

# Accountability is Related to Higher Implementation Ratings of Local School Wellness Policies

Elizabeth L Budd, MPH, Byron W Yount, MA, Cindy Schwarz, MPH, MS, RD, Debra Haire-Joshu, PhD

## Background & Design

### Background

Many local school wellness policies (LWP) have weak language, minimal impact, and lack plans for measuring implementation.



To improve the quality and implementation of LWP, this study surveyed key personnel from a national sample of high schools to

- 1) identify factors and barriers associated with implementation and
- 2) assess relationships among accountability, challenges, and implementation of LWP.

### Methods & Measures

The 40 item School Wellness Policy Implementation Questionnaire was sent to school administrators in 26 states.

### School Wellness Policy Oversight Responsibility

Measure	Frequency	Percent
<b>Who is responsible for oversight/enforcement of policies at your high school?</b>		
General Administration	41	36.6
'Wellness/Food/Athletic' Director, School Nurse	37	33.0
Committee	16	14.3
Not Sure	6	5.4

## Results

### School Wellness Policy Implementation Rating by Policy Implementation Accountability and Challenges

Measure	Response (%)	Implementation Rating (1-----10)
<b>Is your school held accountable for following/implementing the local wellness policy?</b>		
<i>Nutrition Education Goals</i>	Yes (51%) No (15%)	7.16 6.47
<i>Nutrition Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs &amp; School Meals</i>	Yes (82%) No ( 3%)	8.27 7.33
<i>Nutrition Standards for Competitive and Other Foods &amp; Beverages</i>	Yes (72%) No ( 6%)	7.82 6.17
<i>Physical Activity Goals</i>	Yes (36%) No (20%)	7.23 5.45
<i>Physical Education Goals</i>	Yes (59%) No (13%)	7.44 5.61
<i>Community &amp; Promotion Goals</i>	Yes (27%) No (20%)	7.16 4.89
<i>Evaluation Goals</i>	Yes (28%) No (13%)	6.93 4.33

Implementation Rating by Challenges	Challenges	Implementation Rating (1-----10)
<i>Nutrition Education Goals</i>	Zero Challenges 1 – 2 Challenges ≥3 Challenges	7.89 6.57 6.13
<i>Nutrition Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs &amp; School Meals</i>	Zero Challenges 1 – 2 Challenges ≥3 Challenges	8.47 7.88 7.71
<i>Nutrition Standards for Competitive &amp; Other Foods and Beverages</i>	Zero Challenges 1 – 2 Challenges ≥3 Challenges	8.27 7.33 7.02
<i>Physical Activity Goals</i>	Zero Challenges 1 – 2 Challenges ≥3 Challenges	7.38 6.26 6.08
<i>Physical Education Goals</i>	Zero Challenges 1 – 2 Challenges ≥3 Challenges	7.94 6.72 6.30
<i>Community &amp; Promotion Goals</i>	Zero Challenges 1 – 2 Challenges ≥3 Challenges	6.35 6.21 5.32
<i>Evaluation Goals</i>	Zero Challenges 1 – 2 Challenges ≥3 Challenges	6.91 5.70 5.38

\*Mann-Whitney Test (p>0.05), †Kruskal-Wallis One-Way ANOVA by Ranks (p<0.05)

## Results

- 112 (37.3%) questionnaires were returned
- Most schools (83%) have taken more passive approaches (i.e. made staff aware of policy requirements/developments) to prepare for policy implementation.
- Fewer schools (25.7%) have taken more aggressive approaches (e.g. acquired funding) toward implementation.
- Top Challenges to LWP Implementation:
  - 1) Lack of resources (e.g. funding)
  - 2) Lack of support
  - 3) Lack of accountability
- Respondents from schools that were held accountable for their LWP reported higher implementation ratings.
- The more challenges a school faced, the lower the rating of LWP implementation.



## Conclusions

These findings suggest that increased 1) accountability, 2) support and 3) resources are critical to overcoming challenges to implementation of LWP.

Deficiencies in these three areas need to be addressed before the impact of LWP on the health of students can be accurately assessed.