

# 2012

## The Obesity Epidemic and Massachusetts Students



### What is the status of student health?

The 2011 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among high schools students:

#### Obesity and Overweight

**25%** were either overweight or obese (10% obese) according to students' own reports of their height and weight. When height and weight were actually measured in some Massachusetts schools, overweight/obesity rates were **32%**.<sup>2</sup>

#### Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors

**86%** ate fewer than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.<sup>3</sup>

**18%** reported drinking at least 1 can or glass of soda per day.<sup>3</sup>

**63%** skipped breakfast on some days.<sup>3</sup>

#### Physical Inactivity

**57%** of high school students and **63%** of middle school students did not meet the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity on even 5 days per week.<sup>3</sup>

**69%** of high school students and **63%** of middle school students did not walk or bike to school.<sup>3</sup>

**28%** watched 3 or more hours of television on an average school day. (CDC recommends no more than 2 hours of non-school media time per day.)

<sup>1</sup> The 2011 MA YRBS is the source of information except where noted. Middle school information is from the 2011 MA Youth Health Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Summer 2012. The Status of Childhood Weight in Massachusetts, 2011, Preliminary Results from Body Mass Index Screening in Massachusetts Public School Districts, 2009–2011.

<sup>3</sup> In the week before the survey.



## What are the solutions?

**Kids must be healthy to learn, but they must also learn to be healthy.**

- High Quality Health and Physical Education
- Healthy Food Choices
- Strong Physical Activity Programs
- Safe Routes To School

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### What is the status of school health programs?

The 2012 Massachusetts School Health Profiles indicates that among secondary schools (middle & high schools):

#### Health Education

- 16%** did not require any health education course.
- 26%** did not have a written curriculum for health education, and **41%** did not have plans for how to assess student performance.
- 23%** did not have a lead health education teacher with Massachusetts certification to teach health education.
- 42%** did not have a health education curriculum that covered all health skills in the National Health Education Standards.

#### Physical Education and Physical Activity

- 18%** did not require physical education in every grade.
- 33%** allowed students to be exempted from physical education for participation in sports, other courses, or activities.
- 27%** did not administer a physical fitness test to students in any grade in the past year.
- 65%** did not have a policy prohibiting or discouraging the use of physical activity as punishment.



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## What are the solutions?

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