STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF LOCAL WELLNESS POLICIES IN GEORGIA

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Georgia State University
Overview

- Evaluation of wellness policies in Georgia
- Process
- Instrument
- Findings on compliance and associations
- Model policies
- Limitations
- Next steps
Project Goals

(1) Assess compliance of school districts in Georgia with the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004,

(2) Evaluate the strength of wellness policy goals, and

(3) Analyze relationships between demographic characteristics of Georgia school systems and policy compliance and strength.
Procedure

- GaDOE issued memo to all GA school systems requesting copies of local wellness policies be sent to GSU.
- Wellness policies received from 176 of 180 public school districts in GA (97.8% response rate).
  - Findings represent 1,551,797 (99.3%) of the students enrolled in the Georgia public school systems.
- An advisory committee made up of GaDOE representatives, school nutrition directors, and other school leadership reps and physical activity experts was convened to advise the GSU research team.
The Review Process

- The research team developed an evaluation instrument to assess districts’ wellness policies. It included four sections:
  1. Demographic data for each district
  2. Compliance with minimum requirements set forth in the Reauthorization Act.
  3. Degree to which wellness policy contained optional wellness policy provisions encouraged by the Georgia Department of Education.
  4. Identification of model wellness policies and practices.
- GSU research team performed double blind reviews of each policy.
- Discrepancies were reconciled by a 3rd reviewer when necessary.
- Preliminary reports mailed to each district.
- Comments received by 70 districts, 14 adjustments made.
### Summary of demographic data for 176 Georgia school districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Range:</th>
<th>Percentiles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=176)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Min.</td>
<td>Max.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>8,817</td>
<td>17,801</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>149,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per FTE Expenditure</td>
<td>$7,945</td>
<td>$1,233</td>
<td>$5,945</td>
<td>$15,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Schools Meeting AYP</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>13.52%</td>
<td>2.88%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>24.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average daily participation for breakfast</td>
<td>41.08%</td>
<td>16.99%</td>
<td>8.17%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average daily participation for lunch</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
<td>9.92%</td>
<td>44.77%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
County Profile Designations of Georgia School Districts (n=176)

- **Urban**: 19 (11%)
- **Suburban**: 62 (35%)
- **Rural Growth**: 61 (35%)
- **Rural Decline**: 34 (19%)
Model Policies: Nutrition Education

- A number of school districts have innovative model wellness practices that could be replicated in other districts.
  - School menu boards will reflect a Good, Better, Best label for the menus served daily.
  - Nutrition information for products offered in vending machines will be readily available at the point of purchase.
  - Provide a “Nutritional Moment” from school nutrition staff on the intercom at least once a week.
  - All student-based activities are re-examined to determine if nutrition education or physical activity can be incorporated into a non-traditional health activity.
Model Policies: Nutrition Guidelines

- All foods and beverages sold or served on campus will be in compliance with the current USDA Guidelines for Americans.
- Vending machines guidelines will be modified to offer healthy options.
- Class party menu ideas
- Keeping nutrition in mind when planning fundraising
- Engaging parents and providing nutrition information
Model Policies: Menu Planning

- Healthier choices shall be sold at a lower price.
- Students and parents shall be periodically surveyed about their food and nutrition needs at school.
- Students will be involved in “taste testing” of new, as well as current, menu items.
Model Policies: Expanding Access

- Participate in offering meals during breaks in the school calendar and coordinate with other agencies to operate or assist with a summer feeding program.
- Encourage consumption of school breakfast (e.g., bus schedules, grab-and-go.)
Adequate Time for Meals

- Students should be provided adequate time to eat, at least 10 minutes for breakfast and 20 minutes for lunch, from the time the student is seated.
- A minimum 30-minutes uninterrupted lunch period should be scheduled.
Model Policies: Physical Education

- At a minimum, all students in grades K-8 will be involved daily in a physical education class.
- Students’ fitness will be assessed two times per year.
- All students in grades K-12 will receive daily physical education (or the equivalent of 150 minutes/week for elementary and 225 minutes/week for middle and high schools) for the entire school year.
Extracurricular Activities

- Safe Routes to School
- Partnerships to provide after-school programs
- Encourage use of campus as a wellness venue
- Access to physical activity facilities outside school hours
- Establish a pedometer walking program
Family and Staff Wellness

- Creation of a wellness club and activities for faculty.
- Faculty and staff are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle through proper nutrition and physical activity.
- Each school will plan and implement a family health and wellness event... suggestions include a family walk night and health fair.
Wellness Committees and Evaluation

- Establishment of a School Health Advisory Council, use of the School Health Index in developing an annual plan for school wellness.
- Evaluate possible financial impact from healthy vending policies.
- Wellness Committee will establish yearly goals and benchmarks.
- The superintendent shall develop a summary report every 3 years on district wellness compliance.
Clean and Hygienic Environment

- Hand sanitizer dispensers will be available at every school in different stations throughout the building.
- Offer opportunity for hand washing or hand sanitizing before students eat meals or snacks.
- Schools should take reasonable steps to accommodate the tooth-brushing regimens of students with special oral health needs.
## Results: Compliance with Reauthorization Act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the local wellness policy include…</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Goals for nutrition education?</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(98.3%)</td>
<td>(1.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Goals for physical activity?</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(99.4%)</td>
<td>(0.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Goals for other school-based activities to promote wellness?</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(94.3%)</td>
<td>(5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on each school campus under the local education agency during the school day?</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(92.0%)</td>
<td>(8.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A provision for assurance that guidelines for reimbursable meals are not less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to subsections…of the Child Nutrition Act and section…of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act as those regulations and guidance apply to schools?</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(84.7%)</td>
<td>(15.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy?</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(88.1%)</td>
<td>(11.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A reference to involvement of parents, students, and representatives of the school nutrition authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in the development of the school wellness policy?</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(61.9%)</td>
<td>(38.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3: Percentage of Districts in Compliance for each Requirement

- Nutrition Education Goals
- Physical Activity Goals
- OSBA Goals
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods on campus
- Guidelines for reimbursable meals
- Plan for measuring implementation
- Involvement of stakeholders

Legend:
- Red: no
- Blue: yes
### Summary of Compliance Based on Seven Required Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of items in compliance</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of districts</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of districts</td>
<td>51.70%</td>
<td>27.30%</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cumulative # of districts</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cumulative % of districts</td>
<td>51.70%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>92.60%</td>
<td>97.70%</td>
<td>98.80%</td>
<td>99.40%</td>
<td>99.40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Guidelines</td>
<td>0 No Reference</td>
<td>1 Limited Reference</td>
<td>2 Substantial Reference</td>
<td>3 Exceptional Reference</td>
<td></td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. establish that foods sold in cafeteria a la carte, vending machines, snack bars</td>
<td>121 (68.8%)</td>
<td>20 (11.4%)</td>
<td>13 (7.4%)</td>
<td>22 (12.5%)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. establish that nutritional composition of foods and beverages, whether part of</td>
<td>133 (75.6%)</td>
<td>27 (15.3%)</td>
<td>15 (8.5%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>other food sales, is posted for students’ information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. establish goals that maximize participation in school lunch program</td>
<td>104 (59.1%)</td>
<td>59 (33.5%)</td>
<td>11 (6.3%)</td>
<td>2 (1.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. establish that schools offer school breakfast and encourage maximum participation</td>
<td>60 (34.1%)</td>
<td>54 (30.7%)</td>
<td>55 (31.3%)</td>
<td>7 (4.0%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>in school breakfast</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. establish that school staff members who supervise student dining are trained to</td>
<td>91 (51.7%)</td>
<td>66 (37.5%)</td>
<td>18 (10.2%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourage healthy eating patterns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. establish goals that allow students adequate time to eat meals</td>
<td>100 (56.8%)</td>
<td>44 (25.0%)</td>
<td>26 (14.8%)</td>
<td>6 (3.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. establish that food or beverages are not used for reward or punishment</td>
<td>116 (65.9%)</td>
<td>31 (17.6%)</td>
<td>28 (15.9%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity Goals</td>
<td>0 No Reference</td>
<td>1 Limited Reference</td>
<td>2 Substantial Reference</td>
<td>3 Exceptional Reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. aim to increase access of students to physical activity programs and/or facilities outside the school day</td>
<td>74 (42.0%)</td>
<td>66 (37.5%)</td>
<td>32 (18.2%)</td>
<td>4 (2.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. support provision of regular physical education where all students learn, practice, and are assessed on developmentally appropriate activity-related skills and knowledge</td>
<td>41 (23.3%)</td>
<td>104 (59.1%)</td>
<td>30 (17.0%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. focus on increasing the time, frequency, and intensity of student physical activity before, during, and/or after school</td>
<td>72 (40.9%)</td>
<td>70 (39.8%)</td>
<td>26 (14.8%)</td>
<td>8 (4.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. promote delivery of physical education by certified physical educators or appropriately trained classroom teachers</td>
<td>124 (70.5%)</td>
<td>10 (5.7%)</td>
<td>18 (10.2%)</td>
<td>24 (13.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. seek to prevent use of physical activity as a reward or punishment</td>
<td>115 (65.3%)</td>
<td>33 (18.8%)</td>
<td>26 (14.8%)</td>
<td>2 (1.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Summary of Scores for Nutrition Education Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition Education Goals</th>
<th>0 No Reference</th>
<th>1 Limited Reference</th>
<th>2 Substantial Reference</th>
<th>3 Exceptional Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. focus on improving quantity and/or quality of classroom nutrition instruction</td>
<td>54 (30.7%)</td>
<td>79 (44.9%)</td>
<td>41 (23.3%)</td>
<td>2 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. reinforce healthy nutrition messages through the school environment</td>
<td>64 (36.4%)</td>
<td>62 (35.2%)</td>
<td>46 (26.1%)</td>
<td>4 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. focus on assuring adequate nutrition training for teachers and nutrition staff</td>
<td>77 (43.8%)</td>
<td>57 (32.4%)</td>
<td>39 (22.2%)</td>
<td>3 (1.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. seek to ensure cafeteria nutrition instructions/information is scientifically-based</td>
<td>98 (55.7%)</td>
<td>36 (20.5%)</td>
<td>41 (23.3%)</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

- 51% of districts were found to be in compliance with all of the requirements in the Reauthorization Act.
- 38% of districts did not reference the involvement of community partners in the development of their wellness policies.
- 15% of districts did not include guidelines for reimbursable meals.
- 12% of districts did not include a plan for measuring policy implementation.
- “Exceptional” policy goals were few.
Data collected were analyzed using SPSS. Pearson’s correlations were used to test for associations between district-level demographic variables (the independent variables) and ratings from the inventory evaluation tool (the dependent variables).
### Table 2: Bivariate Correlation of Demographic Variables and Nutrition Goals

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite score for goals related to:</th>
<th>% schools meeting AYP</th>
<th>Graduation rate</th>
<th>Economic status of students</th>
<th>County profile</th>
<th>District size</th>
<th>Per FTE total expenditure</th>
<th>Nutrition leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition education</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.224**</td>
<td>.157*</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition guidelines</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>-.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall nutrition</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < 0.01 (two-tailed)**  
**p < 0.05 (two-tailed)**
### Table 3: Bivariate Correlation of Demographic Variables and Ratings on Specific Criterion

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating score for goals related to:</th>
<th>% of schools meeting AYP</th>
<th>Graduation rate</th>
<th>Economic status of students</th>
<th>County profile*</th>
<th>District size</th>
<th>Per FTE total expenditure</th>
<th>Nutrition leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing school health committees or wellness councils</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.110</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting evaluation of school environment through School Health Index or comparable assessment</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.156*</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.150*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as the nutrition standard for food/beverage sold/served on campus</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>-.106</td>
<td>-.155*</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>-.052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

- Districts with higher graduation rates and/or higher economic status of students were positively associated with higher composite scores for nutrition education.

- A statistically significant and positive relationship was identified between districts reporting higher graduation rates and having higher composite scores for other school-based activities, which included, for example, references to health committees, school health environment assessment, staff wellness, and engaging families.
Findings

- There were no statistically significant associations for composite scores on nutrition guidelines, overall nutrition, or physical activity.
- Larger district size and higher levels of school leadership were shown to be positively associated with wellness policies promoting School Health Index.
Summary of Findings

- The majority of Georgia school systems were in compliance with required criteria.
- Nutrition education was the area most consistently referenced in districts’ policies.
  - For instance, almost 70% of districts made a reference to improving classroom nutrition instruction.
Summary of Findings (cont.)

- Several district-level demographic variables appear to be factors of influence on optional wellness policy goals
  - graduation rates, percentage of schools meeting AYP, and economic status of students
- Wellness policy goals for physical activity were not as comprehensive or robust.
- Only a small number of districts included nutrition guideline that cover all foods and beverages sold or served in schools
Summary of Findings (cont.)

- Rural and urban districts had higher ratings on goals related to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines
  - These areas may have higher free or reduced lunch and less competitive foods... maybe demand is lower
- Almost 40% of schools did not reference community involvement (largest area of noncompliance)
  - Community involvement can lead to increased accountability and increased focus or effectiveness.
National Context

- Compliance varies across states and districts
  - 51% compliance for GA is low relative to national studies and other states
- Data collection methods vary
- No common instrument for policy evaluation
Recommendations

- Focus on increasing involvement of stakeholders in wellness policy development and implementation
- Offer assistance to resource poor districts
- Develop a common instrument for evaluation
- Monitor implementation progress
- Promote evidence-informed practices
- Measure effectiveness of wellness policies on desired outcomes
- Share model practices among districts
Limitations of the Study

1. Wellness policies are not all encompassing of ongoing wellness activities in schools
2. Implementation of goals set forth in policies was not evaluated
Summary

- Obesity in US has reached epidemic proportions
- Schools are one of three key settings for shaping the behavior of our youth (communities, families)
- Georgia school districts have developed wellness policies to make school environments more healthy
- The strength of wellness policies varied greatly but was generally low.
- Districts could benefit from additional guidance, training, and resources for school wellness.
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- Membership in an SNEB specialty division
- Connection to other professionals through SNEB listserv
- [www.sneb.org/join](http://www.sneb.org/join)
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