

Issue Brief | Santa Clara County Children's Agenda

Volume 2 – Number 3 | November 2009

Santa Clara County Children and Healthy Lifestyle

Overview: This issue brief looks at the issue of healthy lifestyle of children in Santa Clara County. For the purposes of this issue brief, we will be looking at good nutrition and physical activity and fitness. Good nutrition is essential for physical and mental growth and development. Physical fitness and physical activity increases memory, concentration, and energy levels that assist in learning. In Santa Clara County, 54.1% of fifth-graders, 64.1% of seventh-graders and 67.4% of ninth-graders achieved at least 5 out of 6 fitness standards. No group of children reports eating behaviors that meet the Healthy People 2010 goals.

Every child safe, healthy, successful in learning, successful in life.

The Santa Clara County Children's Agenda, is a focused, integrated initiative that **utilizes data and research to inform decision-making, guide program improvement, and drive results.** The Children's Agenda has identified community goals for our children and thirteen data outcomes to track our progress in achieving those goals. The Children's Agenda provides basis for action, and allows our stakeholders to develop powerful strategies for change. It provides a framework to build meaningful and deep partnerships, provides a common language that helps us to align public and private investments, assess and improve quality, seek and allocate resources, and increase reach and impact across sectors. The thirteen indicators of the Children's Agenda are:

- Routine Access to Health Care
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Early Social Emotional Health
- Developmental Assets
- Readiness for Kindergarten
- Third Grade Reading Scores
- Eighth Grade Math Scores
- High School Graduation Rates
- Children Fluent in at Least Two Languages
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Childhood Hunger
- Juvenile Arrests
- Youth Feel Valued by the Community

For more information on the Children's Agenda and to read previous Issue Briefs go to: www.kidsincommon.org

Healthy Lifestyle and Why It Matters

For the purpose of this issue brief, we are focusing on good nutrition and physical fitness when we discuss healthy lifestyle. Good nutrition means getting enough of the right foods and vitamins and minerals a body needs to grow and stay healthy. Good nutrition is essential not only for physical and mental growth and development, but also for the prevention of illness and chronic disease. In children, good physical fitness and physical activity increases memory, concentration, and energy levels that assist in learning. For children, almost any physical activity is sufficient as long as they are moving. Playing actively or participating in athletic or physical fitness activities during school, running, biking, jumping rope, and dancing – instead of watching television or playing video games – all provide children with the kinds of activity they need.¹

Lack of good nutrition and opportunities to be physically active and fit is linked to obesity or overweight. Overweight conditions in children can cause increased risk for high blood pressure, respiratory problems and orthopedic problems now and later in life. Overweight children are hospitalized more often than children with healthy weight and have a 70% chance of becoming overweight adults.² Overweight conditions due to nutritional choices and physical inactivity are preventable.

While eating well and being physically active involves having knowledge about nutrition (including positive parental feeding practices) and the benefits of physical fitness and personal choice, those choices can be influenced by the environment. For example, some communities lack parks and other safe places to play. Some neighborhoods have only convenience stores and fast food outlets and little or no opportunity to purchase affordable healthy foods.

How We Measure Healthy Lifestyle:

In this issue brief, we utilize several measures of good nutrition and physical fitness:

- o California Physical Fitness Test: The percentage of youth achieving at least 5 out of 6 physical fitness standards.
- o The California Healthy Kids Survey: Self reported time spent watching television and time spent in physical activity.
- o The California Healthy Kids Survey: Self reported consumption of healthy, high sugar and high fat foods.

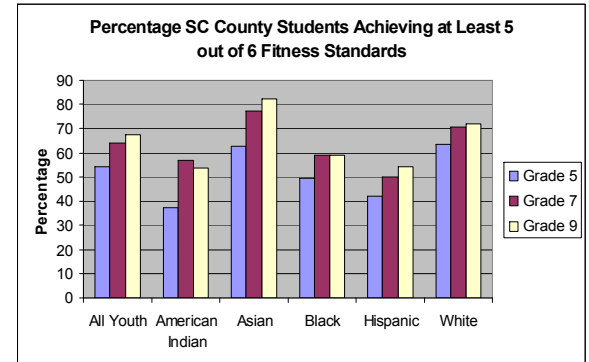
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What the Data Tell Us:

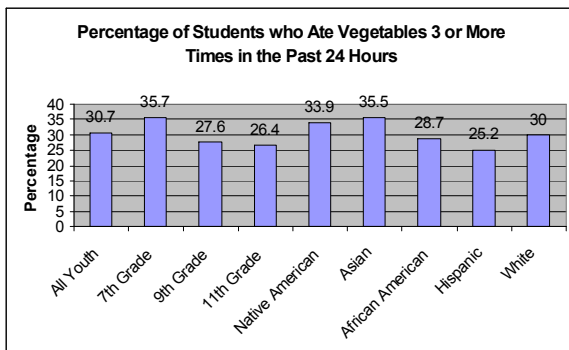
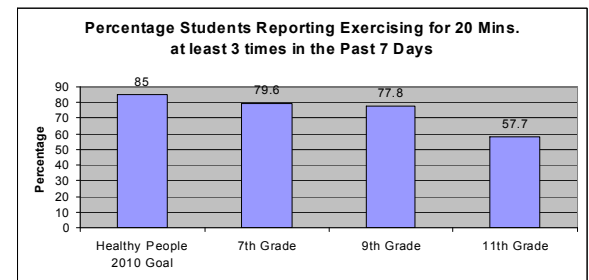
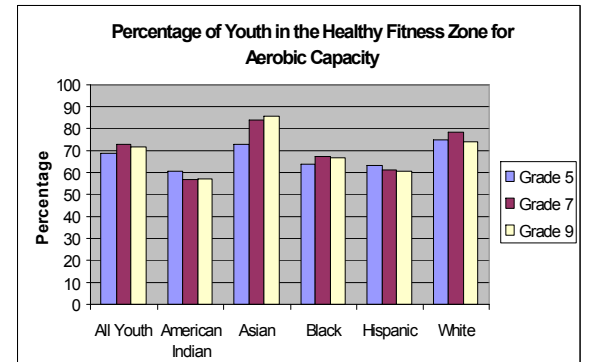
During the 2007-08 school year, 55,790 Santa Clara County fifth, seventh and ninth graders participated in the annual California Fitness Test. The six areas of testing include: aerobic capacity, body composition, abdominal strength, trunk extension strength, upper body strength and flexibility.

Of those, 54.1% of fifth-graders, 64.1% of seventh-graders and 67.4% of ninth-graders achieved at least 5 out of 6 fitness standards. Of the ninth-graders, Asian students had the highest percentage achieving at least 5 fitness standards at 82.3%, followed by white students at 72.1%. Only 53.6% American Indian ninth-graders, 54.2% of Hispanic and 58.9% of African American ninth-graders achieved at least 5 fitness standards. Similar trends can be seen for youth achieving the aerobic capacity standard with 68.7% of fifth-graders, 72.9% of seventh-graders and 71.7% of ninth-graders in the Healthy Fitness Zone. The Healthy People 2010 standard for exercising at least 20 minutes three times a week. 79.6% of 7th grade, 77.8% of 9th grade and only 57.7% of 11th grade students reported meeting this standard. A large percentage of students (34.3%) report watching television three or more hours on weekdays.³

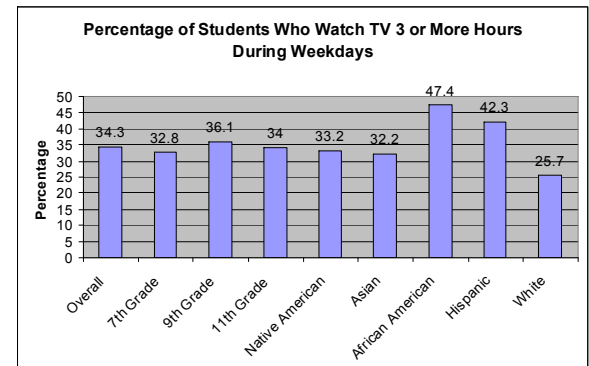
Only 30.7% of students reported eating vegetables 3 or more times in the past 24 hours. 30% of white, 25.2% of Hispanic students, 28.7% of African American, 35.5% of Asian and 33.9% of Native American youth reported doing so. When asked, "During the past 24 hours, how many times did you eat fruit?" 55.4% reported "2 or more times" and 30.3% answered "3 or more times." The Healthy People 2010 objective for 3 daily servings of vegetables a day is 50% and was not met by any grade, gender, race, or ethnicity group. Similarly, the Healthy People 2010 of 75% of those over the age of 2 to have 2 daily servings of fruit was not met by any grade, gender, race, or ethnicity group.⁴



The tables immediately above and below are the results for Santa Clara County from the 2007-08 Physical Fitness Report. Retrieved 11/1/09 <http://data1.cde.ca.gov>



The tables above and on the right are from the Santa Clara County 2005-06 California Healthy Kids Survey issued by the Public Health Dept in December 2007 retrieved 11/1/09 [http://www.sccgov.org/SCC/docs/Public%20Health%20Department%20\(DEP\)/attachments/05-06%20SCC%20CHKS%20Report.pdf](http://www.sccgov.org/SCC/docs/Public%20Health%20Department%20(DEP)/attachments/05-06%20SCC%20CHKS%20Report.pdf)



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Promising Strategies for Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle for our Children and Youth

Childhood Feeding Collaborative

The **Childhood Feeding Collaborative** provides information and training in best feeding practices to parents, pediatric health-care providers, government programs and community-based organizations that support children's health. Based on Ellyn Satter's "Division of Responsibility in Feeding," parents learn that they are responsible for food – what, where, and when it is served. Children are responsible for eating – what and how much. By providing consistent information and practical guidance to parents, the Childhood Feeding Collaborative is working to address obesity and poor eating among children by improving parenting skills around feeding. Program evaluation has shown the Childhood Feeding Collaborative to successfully change parent behaviors around feeding. For more information on this program contact Carol Danaher at carol.danaher@hhs.sccgov.org or Doris Fredericks at doris@choicesforchildren.org.

fit for learning

fit for learning creates school environments that promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for the children of Santa Clara County and provides participating schools with easy-to-use, effective resources that increase physical activity and encourage healthy nutrition. Parents and community members play a vital role in the program by acting as champions at school sites to help support others in fostering a healthy environment, advocate for healthy campuses and reinforce healthy living habits outside of school.

For more information go to: www.fitforlearning.org.

Healthy Silicon Valley

Healthy Silicon Valley is an obesity prevention collaborative in Santa Clara County. Made up of over 100 organizations and individuals, the collaborative seeks to increase nutrition and physical activity opportunities by positively changing the built environment.

Vision: All residents in Silicon Valley will experience optimized health and wellness.

Mission: To foster a culture of health by supporting prevention and wellness activities, increasing physical activity, and promoting healthy nutrition.

The Collaborative Approach: Healthy Silicon Valley has modeled its approach after efforts supported in many parts in the state and country. The collaborative focuses on environmental change strategies utilizing the Spectrum of Prevention as its organizing framework. This model allows HSV to categorize promising interventions in healthy nutrition and physical activity.

To that end, HSV uses a multi-sector approach that has resulted in the development of 8 sectors and 2 sub-sectors. Efforts of all the sectors have focused on environmental change strategies involving systems change.

To learn more about Healthy Silicon Valley go to www.healthysiliconvalley.org.

Second Harvest Food Bank Produce Mobile, Family Harvest and Kids NOW Programs:

For many economically disadvantaged children, access to healthy food is an issue. Food insecurity increases the likelihood of being overweight or obese among children⁶ and overweight or obese children are at increased risk for diabetes and asthma, among other health problems.⁷ Second Harvest Food Bank has several programs that support healthy nutrition for children including the monthly Produce Mobile and Family Harvest programs, as well as a weekly children's program, Kids NOW (Nutrition on Weekends). Kids NOW provides food to take home on weekends, when other resources such as free or reduced cost school lunches are not available. Every Friday afternoon, approximately 580 children ages 6-18 receive an assortment of food items as they are leaving their after school programs. Food items are healthy and kid-friendly and represent the basic food groups: grains, protein, dairy, fruits and vegetables. The Food Bank utilizes the Kids NOW food bags as a vehicle for communication with the families, promoting healthy eating and food access through the distribution of nutrition education, Family Harvest, and Produce Mobile information. For more information on these programs, contact the Food Bank's Food Connection line at 408-266-8866, ext. 263.

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District Wellness Policies

If a district participates in the National School Lunch Program and/or other feeding programs authorized by the federal Child Nutrition Act, nutrition guidelines must be incorporated into a comprehensive **District Wellness Policy**. This policy must include goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness. If you would like to read more about District Wellness Policies or view a specific district's policy, go to www.fitforlearning.org.

Steps Parents Can Take to Support Good Nutrition and Physical Activity in Children & Youth⁸

- Breastfeed
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages
- Consume 5-9 fruits and vegetables a day
- Eat breakfast every day
- Limit fast food
- Pay attention to portion size
- Eat meals together as a family
- Limit television and screen time and keep televisions out of children's bedrooms
- Encourage moderately vigorous physical activity of 60 minutes a day or more.

Notes and Resources:

1. US Department of Health and Human Services, Healthier US. Retrieved 11-1-09 <http://healthierus.gov/exercise.html>
2. US Department of Health and Human Services, The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity: Overweight in Children and Adolescents, 2001
3. Results from the California Healthy Kids Survey Santa Clara County 2005-2006 Report from the Santa Clara County Public Health Dept, Dec. 2007. Retrieved 11/1/09 [http://www.sccgov.org/SCC/docs/Public%20Health%20Department%20\(DEP\)/attachments/05-06%20SCC%20CHKS%20Report.pdf](http://www.sccgov.org/SCC/docs/Public%20Health%20Department%20(DEP)/attachments/05-06%20SCC%20CHKS%20Report.pdf)
4. Ibid.
5. Nutrition Standards for schools: Implications for Student Wellness. Governance Policy Services Policy Briefs, California School Boards Association. October 2007.
6. ChildTrends. Food Insecurity and Overweight among Infants and Toddlers: New Insights into a troubling Linkage. 2007. www.childtrends.org <<http://www.childtrends.org>>
7. California Center for Public Health Advocacy. The Growing Epidemic: Child Overweight Rates in California Counties, 2004.
8. Padalkar, Padmaja presentation on Childhood Obesity (California Medical Association Foundation) retrieved 11/22/09 http://www.thecmafoundation.org/projects/TrainingMaterials/San%20Jose%202008%20Training_Padalkar%20Presentation.pdf .

The Children's Agenda is being led by Kids in Common, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Kids in Common advocates for policies, partnerships and investments that improve children's lives in Santa Clara County.

Children need a strong public voice – a voice that promotes and protects their best interests. Kids in Common is that voice and challenges leaders and decision-makers in our community to act on behalf of children.

Every day, our elected officials make policy and fiscal decisions that impact the more than 450,000 children who live in Santa Clara County. Kids in Common is the only organization that focuses on systemic change to improve children's lives in Santa Clara County. We advocate for effective investment and policies for children and support the mobilization of public and private resources to meet children's needs. We inform decision makers on best practices and champion local implementation. We convene agencies that care about children's well-being to address systems issues and speak out for needed change. Kids in Common is steadfast in speaking and acting on behalf of children and brings a uniquely qualified perspective that is grounded in research and data. Because we don't receive government funding, we do not have to worry about being perceived as acting in our own self-interest. **Policymakers know our only agenda is children.**



For the most current data on how Santa Clara County children are faring, go to:

www.kidsdata.org