

Approaches to Measuring Obesity- related Public Policies for Use in Quantitative Evaluations:

Examples from State and Local Policy Environments

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- Brief overview of public policy strategies for addressing the obesity epidemic
- Factors to consider when evaluating public policies
- School district-level policy evaluation examples
- State level policy evaluation example
- Local level policy evaluation example
- Parting words

POLICY STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC

Obesity Policy/Environmental Strategies

State and National

Local and Community

School and Organizational

Individual and Household

State level policies addressing the built environment

Availability and accessibility of physical activity opportunities

Comprehensiveness of school district wellness policies

State level policies and legislation around Safe Routes to School

Information on healthy eating and physical activity opportunities from key informant interviews

State taxation of beverages, snack foods, and restaurant food

Federal and state policies related to school district wellness policies

Height and weight, physical activity, and measures of healthy eating household food expenditures

Presence and content of vending machines at school

Frequency and length of physical education and recess

Implementation of school district wellness policies

Availability and accessibility of healthy food and beverages in stores and restaurants

Marketing of food/beverages at school

Availability of various foods/beverages in the school environment

Awareness and implementation of Alliance for a Healthier Generation Guidelines

Characteristics of the built environment that impact on physical activity

National food and beverage television advertising

Local zoning codes, regulations, and ordinances that can impact on healthy eating and physical activity

Marketing of healthy/unhealthy foods and beverages in communities

State policies related to healthy eating and physical activity

Market-level PSAs related to healthy eating, physical activity, and obesity

bridging the gap

Research Informing Practice & Policy
for Healthy Youth Behavior

Factors to Consider When Evaluating Public Policies for Use in Assessing their Impact-1

1. Underlying evaluation/research/surveillance purpose
 - Examples:
 - What is the impact of a certain state/community policy on community-level behavior change?
 - How responsive have districts been to a federal mandate?
2. Study scope
 - Sample size (# districts, communities, states, etc.)
 - Resources (time, \$, staffing, expertise)
3. Type of data seeking
 - Quantitative or qualitative
4. Role of policy in study design
 - Type of variable: dependent, independent, control
5. Policy complexity
6. Policy jurisdiction
 - Federal, state, local, district
7. Type of Law
 - Statutory, Administrative, Case Law

Factors to Consider When Evaluating Public Policies for Use in Assessing their Impact-2

8. Policy Type

- Enacted vs. pending
- Codified vs. legislation/individual rules/regulations
- Dealing with repealers and vetos

9. Periodicity

- Reference date(s) for your policy data
- Annual time points, time-series measures

10. Policy source availability

- Challenges with historical policy collection

10. Policy data collection approach

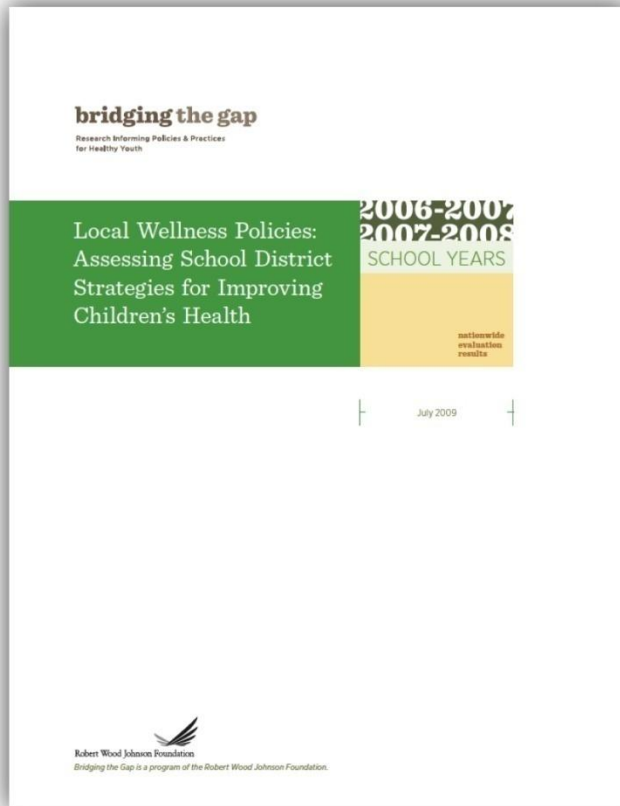
- Primary legal/policy collection
- Survey

A few suggestions for systematically evaluating public policies

- Consistency, consistency, consistency
- Coding instruments/tools
- Documentation
 - Decision rules/protocols
 - Dealing with the 'grey' areas of policies
- Trained coders
- Reliability coding
- Linking with outcome data to assess whether the policy measurement tool(s) is working the way intended

SCHOOL DISTRICT LEVEL POLICY EVALUATION EXAMPLE

Local Wellness Policies— Nationwide Evaluation

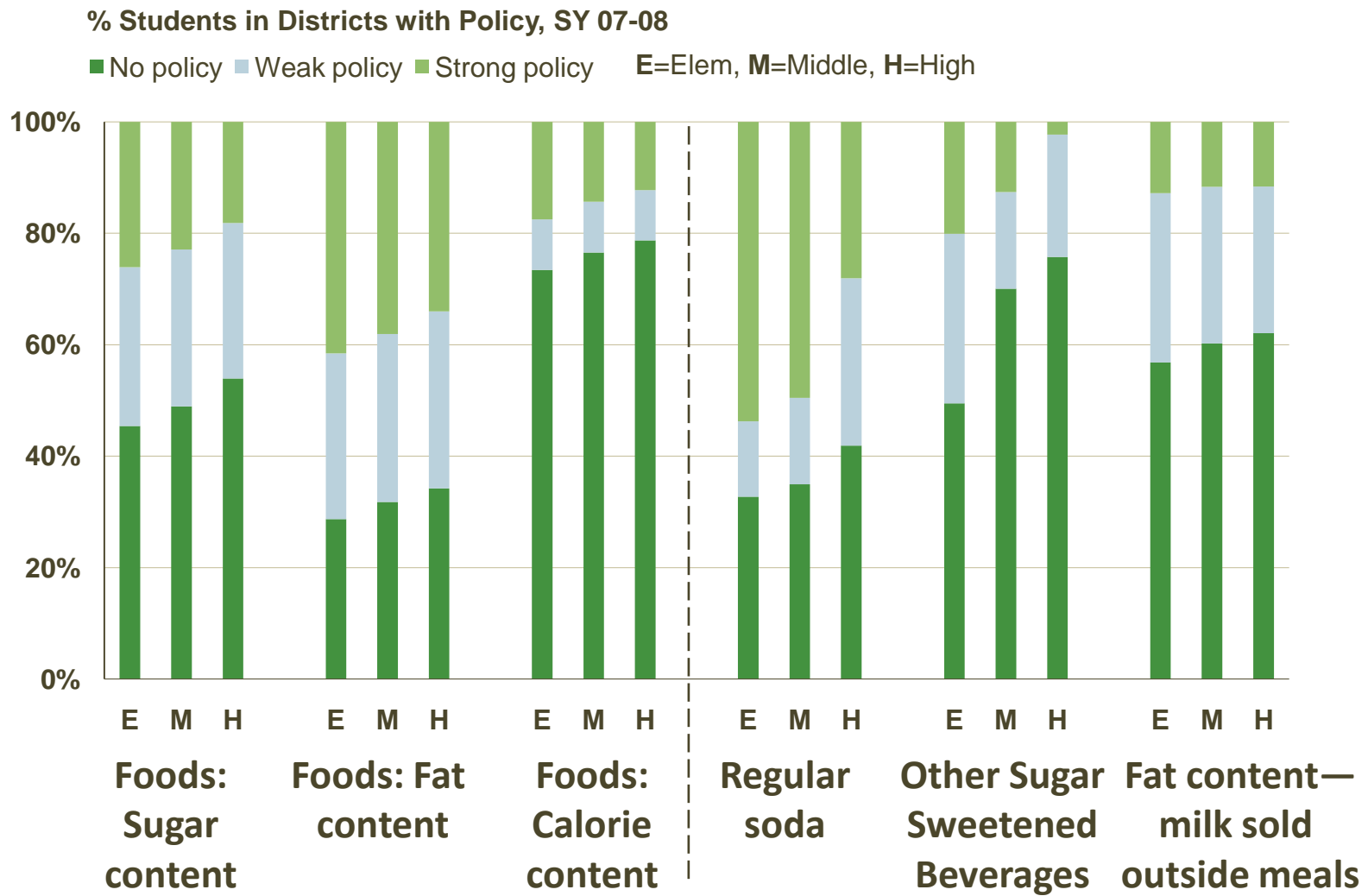


- Local Wellness Policies: Assessing School District Strategies for Improving Children’s Health. School Years 2006-07 and 2007-08.
- Executive Summary, Monograph and backup data available at:
- www.bridgingthegapresearch.org

- Ongoing nationwide evaluation of school district wellness policies required as of 1st day 2006-07 school year under P.L. 108-265, Section 204
 - Nationally representative sample of 579 and 641 school districts, respectively, for school years 06-07 and 07-08
 - Coding nearly completed for SY 08-09 and collection underway for SY 09-10
- Primary policy collection and analysis, included wellness policy and all associated regulations/guidelines/procedures
 - Also included cross-referenced policies/models/embedded state laws

- Policies coded by grade level using adaptation of Schwartz et al. (JADA, 2009) scheme
 - Focus on required wellness policy elements:
 - Goals for nutrition education
 - School meal requirements
 - Competitive food guidelines
 - Goals for physical activity
 - Implementation plans
 - Also included provisions for physical education
- Policies evaluated using an ordinal coding scheme:
 - 0: No policy/provision
 - 1: Weak policy/provision (should, encourage, may, try, attempt)
 - 2: Strong policy/provision (must, shall, require)
- Data presented weighted to %age of students nationwide in districts with given policy provision

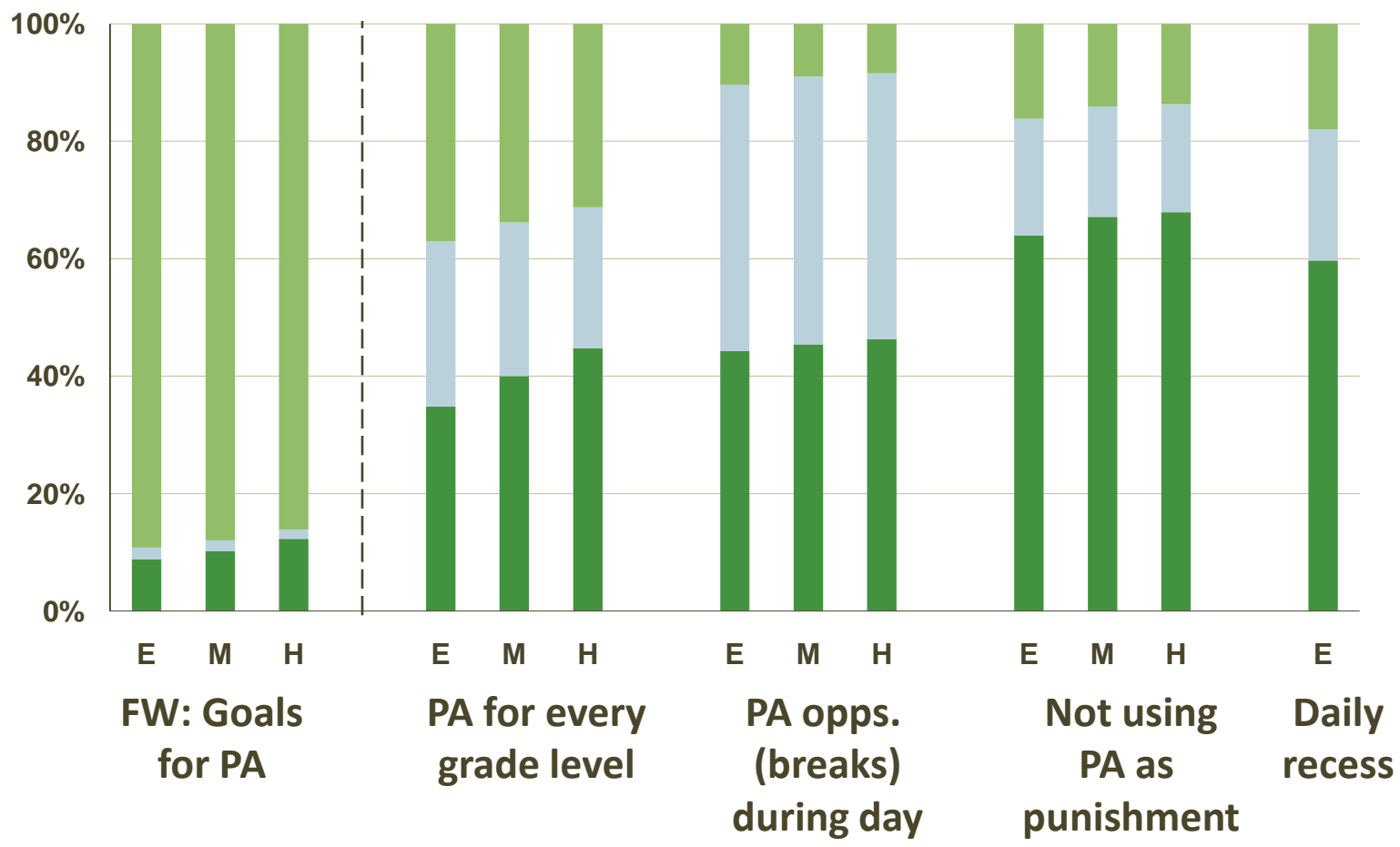
Wellness Policy Coding Example: Competitive Food Content Restrictions



Wellness Policy Coding Example: Physical Activity (PA) Policies are Relatively Weak

% Students in Districts with Policy, SY 07-08

■ No policy ■ Weak policy ■ Strong policy E=Elem, M=Middle, H=High



STATE LEVEL POLICY EVALUATION EXAMPLE

Methods

- Data Source: State Laws
 - Statutory (legislative) and administrative (regulatory) laws effective as of September 2007 were examined using the Lexis-Nexis state legal databases for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to determine the presence and extent of FTSP-related provisions.
- State Law Evaluation Topics (and coding levels: 0=no, 1=sugg., 2=req.)
 - Establishment of FTSP* (yes/no)
 - Initiatives to source locally grown F&V in schools* (0/1/2)
 - Funding/grants for FTSP (0/1/2; \$)
 - FTSP includes nutrition education (0/1/2)
 - Training for food service personnel (0/1/2)
 - Establishment of FTS council (0/1/2)
 - Establishment of contact person b/w DOE and DOA (0/1/2)
 - TA to districts to establish FTSP* (0/1/2)
 - Requirement of district to report to state on FTSP (0/1/2)
 - State Evaluation and reporting on FTSP (0/1/2) *Focus at the state level

Coding Example: State FTS Laws

Topic	Number of States with Provision (N=14 states with FTS-related laws)		
	0=Not mentioned	1=Suggested	2=Required
Other state F&V initiative (not FTS)	7	5	2
Funding/incentives to support FTS programs	6	5	3
FTS includes nutrition education	10	2	2
Training for food svc on local sourcing	10	2	2
FTS council established	12	1	1
TA to districts to implement FTS	7	2	5
Requires district reporting to state	14	0	0
State evaluation and reporting on FTS	11	0	3

LOCAL POLICY EVALUATION EXAMPLE

Example from the Bridging the Gap Study

- Component of the Bridging the Gap nationwide evaluation of the relationship between state laws, local policies, community environments, school practices and secondary school student attitudes, behaviors and weight outcomes
- Types of policies being collected
 - State laws, plans
 - County/municipal codes, ordinances, and non-codified (executive) policies
- Policies related to the built environment and food environment
- Advisory panel for developing policy evaluation tools

Local Zoning Code Example: Markers of Walkability— in development

MARKERS OF WALKABILITY	Design standards/ guidelines specifically address pedestrian access, bicycles/lanes, trails, street connectivity, etc.			Walking/ biking/ pedestrian provisions (oriented to active-living)			Strength of walkability marker relative to district/zone				Terms used to determine “walkability” (e.g., pedestrian, pedestrian/street furniture, bicycle, etc.)
	District/Zone/Type of Development	YES	NO	Not Appl.	YES	NO	Not Appl.	REQ.	ENCR.	Not Addr.	
a. Transect zones/districts	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Public/civic/gvt. use districts	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Schools/education districts	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Park district	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Forest (preserve) district	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Open space	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Recreation	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Residential	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Commercial	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Mixed-use	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Pedestrian-oriented district	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Pedestrian-oriented dev. (POD)	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Planned unit dev. (PUD)	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Tradl. neighborhood dev. (TND)	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Transit-oriented dev. (TOD)	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. New urbanism dev./dist.	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Downtown district (see protocol)	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	
a. Shopping district (see protocol)	1	0	8	1	0	8	2	1	0	8	

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BTG Local Zoning Markers of Walkability

Pilot Coding Example

MARKERS OF WALKABILITY	Design standards add. walkability	Walking/ biking/ Ped. provisions (oriented to active-living)		Strength of walkability 5marker relative to district/zone			Terms used to determine "walkability" (e.g., pedestrian, pedestrian/street furniture, bicycle, etc.)
		# YES	# YES	# NO	# REQ.	# ENCR.	
District/Zone/Type of Development							
a. Transect zones/districts	1	1	0	1	0	0	Filled in for each community, as appropriate
a. Public/civic/gvt. use districts	10	2	8	1	1	8	
a. Schools/education districts	2	0	2	0	0	2	
a. Park district	4	2	2	1	1	2	
a. Forest (preserve) district	4	0	4	0	0	4	
a. Open space	30	9	21	4	6	20	
a. Recreation	9	2	7	1	1	7	
a. Residential	40	1	39	0	1	39	
a. Commercial	39	4	35	4	1	34	
a. Mixed-use	18	10	8	6	5	7	
a. Pedestrian-oriented district	1	0	1	0	0	1	
a. Pedestrian-oriented dev. (POD)	4	4	0	1	3	0	
a. Planned unit dev. (PUD)	29	9	20	6	4	19	
a. Tradl. neighborhood dev. (TND)	6	4	2	4	1	1	
a. Transit-oriented dev. (TOD)	3	2	1	2	0	1	
a. New urbanism dev./dist.	1	1	0	0	1	0	
a. Downtown district (see protocol)	7	7	0	5	2	0	
a. Shopping district (see protocol)	8	8	0	2	6	0	

N=53 communities

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- Policies are complex
- Policies can be quantified beyond simple yes/no measures
- Multiple sub-scales/measures can be combined to form policy indices
- The nature of the policy evaluation will rest largely on the nature of the study question and research design
- Systematic approaches to policy evaluation are essential
- Have fun!!!!

For more information:

www.bridgingthegapresearch.org

www.impactteen.org

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