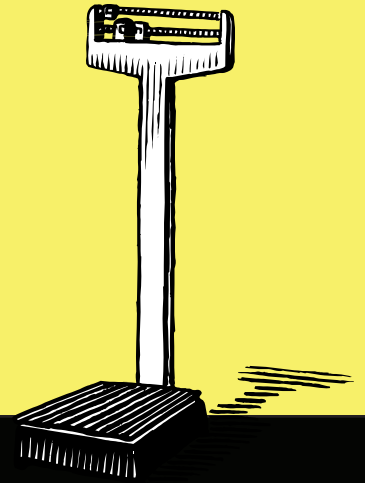


CHILDHOOD OBESITY



2008 Survey of the National Capital Region



Prepared by the Human Services Policy Committee and Health Officials Committee
for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Board of Directors

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

2008 Survey of the National Capital Region



The number of overweight & obese Americans has increased dramatically since the mid-1970s. In that time span, the number of overweight children and adolescents has tripled.

Background:

COG held a regional summit in 2005 on childhood obesity and found a lack of information on the subject. Following the summit, a regional survey identified gaps in policies and programs. In 2006, COG's Human Services Policy Committee (HSPC) and Virginia Tech organized the conference, "Obesity, Tipping the Scales towards Crisis," to examine regional strategies to prevent and treat obesity and improve public health. In 2007, the COG Board of Directors adopted a resolution urging its participating jurisdictions to act on recommendations by the HSPC to reduce obesity in the region. The HSPC directed the Obesity Prevention Workgroup of the Health Officials Committee to report on the status of policies and programs in the participating jurisdictions. This document reports the findings of a survey conducted in 2008.

Survey Results:

Surveys were sent by area health officials to all local school systems, and the data included in this report is from the systems that voluntarily returned it. The survey examined four areas: nutrition, physical activity, planning/land use, and obesity trend data. While all the school systems included in this report meet or exceed the USDA nutrition standards for breakfast and lunch, the survey also noted several areas in need of improvement. The Obesity Prevention Workgroup identified three areas for regional leaders to focus on: meeting elementary school PE standards, including Health Impact Assessments in local land use processes, and collecting student Body Mass Index (BMI) measurements. (Survey results are listed in a table on the next page. Areas in need of improvement are highlighted.)

Recommendations:

After reviewing the survey results, COG's Human Services Policy Committee recommended that elected officials work to build understanding and support for policies that will prevent and treat obesity. These policies will also help meet other regional goals such as better academic performance by students and the creation of more livable, walkable communities. HSPC's recommendations are as follows:

- Participating jurisdictions should take steps to encourage retail access to fresh foods in low-income areas.
- Local elected officials should actively work in their jurisdictions to engage school board members, both as policy makers and as community influencers.
- Local elected officials should reach out across all sectors of the community through health fairs, health summits, and other activities to increase support for and involvement in changing beliefs and behaviors related to eating and exercise habits.
- After about a year of outreach in the jurisdictions, COG members should host a regional meeting among jurisdictional council/board members and school board members to address youth obesity and the impact on success in school.

COG Board Resolution R36-07

Member jurisdictions, including their school boards and planning agencies, are urged to undertake the following:

1. Adopt standards for all food served in schools and physical exercise in schools to conform with national standards. Lunches should meet USDA's School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children regulations. Physical Education should meet the National Association of State Boards of Education recommendations.
2. Collect data on obesity trends, such as Body Mass Index measurements for students, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and Behavioral Risk Factors survey, with a sample size that provides neighborhood level data.
3. In the adoption of new land use proposals, incorporate measures to encourage and enhance exercise, biking, and pedestrian options and access to healthy food.

Childhood Obesity: 2008 Survey of the National Capital Region Results*

	DC	Frederick	Montgomery	Prince George's	Alexandria	Arlington	Fairfax	Loudoun	Prince William
 Nutrition (completed by School Nutrition program)									
Has an Educational Component in Nutrition Program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meets or Exceeds USDA Standards for Breakfast and Lunch	Meets	Meets	Exceeds	Exceeds	Meets	Meets	Exceeds	Meets	Exceeds
 Physical Activity (completed by school PE program)									
Meets recommended minutes per week of elementary school PE									
Minutes per week of middle school PE		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Use of a Physical Fitness Assessment	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Planning/Land Use (completed by Planning Department)									
Use of Smart Growth Practices	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Analysis of Services Available w/o a car	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Safe Routes to School Program	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Health Impact Assessment in Planning Process		✓	✓						
 Obesity Trend Data (completed by Health Department)									
Collection of Student BMIs	✓					✓			
Use of Youth Risk Behavior Survey	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Use of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System	✓		✓		✓				

*The survey was sent by area health officials to all local school systems, and the data included in this report is from the systems that voluntarily returned it.

Nutrition Survey (completed by School Nutrition program)

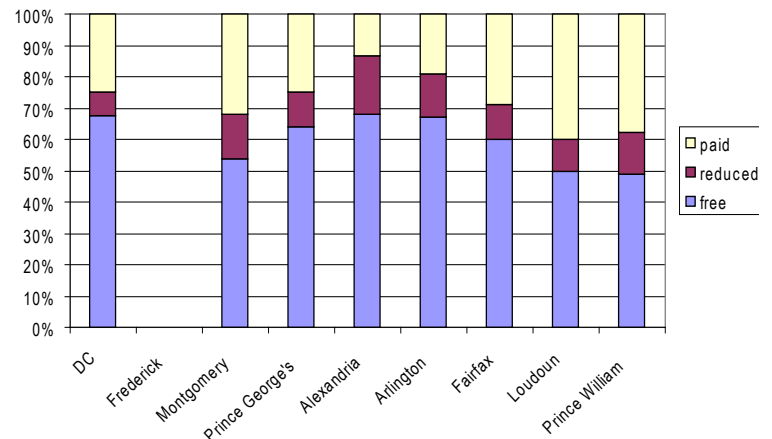
Strengths:

- Nearly half (44%) of jurisdictions report that they exceed the USDA school nutrition standards, while the other jurisdictions are meeting them. Limiting trans fats and sodium were the most common ways of exceeding standards.
- All jurisdictions reported that they have a vending machine policy. Most commonly this involves no access for elementary school students and limited access for middle and high school students. Most jurisdictions also have nutritional requirements for the foods and beverages available in the machines.
- Eight out of nine jurisdictions report that they incorporate an educational component into their nutrition program – typically this involves classroom lessons and/or printed nutrition information and articles in newsletters for parents.

Challenges:

- Most jurisdictions (seven out of nine) reported that not having enough time for the students to eat breakfast (due to tight schedules, late buses, and students not arriving on time) was a major barrier to participation in the free or reduced-price programs. In all jurisdictions, the majority of the students who eat breakfast at school qualify for free meals. Most jurisdictions track these kinds of data to monitor participation and plan menus.
- Overall, most jurisdictions indicated a need for greater financial assistance to increase the nutritional content of their meals. Another common response was the need for lower sodium foods.

Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Breakfasts

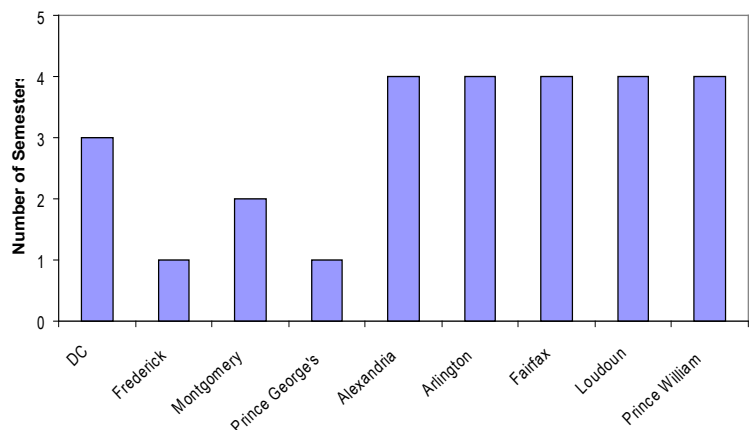


Physical Activity Survey (completed by school PE program)

Strengths:

- In all jurisdictions, Physical Education (PE) is structured and takes place in PE facilities and not in a classroom.
- PE is required for all Maryland and Virginia students in middle school (grades 6-8), and DC has new standards coming for the 2009-2010 school year.
- Virginia requires 2 years of PE for high school graduation while Maryland only requires one semester. Montgomery County is exceeding this requirement by requiring one year of PE for graduation. DC requires three semesters.
- Seven jurisdictions conduct physical fitness assessments and the majority of them are used for student goal-setting. Some jurisdictions are using FITNESSGRAM, a computer program where students can track their individual progress and compare themselves to national standards, especially for high school students.

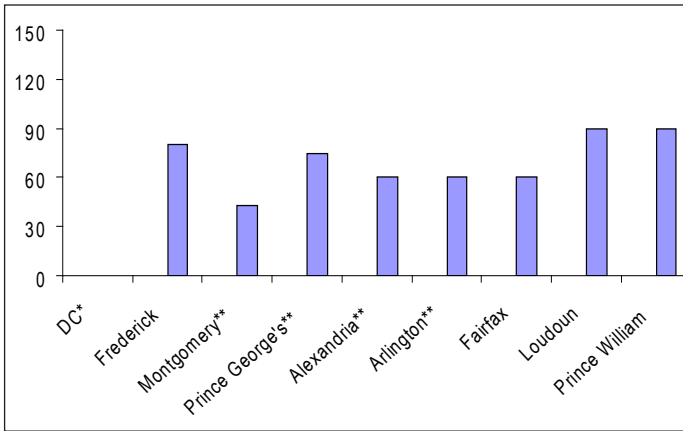
Semesters of PE Required for HS Graduation



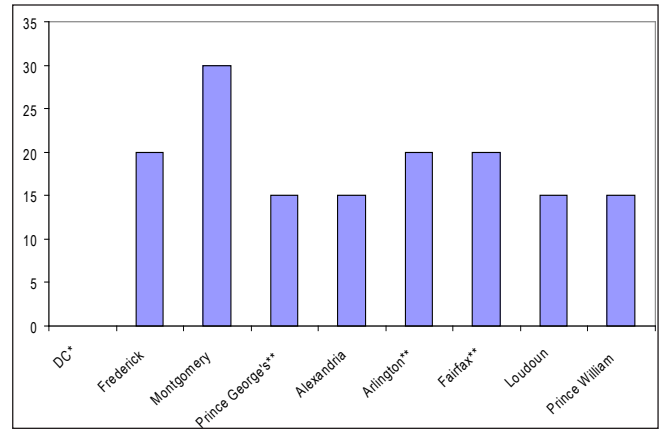
Challenges

- No jurisdiction reported that their elementary school students receive 150 minutes of physical education each week, which is the amount recommended by the National Association of State Boards of Education.
- There was no standardized amount of elementary school recess, but the average was about 15 minutes per day.

Elementary School PE (minutes/week)



Elementary School Recess (minutes/day)



Elementary School PE Chart Notes

* DC does not have an elementary school, city-wide standard; minutes of PE vary by school.

** Average time in PE or the minimum is reported for Alexandria, Arlington, Montgomery, and Prince George's.

Elementary School Recess Chart Notes

* DC does not have an elementary school, city-wide standard; minutes of recess vary by school.

** Average recess times are reported for Arlington, Fairfax and Prince George's counties.

Planning/Land Use Survey (completed by Planning Department)

Strengths:

- Eight out of nine jurisdictions incorporate pedestrian options such as walking paths, bike paths, and pedestrian intersections/crosswalks into the planning and development process.
- Seven out of nine jurisdictions report that smart growth initiatives are required during the development process. Incorporation is typically ensured by county staff.
- Mixed-use development was cited as the most common way to ensure that residents have easy access to businesses. Eight out of nine jurisdictions reported that they offer incentives for mixed-used development. Five out of nine jurisdictions conduct an analysis of the services available without the use of an automobile.

Challenge:

- Only Frederick and Montgomery counties report that they conduct a health impact assessment as part of the planning process.

Obesity Trend Data Survey (completed by Health Department)

Strengths:

- Most jurisdictions have a publicly accessible report and data available upon request. Only Loudoun County does not collect any obesity trend data.
- Seven out of nine jurisdictions have some source of data to help track obesity trends. These data are used for a variety of purposes such as monitoring trends, determining funding decisions, grant writing, developing interventions, and establishing baseline levels.

Challenge:

- Only two jurisdictions collect Body Mass Index (BMI) measurements of students. It is voluntary in Loudoun County, and Prince George's County has a pilot program in some elementary schools.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

2008 Survey of the National Capital Region



Obesity Prevention Workgroup

Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Chair (Fairfax County)
Lindsey Allard (District of Columbia)
Shirley Brown-Ornish (Prince George's County)
Judy Covich (Montgomery County)
Peggy Cressy (INOVA)
Paula Fisher (District of Columbia)
Alison Henderson (Diabetes Association)
Theresa Panagis (Arlington County)
Raja'a Satouri (Fairfax County)
Donald Shell (Prince George's County)
Lenora Sherard (Montgomery County)
Stephanie Tindle (District of Columbia)
Michele Tingling-Clemmons (District of Columbia)
Rachel Wick (Consumer Health Foundation)

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4290
(202) 962-3200
www.mwcog.org