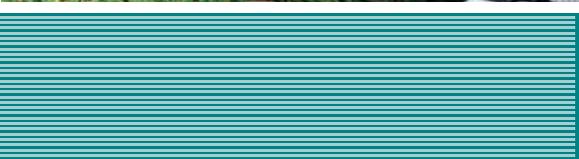




SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS Through Healthy Food Policies

ACT NOW FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE



A collaborative project between California Project LEAN and the California School Boards Association to create a healthier school environment through nutrition policy.

Learn strategies and results from a statewide campaign with schools and communities.





An Epidemic: Childhood Obesity

The general health of children and youth is at risk, in part, due to poor nutrition and inadequate physical activity. For the first time in two centuries, the current generation of children in America may have shorter life expectancies than their parents due to the rapid rise in childhood obesity.

They eat too much fast food and soda that is high in fat or sugar, and too few fruits and vegetables. They are also less physically active than ever.

Why Schools?

Local school boards play a critical role by setting expectations and making important policy decisions that determine whether and how student health is a priority throughout the school district.

Proper nutrition and adequate physical activity have tremendous implications for academic achievement and long-term health. Thus, it is imperative that schools—along with children, parents and communities—support, teach, model, and practice a healthier lifestyle.

To focus school boards' attention on student nutrition issues, California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) (CPL) and the California School Boards Association (CSBA) have joined forces to provide boards with useful data for informed decision making and to assist them in adopting policies that support healthy practices. The **Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies—Act Now for Academic Achievement** campaign is a collaborative, research-based program that has demonstrated success in increasing the number of nutrition-related school district policies throughout California.

Poor diet and overweight/obesity increase the risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, dental disease, and other chronic diseases. Proper nourishment can have a positive effect on children's cognitive development, behavior, ability to concentrate, school attendance, and educational performance. Physical activity has a positive effect on alertness, mental function, and learning.

“The program serves as a model for local school districts and states who are exploring strategies to address the challenges posed by childhood obesity and its related health issues.”

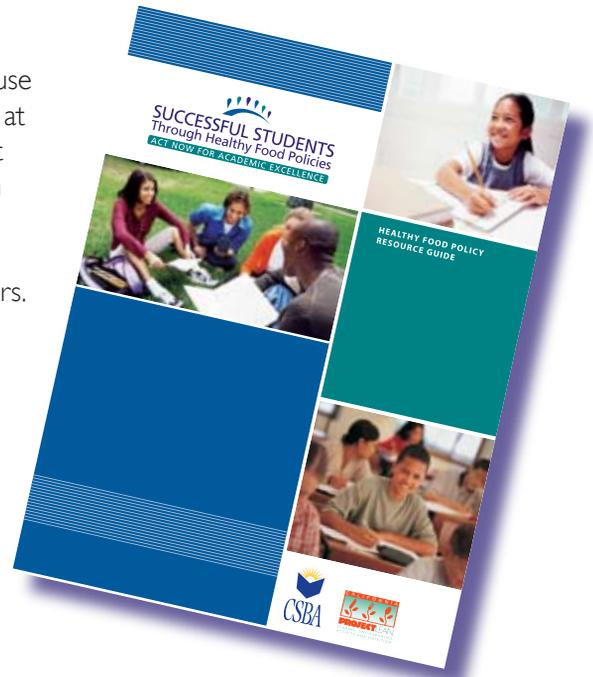
*Martin Gonzalez
Assistant Executive Director,
Governance and Policy Services
California School Boards Association*



What Can School Boards Do?

Schools alone cannot meet all the nutrition and physical activity needs of children. However, because children spend so much of their time at school or at school-related activities, schools can be a vital part of the solution. A comprehensive school program can help provide the skills, social support, and environmental reinforcement necessary to adopt lifelong healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

The **Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies** campaign targets school boards because they are in a powerful position to encourage and facilitate programs that enhance student health.



“Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies is a leader in promoting healthier lifestyles for California students. Students who are properly nourished are better prepared to learn, making the benefit life-long.”

*Secretary of Health and Human Services
Tommy Thompson*

Working closely with the district superintendent, school boards can:

- Set a vision and goals which establish good nutrition and good health as district priorities.
- Become advocates for good nutrition and health in their communities.
- Adopt policies that promote healthier eating habits and physical activity, such as limiting the sale of unhealthy foods and beverages, banning the advertisement of these unhealthy foods and beverages, and providing adequate time for physical activity.
- Adopt curriculum guidelines for effective nutrition education and physical education.
- Establish budget priorities to allocate adequate resources to nutrition education and physical education programs.
- Encourage collaboration among organizations within the community, such as YMCA and parks.
- Monitor program implementation and outcomes.



Building ^A Comprehensive Strategy

An Innovative Partnership

The **Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies** campaign was initiated by CPL with a focus on California school districts with high schools in low-income communities. The plan and subsequent intervention activities were the result of collaborations with CSBA, social marketing and health education experts at the University of South Florida College of Public Health, and CPL's 10 state and local regional coordinators.

The purposes of the collaborative effort were to:

- Increase the frequency with which nutrition-related policy issues are discussed at school board meetings.
- Increase the number of school districts that adopt and enforce school nutrition policies.
- Facilitate board member involvement in sponsorship of nutrition-related policy initiatives.

Four Major Strategies Were Implemented

1 Understanding the Audience

Formative research was conducted to better understand school board member's nutrition-related policy decision making. The research included:

- Literature review of school policy.
- Interviews with school board members and other key stakeholders.
- Focus groups with school board members.
- Strategy sessions with school board members and partners.
- Survey of California school board members.

The research revealed school board members' beliefs and perceptions of nutrition-related school policies, their perceived needs for professional development and training, policies they do or do not support, and spokespersons who could influence their nutrition-related policy decision making.

2 Motivational Messages and Materials

A key component of the campaign was the development and dissemination of information designed to educate school board members about nutrition issues and assist in policy development. The following communication resources and tools were developed:

The **Healthy Food Policy Resource Guide**—provides background information on the issues, describes actions that school districts and school boards can take to provide a comprehensive program on nutrition and physical activity, and provides tools for policy development. Over 3,000 *Guides* have been widely used by school boards, food service directors, parents, county offices of education, and others.

Sample Board Policies and Administrative Regulations—are made available through CSBA on related topics, such as goals of the district, the district's food service/child nutrition program, free and reduced price meals program, other food sales, physical education, comprehensive health education, and local wellness policies.

Fact Sheets—were developed on the key issues of importance to school boards, and distributed locally during presentations and one-on-one meetings with school board members, parents, and community leaders. Topics included nutrition and youth health statistics, creative school fund-raising ideas, and nutrition, physical activity, and academic achievement.

Advertisements—communicated the campaign message and ran in CSBA's quarterly magazine, *California Schools*.

Articles, Case Studies, and Resources—appeared in CSBA's newsletter and magazine, *California Schools*; publications of the National School Boards Association, Association of California School Administrators, National Association of State Boards of Education, and Parent-Teacher Association; Healthy Kids Resource Catalog; and on the CSBA and CPL websites.

3 Professional Workshops

School board members needed assistance to help them develop sound nutrition-related policies, and provide community leadership on the issues. Conferences, workshops, and one-on-one trainings offered an opportunity to share information in an interactive setting. School board members were trained through workshops that included the following topics:

- Linkages between nutrition, physical activity, and student learning.
- Scope and risks associated with the rise of obesity among Americans, especially youth.
- Making school policies work.
- Discussing the school board's role in community relations and policy development.
- Understanding the policy process and analysis of sample policies.
- Success stories from other school districts.

These trainings continue to be supplemented by professional development activities carried out by CPL regional representatives and CSBA.



4 Mobilize Communities

The **Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies** campaign helped mobilize communities to advocate for nutrition policy initiatives. CPL regional coordinators were trained to work with community partners, including health experts, food service directors, parents, and students, to influence school districts to establish policies that support healthy eating and physical activity.

A guidebook, **Reaching School Board Members**, was developed for community groups on working effectively with school board members on healthy nutrition and physical activity policies.

CPL state and regional coordinators, and CSBA offered ongoing technical assistance to school boards in their establishment and implementation of policies. Local health experts provided credibility and research for school board members who championed the issue in their own school districts.

“In partnership with CSBA, we worked with schools and communities to create healthier school environments that make it easier for students to eat better.”

*Peggy Agron
Program Chief
California Project LEAN*

Deliver Results

A program evaluation showed that, in less than two years, significant progress was made towards:

- Increasing the importance of nutrition issues among school board members.
- The adoption of school board policies.
- Greater support from school board members.

The project helped create nutrition policies to increase the availability of healthy foods to one million of California’s 6.3 million students. Approximately, 10 percent of school districts, with at least one high school, have developed or are developing healthier nutrition policies.

Budget considerations continue to be a guiding force. The campaign addressed these concerns by showing how nutrition policies need not adversely impact budgets and by exploring new opportunities to generate support and revenue that are not based on the sale of unhealthy foods.

*“I encourage all school programs to use a similar approach to California’s **Successful Students Through Healthy Food Policies** program. We are using many of the same resources and strategies in our state.”*

*Joan Ware
Utah Gold Medal School Program
Utah Department of Health*



“We like to think of ourselves as a youthful nation focused on healthy lifestyles, but behind this image is a troubling reality—a generation of young people that is in large measure inactive, unfit, eating poorly, and at an alarming rate, becoming obese. CDC is committed to working with health partners to foster healthy behaviors to help reduce the burden of obesity in our nation.”

Julie Gerberding
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Awards

Innovation in Prevention Award, 2004

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Excellence in Work/Advocacy Award, 2004

Martin Gonzalez, California School Boards Association

Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors

Partners

Healthy Food Policy Resource Guide—offers a step-by-step approach for creating a healthy school environment so students can practice healthy eating habits while at school.

Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide—revised and expanded version of the *Healthy Food Policy Resource Guide*. Includes new information on local wellness and physical activity resources, sample policies, case studies, and fact sheets.

Guides are available at

www.CSBA.org

Reaching School Board Members Guide—helps community groups create “win-win” situations when working on school district nutrition and physical activity issues. Available in English and Spanish.

Playing the Policy Game—highlights nutrition and physical activity policies in the school and community that teens can pursue with adult guidance. Available in English and Spanish.

California’s Obesity Crisis: Focus on Solutions, What Schools Can Do, Policy Briefs—provide a quick, easy-to-use reference for high profile subjects in the school nutrition and physical activity environment.

Food on the Run: Lessons From a Youth Nutrition and Physical Activity Campaign—provides examples of how Food on the Run, a California-based project worked with youth advocates to make healthy eating and physical activity easier to do at their schools.

Taking the Fizz out of Soda Contracts—provides resources that can be utilized when discussing school district policy on soda and other sugary drinks with parents, students, community members, and school decision-makers.

Publications are available at
www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org

Partners

A number of organizations, agencies, and individuals have joined with CPL and CSBA to multiply and reinforce the message to school boards, including:

Association of California School Administrators
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
California Department of Education
California Food Policy Advocates
California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families
California Obesity Prevention Initiative
California Parent-Teacher Association

California School Nurses Organization
National Association of State Boards of Education
National School Boards Association
Public Health Institute
School Health Connections
Strategic Alliance for Healthy Active Environments
United States Department of Agriculture

Project Support

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CPL is a joint program of the California Department of Health Services and the Public Health Institute. Its mission is to increase healthy eating and physical activity through youth empowerment, policy and environmental change strategies, and community-based solutions. CPL works with state and local physical activity and nutrition leaders to conduct programs in communities throughout California.



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CSBA is a nonprofit association consisting of nearly all of the state's 1,000 school districts and county offices of education. The member-driven organization supports the governance team—school board members, superintendents, and senior administrative staff—in its complex leadership role, offering policy services, policy analysis, advocacy, publications, continuing education, financial programs, legal services, and more.

“We sought first to understand what tools and information school board members needed in order to make nutrition a higher priority and then developed and delivered those resources.”

*Victoria Berends
Marketing Manager
California Project LEAN*