



School Meals

This is the third in a series of eight handouts summarizing the statewide results for each category of the School Wellness Policy Report. All handouts are available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322168>.

Background

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265) required that schools participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s child nutrition programs establish a school wellness policy by the 2006-07 school year. During the 2007-08 school year, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) conducted a review of district school wellness policies in partnership with the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at Yale University. In June 2008, each district received a *School Wellness Policy Report*, which included district, state and District Reference Group (DRG) scores for comprehensiveness and strength in seven policy categories: Nutrition Education; School Meals; Other School Food and Beverages; Physical Education; Physical Activity; Communication and Promotion; and Evaluation.

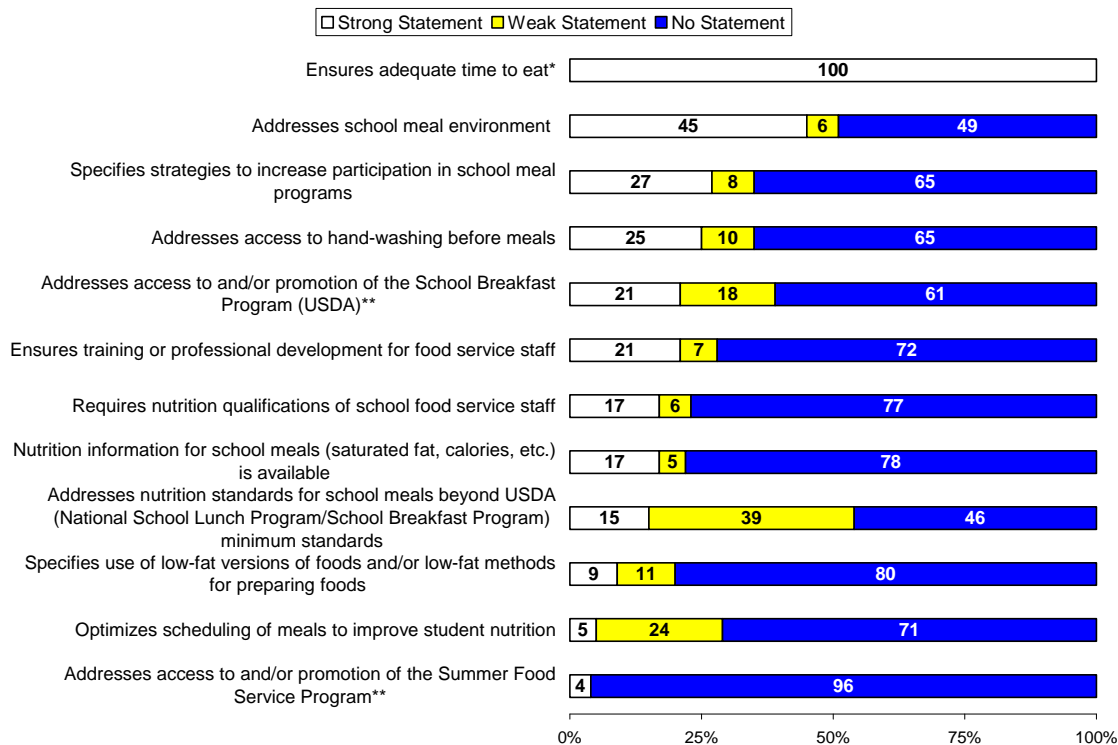
Results

Federal law specifies that school wellness policies must ensure that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s school meal regulations (see Data Summary 1). Eighty-six percent of Connecticut school wellness policies met this requirement.

Based on state standards, Figure 1 below indicates the percent of public school districts receiving a score of 2 (strong statement), 1 (weak statement) or 0 (not mentioned) for each policy item in the *School Meals* component. Weak statements are hard to enforce because they are vague and/or only recommended. Strong statements include a concept followed by specific plans or strategies for implementation and use wording that indicates action is required. Detailed information on policy scoring is contained in the *Coding Tool for Connecticut School Wellness Policies* at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Student/NutritionEd/SWP/SW_CodingTool.pdf

Weak statements often use words such as *may, can, could, should, might, encourage, suggest, urge, some, partial, make an effort* and *try*. Strong statements use words such as *shall, will, must, have to, insist, require, all, total, comply* and *enforce*.

Figure 1. Percent of District Policies with Strong, Weak and No Statements for School Meals



*All districts received a default score of 2 because Section 10-221o of the Connecticut General Statutes mandates a minimum 20-minute lunch period.

**Districts may not have addressed these areas if they did not participate in the School Breakfast Program or Summer Food Service Program.

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School Meals, continued

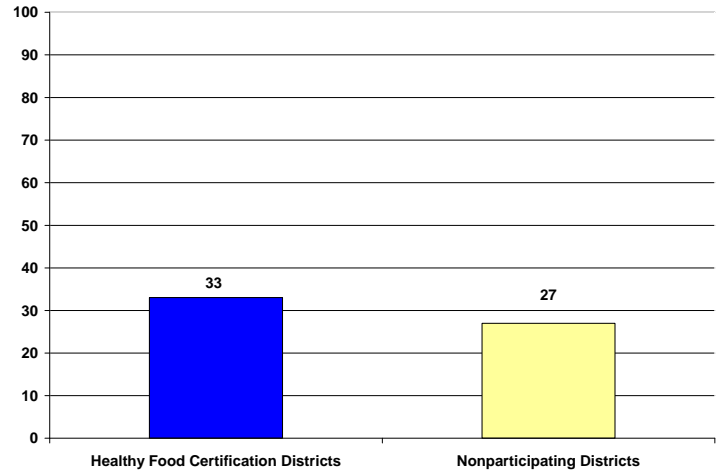
Impact of Healthy Food Certification

Under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes, healthy food certification (HFC) requires that all public school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program must certify whether they will follow state nutrition standards. Districts that choose to implement HFC receive a financial incentive and must follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all food sold to students separately from reimbursable school meals, including but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias and any fundraising activities on school premises. (Additional information on HFC is available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Standards>.)

Figure 2 shows the average *School Meals* strength scores for districts participating in HFC versus nonparticipating districts. These scores are based on the federal requirements and the policy items indicated in Figure 1 (see previous page). Districts participating in HFC made stronger policy statements and received higher average scores for the *School Meals* component than districts that did not participate in HFC.

Figure 2. Average School Meals Score for HFC and Non-HFC Districts*

*Based on a scale from 0 to 100



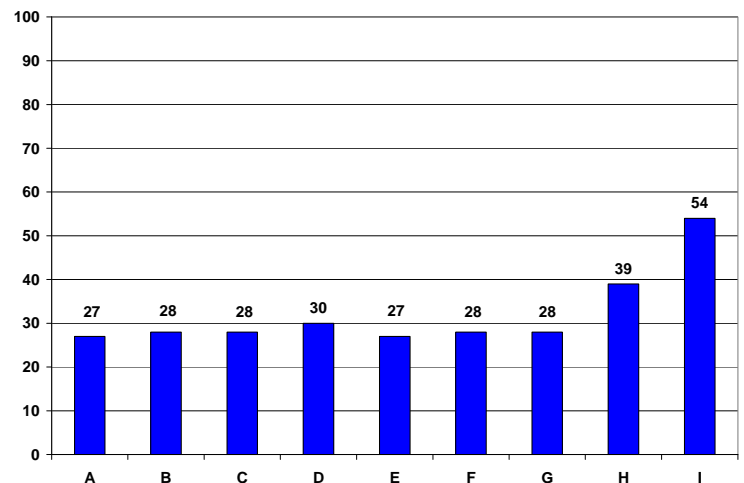
Results by District Reference Group

District Reference Group (DRG) is a classification system in which districts that have public school students with similar socioeconomic status and need are grouped together. DRGs are based on the following seven variables: income, education, occupation, family structure, poverty, home language and district enrollment. They include nine groups, from group A (very affluent, low-need suburban districts) to group I (high-need, low socioeconomic urban districts). Charter schools, Connecticut Technical High Schools and Regional Educational Service Centers are not given DRGs. For additional information, see http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/databulletins/db_drg_06_2006.pdf.

Figure 3 shows the average *School Meals* strength score for each DRG. Group I, the DRG containing the state's seven highest need districts (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham), made stronger policy statements and received higher average scores for the *School Meals* component than all other DRGs. Group H, the second highest need DRG (Ansonia, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Meriden, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford and West Haven), had the second highest average score.

Figure 3. Average School Meals Scores by DRG*

* Based on a scale from 0 to 100



District school wellness policy reports can be accessed online at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#SW>. For additional information, please contact Susan Fiore, Nutrition Education Coordinator, CSDE, at susan.fiore@ct.gov or (860) 807-2075 or Marlene Schwartz, Deputy Director, Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, at (203) 432-0662 or marlene.schwartz@yale.edu.

The State of Connecticut Department of Education is an equal opportunity/affirmative action entity. For more information, please call the Affirmative Action Administrator, State of Connecticut Department of Education, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut 06106, (860) 713-6530.