



# Data Brief:

## Results from Body Mass Index Screening in Massachusetts Public School Districts for 2012, 2013, 2014

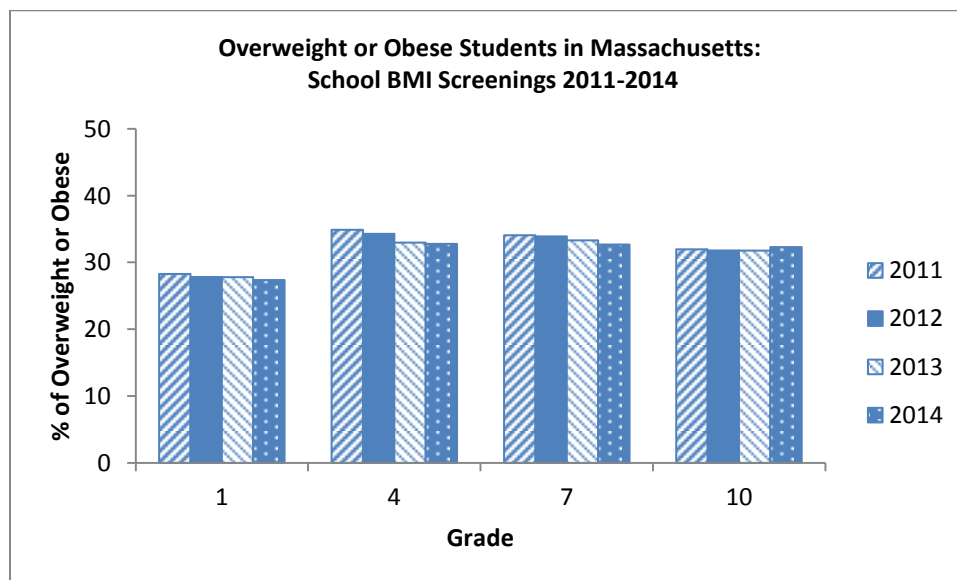
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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For the first time since collecting body mass index data in Massachusetts schools, there was a slight, but continuous decline in the rate of overweight and obesity for Massachusetts students in grades 1, 4, 7 from 2011-2014. The largest decrease was among students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade from 34.9% of students who were overweight or obese in 2011 to 32.8% of students were overweight or obese in 2014. The percentage of students who were either overweight or obese was somewhat lower in grade 1 for all four years of school BMI data (27.4% to 28.3% overweight or obese) compared the other grades included in school BMI screening.

This data brief summarizes the results from Body Mass Index (BMI) screening in Massachusetts public school districts for the 2012, 2013, and 2014 school years. To address the significant public health problem of obesity, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) launched its multifaceted statewide Mass in Motion initiative in January 2009. As a key component of the Mass in Motion initiative, in April 2009, the Public Health Council unanimously approved a regulation requiring school systems to measure the height and weight of public school students in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 and use those figures to calculate their BMI. BMI is a method of determining if a child has a healthy weight compared to other children of the same age and sex. Children with a high BMI-for-age are more likely to become overweight or obese adults and be at a higher risk for diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Helping children attain a healthy weight now, and stay at a healthy weight, may prevent serious illness later in life. These reports provide actionable local data to the public and communities participating in school BMI screenings. In 2013-2014 school year there were 66.0% of students of healthy weight compared to 65.9% in 2012-2013 school year and 65.6% in 2011-2012 school year.

**Exhibit 1: Percentage of Overweight or Obese Students by Grade in Massachusetts from 2011-2014**



The reports attached to this data brief include data from the public school districts that submitted BMI data for the 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 school years. These reports include the results of BMI

screenings on 84-87% of Massachusetts public school students in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10. The report on the results of the BMI screenings from 2010-2011 was previously released and represented 77% of Massachusetts public school students in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10. BMI statistics at the local level may vary from year to year due to factors that do not reflect long term trends, and changes in any single year should be interpreted with caution. Trends over longer time periods (5 to 6 years or more) are more meaningful than increases or decreases in a single year.

#### Department of Public Health Efforts to Address Overweight and Obesity

Mass in Motion is a multi-faceted campaign launched by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health in January 2009 to promote wellness and to reduce the burden of obesity and chronic disease with a particular focus on the importance of healthy eating and active living at home, at work, at school and in our communities. Mass in Motion partners with municipal and state governments, schools, and businesses to create conditions and environments that make the healthy choice the easy choice. Mass in Motion works with communities to create walkable neighborhoods and ensures community members can easily access and afford healthy foods. Mass in Motion works with schools to make healthy foods available for school lunches for our children. In addition to the school height and weight measurement requirements, under the Mass in Motion initiative the Department of Public Health promulgated pioneering school nutrition regulations in 2011 and revised these in 2013. Working within existing systems like these and forming multi-sector partnerships among organizations that put people's health first is what allows Mass in Motion a unique opportunity to make real changes to policies that affect health.

The Municipal Wellness and Leadership Program is one component of the overall Mass in Motion initiative and provides grants to cities and towns to make wellness a priority and support their efforts to tackle the root causes of chronic disease such as poor diet and lack of physical activity. This is a public/private partnership between MDPH and private funding partners including The Boston Foundation, The Metro West Community Health Care Foundation, Partners Health Care and the Tufts Health Plan Foundation. Mass in Motion's Municipal Wellness and Leadership Program is making healthy food and an active lifestyle more accessible in Massachusetts communities. Mass in Motion works to change the way cities and towns do business by helping to shape policies and practices that create environments supportive of healthy eating and active living. Mass in Motion programs serve as catalysts of change, creating a network of diverse partners committed to advancing the health of their communities.