobacco policies are comprehensive and enforced. For more information on tobacco-free schools, check out the [CDC's Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction](#) and visit NSBA's new [National Consortium on Tobacco Use Prevention through Schools webpage](#).

H1N1 planning: NSBA is here to help

NSBA's School Health Programs has been actively involved in helping school leaders better prepare for the H1N1 flu pandemic. We have been making readily available on our website [new information and resources](#) on the virus. In addition, on August 3, 2009, the CDC launched its new [School Dismissal Monitoring System](#) for the 2009-10 school year in anticipation of the continued and perhaps increasing presence of H1N1 in the school-age population. So far, the CDC does not recommend dismissing students from school in response to H1N1. However, it is possible that the recommendation will change or that some schools or school districts may not follow the current recommendation based on local circumstances. To report a school closing, go to www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal.

NASBE releases childhood obesity policy guide

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) recently released the report [Preventing Childhood Obesity: A School Health Policy Guide](#). The guide was developed with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through the Leadership for Healthy Communities national program. It offers the latest policy updates and recommendations about how to promote physical education and activity and healthy eating policies in schools and provides specific models for schools to address the childhood obesity epidemic.

New online resources about joint use agreements

An effective and cost-efficient strategy for schools to collaborate with communities to provide students with positive, healthy environments outside the home is to enter into a joint use agreement. Such agreements can result in expanded student access to resources to keep them active and healthy before, during, and after school, and even throughout the summer. The new [California Joint Use Statewide Taskforce website](#) provides information and resources about joint use. For additional information about joint use, including sample joint use policies, visit the [National Policy and Legal Analysis Network \(NPLAN\) website](#).

The Stop Bullying Now! Campaign has an updated website

Bullying occurs every day in schools across the country, and can seriously affect the mental and physical health of students and lead to poorer academic performance. To help school leaders and educators deal with bullying issues, the Stop Bullying Now! Campaign provides free, downloadable and research-based resources through its recently updated [website](#). For adults, the site now offers useful

tip sheets, a state-by-state map of bullying laws, and specific resources for parents, youth advisors and educators, among others. For youth, interactive games and short animated webisodes are now front-and-center to help kids learn more about bullies, victims of bullying, and bystanders.

Practice

Five state association executives recognized for leadership in asthma

State school boards association executive directors Frank Bush (Indiana), Kathy Hayes (Michigan), Lance Melton (Montana), John Ashley (Wisconsin) and Bill Scott (Kentucky) are receiving awards for their work in making schools in their states more asthma friendly. Through the [Leadership Forum for Healthy Students and Healthy Schools](#), a collaboration between NSBA and the American Association of School Administrators with support from the CDC, these executives have staff partnering with their respective state administrator association to lead state teams that address asthma in schools. The teams have partnered with other stakeholders to help school districts in their states become more asthma- friendly. Such partnerships are not only helping students with asthma miss fewer days of school and thus be in class and ready to learn more often, but also increase revenues based on average daily attendance figures. Supported by these executive directors, the teams have put schools and school boards at the forefront of positive initiatives and have strengthened the visibility of their respective state associations.

Coordinated School Health model yields results in North Carolina district

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools recently submitted a success story to NSBA's Promising District Practices website that shows the district has elevated Coordinated School Health (CSH) as a priority. Specifically, the district has created a CSH integration team, established school health teams in every school, developed a high level of accountability and support to help establish a wellness policy, and routinely used data to identify needs and further health-related programs. In addition, the district is partnering with a local university to develop measures to link health and student academic achievement. Among the outcomes, one elementary school in the district has seen increases in staff and student attendance, test scores to meet AYP, and a culture of wellness and teamwork. All of these changes were accomplished through the use of in-kind resources and did not increase costs for the district. To learn more about this district's success, including how-to steps, lessons learned and future planning, and to access other success stories, visit NSBA's [Promising District Practices website](#).

What's Happening at NSBA's School Health Programs?

New online resource

NSBA's School Health Programs has established a new [webpage](#) for the National Consortium for Tobacco Use Prevention through Schools. The Consortium is led by NSBA as part of its tobacco-prevention work, which is supported by the CDC. On this site, you can learn about the Consortium and what's being done across the country to improve the health and well-being of young people by promoting and enforcing comprehensive tobacco-free school policies. You can also find resources that help advance comprehensive tobacco-free school policies and links to organizations working in the field of tobacco-free schools.

More ways to learn about school health

NSBA's School Health Programs is always talking about school health! Check out our [website](#) for the latest [updates and announcements](#), our [database](#) for the latest research and resources, and NSBA's blog, [Board Buzz](#), for timely discussions about school health topics.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

- Did you know that vision problems affect 1 in 20 preschoolers and 1 in 4 school-aged children?

September is [Children's Eye Health and Safety Month](#)— a great opportunity to remind school leaders of the link between vision problems and a child's ability to learn.

- September 4 — 10 is [National Suicide Prevention Week](#). The week's theme is "Partnerships for Change: Advancing Suicide Prevention Services & Practice." Since suicide is a complex and multi-dimensional problem, preventing it through collaboration is essential.
- Register now for **National Walk to School Day**, which takes place on October 7th. By registering, schools or districts can access tools to help prepare for the event, receive a chance to win prizes, and receive a weekly e-newsletter with tips and other resources. Plus, it's a chance for schools to be counted among the millions of International Walk to School participants. To register or learn more, visit the [International Walk to School USA website](#), where you can also learn about year-round Safe Routes to School programs.

Want to read past issues of Health Link? You can access archived issues on [NSBA's School Health Programs website](#): just scroll down to the Resources section and click on "Health Link."

About This E-Newsletter: Research shows a link between student health and academic achievement. *Health Link* helps state school boards associations provide relevant health information and resources to school leaders striving to keep students healthy and ready to learn. *Health Link* is published bi-monthly as a service to state school boards associations.

About NSBA's School Health Programs: NSBA's School Health Programs helps school policymakers make informed decisions by providing relevant and up-to-date information, technical assistance, and professional development on a variety of school health issues. Our work underscores the important connections between school health issues, the well-being and success of our nation's children, and the safe and effective operation of schools. We promote healthy school communities to foster excellence and equity in public education. Our activities are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and supported by NSBA.

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