



## Promoting Good Health Through Curricular and Policy Changes

### Public Health Problem

Nearly a fourth of Michigan's high school students are overweight or at risk for becoming overweight, while only a little more than a fifth of students eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day and nearly a third do not get enough physical activity, according to the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

### Program Example

Michigan's Coordinated School Health Program, managed by the Michigan Departments of Education and Community Health, has been nationally recognized as a leader in promoting the health of young people through innovative curricula and strong state and local policies. Michigan has developed state-of-the-art, research-based curricula in health education and physical education as well as a sophisticated regional dissemination, training, and technical assistance system. In addition, Michigan's Coordinated School Health Program has led efforts to develop *The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weight: A Consensus Paper*, which has guided school health policy changes in the state and influenced similar efforts throughout the nation. The consensus paper and a supporting initiative have actively promoted policy changes at the local level by supporting the use of CDC's School Health Index in 50 pilot schools, delivering a comprehensive training workshop for School Health Index facilitators, and developing an innovative, online version of the School Health Index.

### Implications and Impact

Michigan's regional dissemination, training, and technical assistance system has led to widespread use of the health education and physical education curricula not just across the state but nationwide as well. For example, the health education curriculum is now used in 94% of Michigan's school districts and in school districts in 42 states; moreover, use of the School Health Index in Michigan schools has resulted in many changes in physical activity and nutrition policies including establishment of daily salad bars, taste testing to identify healthier choices that students will like, limitations on the days that fried potatoes are offered in school cafeterias, daily fitness activities in the classroom, and staff health promotion programs. The Michigan Coordinated School Health Program has strong support from the state Board of Education, which in 2003 recommended that every Michigan school district adopt its own coordinated school health program with a school health council to guide it and school health teams in each school to carry out the program. The board also passed a policy recommending that physical education programs in every Michigan school offer at least 150 minutes per week of physical education for elementary school students and 225 minutes per week for middle and high school students.