



## Feature Article

# Local Wellness Policies Help Students Eat Smart and Move More

These days, you can't turn on the news without seeing a story on childhood obesity. It is an important topic, especially here in North Carolina.

Almost one-third of school age children in our state are overweight or obese. The effects of this can last a lifetime. Overweight adolescents are likely to become overweight adults. They are more likely to have high-blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

The psychological effects are damaging, too. Obese children are alienated by their peers. This can lead to low self-esteem and depression. These effects can last into adulthood as well.

Since children spend a good amount of their time in school and school-related activities, addressing physical activity and nutrition in these places makes sense. The school environment is beginning to change.

All school districts in North Carolina now have a Local Wellness Policy in place. This policy is federally mandated and must address certain things about nutrition and physical activity in school. It requires that the foods and drinks available to kids at school are healthy. School meals must meet certain nutrition standards. School districts can write their Local Wellness Policy so that foods must meet even higher standards.

Local Wellness Policies also reach beyond the walls of the school cafeteria. Kids need healthy food and drinks over the course of the entire school day. Healthy foods and drinks should be the standard for classroom parties and celebrations, school stores, concessions and other school fundraising activities. Local Wellness Policies can set guidelines for each of these.

[Insert local school district's name]'s Local Wellness Policy states that [include information about nutrition from the Local Wellness Policy here]. It also requires [insert any other information about nutrition from the policy here.] You can delete this entire paragraph.

In addition, the Local Wellness Policy must address nutrition education and physical activity. State Board of Education policy states that every student in grades K-8 should get at least 30 minutes of physical activity at school every day.

[School district]'s policy also addresses physical activity. It states [insert what policy states.]

The Local Wellness Policy sets minimum standards that all schools in the district must meet. However, schools can go beyond those standards. [Insert example from district if you have one.]

There are challenges in implementing the Local Policy. Resources and community support are necessary. To find out more about [School district]'s policy you can [how to get copy of policy-on website? Call county office?]. Then talk to your child's school to find out what they are doing. Let them know that you support the Local Wellness Policy and ask how you can help.