



## January/February 2014 Newsletter

### **Emory University Research Highlights Need for Early Intervention**

According to findings from a new study released in January 2014, Children who are overweight in kindergarten have four times the risk of becoming obese by eighth grade.



As published in the New England Journal of Medicine, the study showed that half of childhood obesity occurred among children who had become overweight during the “preschool years”. The researcher set out to better understand the rate at which new cases of obesity occurred in children ages 5 to 14, with the goal of improving the effectiveness of intervention techniques. “Emerging from the finding that a substantial component of childhood

obesity is established by the age of 5 years are questions about how early the trajectory to obesity begins and about the relative roles of early-life home and preschool environments, intrauterine factors and genetic predisposition,” the researchers wrote. For more information on the study, click [here](#).

Steven L. Gortmaker, a professor of the practice of health sociology at the Harvard School of Public Health, wrote an editorial accompanying the new study. He saw a bright side to the findings. Young children, he said, can cross a line between being fat or normal weight by gaining or losing just a few pounds. For adults, it can be 20 to 30 pounds, or even 40 to 50 pounds. “It can take a long time to turn that around,” said Dr. Gortmaker. And, he said, a number of randomized studies involving young children have shown that it is possible to stop or reverse excess weight gain. For example [One](#) study approved by the Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board at the State University of New York at Buffalo had some overweight children ages 4 to 7 reduce their television and computer viewing time, and had others keep theirs the same. Children in the intervention group — especially those from poorer families — consumed fewer calories, and their body mass index fell.

### **Joint Statement in Support of School Wellness Policy**

National associations and organizations have joined the US Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service, US Department of Health and Human Services’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the US Department of Education in sharing information and resources pertaining to local school wellness policies. The entities have united to recognize local school wellness policies as a key framework for schools’ efforts to create a healthy environment for children that supports nutritious food choices and physically active lifestyles.



# Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan

*Advocates for Healthy Weight in Children*

The joint statement reads:

“We firmly believe that the Local School Wellness Policy, as required by the US Congress in Public Law 111-296, Section 204, provides a tremendous opportunity for schools to assess and improve how their school environment, wellness policies, programs, and activities contribute to the health and well-being of our nation’s children. We are committed to providing assistance to school districts and schools as they assess, revise, adopt, implement, maintain, monitor, and evaluate local school wellness policies that will positively affect their students, schools, and communities. We are committed to supporting the efforts of school districts through collaborations, resources, and other forms of assistance.



“We support schools and communities that recognize the health and educational benefits of creating and implementing local school wellness policies and the importance of making student health a priority. We urge schools to implement policies that support a healthy and physically active lifestyle, which in turn will positively influence students’ health, academic performance, and overall quality of life, today and in the future.”

For a complete list of organizations supporting the joint statement, click [here](#).

## **Capitol Report: Governor’s Budget Recognizes Physical & Health Education**



Governor Rick Snyder presented the Executive Budget recommendations to a joint meeting of the House and Senate Appropriations committees. Included in the School Aid budget is a set of best practices that schools can implement to gain access to a portion of an \$80 million fund. Providing physical or health education is one of the best practices for which a school district can receive credit. HKHM will continue working with the legislature and the

administration to strengthen the language so that school district physical and health education curriculum is in line with national standards.

## **Food Industry Cutting Calories**

Some of the nation's largest food companies have cut daily calorie counts by an average of 78 per person, a new study says, more than four times the amount the industry pledged to slash by next year.



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## **Calorie Pledge Continued...**

The study sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that between 2007 and 2012, the food industry cut an estimated total of 6.4 trillion calories from their products.

Seventy-eight calories would be about the same as an average cookie or a medium apple, and the federal government estimates an average daily diet at around 2,000 calories. The study said the calories cut averaged out to 78 calories per day for the entire U.S. population.

The 2010 pledge taken by 16 companies — including General Mills, Campbell Soup, ConAgra Foods, Kraft Foods, Kellogg, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Hershey — was to cut 1 trillion calories by 2012 and 1.5 trillion calories by 2015.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation signed on to hold the companies accountable, and that group hired researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to painstakingly count the calories in almost every single packaged item in the grocery store. To do that, the UNC researchers used the store-based scanner data of hundreds of thousands of foods, commercial databases and nutrition facts panels to calculate exactly how many calories the companies were selling.

The researchers aren't yet releasing the entire study, but they said Thursday that the companies have exceeded their own goals by a wide margin.

Dr. James Marks, director of the Health Group at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, said the group is pleased with the results but the companies "must sustain that reduction, as they've pledged to do, and other food companies should follow their lead." The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is a nonpartisan philanthropic and research organization that works to improve the nation's health.

Marks says he believes that companies' efforts to package smaller servings — 100 calorie packs of popular snacks, for example — and smaller cans of sugary drinks may have contributed to the reduction in calories. He says the main contributors most likely were the public's increasing willingness to buy healthier foods and companies responding to those consumers.

The companies involved are all part of an industry coalition of food businesses called the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation that has organized to help reduce obesity. The foundation pledged to reduce the calories as part of an agreement with a group of nonprofit organizations and made the 2010 announcement as part of first lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign to combat childhood obesity.

Lisa Gable of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation said the companies achieved the goal by coming together and also competing to make new lower-calorie foods. Market studies have shown that many of the healthier foods have outperformed other products, she said.

"This is a very significant shift in the marketplace," Gable said. Click [here](#) for more info.