Promoting Healthier After School Environments: Opportunities and Challenges

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One in a series of brief reports about creating healthy environments for children

In 2002, California voted to support children and youth by passing Proposition 49, establishing the After School Education and Safety Program (ASES). This legislation currently funds approximately 3,900 after school sites and includes most of the elementary and middle schools in the state that serve high poverty communities, making California a national leader in this arena. The state’s after school programs present an opportunity not only to support California’s children academically and keep them safe, but also to help children and youth develop lifelong skills for better health. California schools are national leaders in providing healthier foods and high quality physical activities during the school day.¹

After school programs have the potential to reinforce these important experiences, putting our children on the path toward a healthy and productive adulthood.

In 2005, The California Endowment launched the Healthy Eating, Active Communities (HEAC) program. HEAC takes a comprehensive environmental and policy approach to reducing childhood obesity and health disparities. After school is one of the five sectors that are the focus of HEAC efforts in its six funded communities.² HEAC communities, along with Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) sites, also funded by The Endowment, are leading the movement in California to transform after school environments and to define the elements of healthy after school programs. Using policy and environmental change strategies, HEAC and CCROPP communities are re-envisioning after school programming to create seamlessly healthful and safe out-of-school environments for children and youth.³

¹ For more about HEAC activities working to make school environments healthier, see Key Lessons from California Schools Working to Change School Food Environments, 2007, by Samuels & Associates, California Project LEAN, the Partnership for the Public’s Health, the Center for Weight and Health, University of California, Berkeley, and The California Endowment.

² To learn more about HEAC, see www.healthyeatingactivecommunities.org.

³ To learn more about CCROPP, see www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes_programs/CCROPP/index.shtml
On December 10, 2007, HEAC convened a meeting of leaders promoting health as an important feature of after school programming. Attendees included statewide after school experts, researchers, leaders of model after school programs, HEAC and CCROPP coordinators, representatives from the California Department of Education (CDE), program evaluators and representatives from county health departments.

Meeting participants affirmed that after school programs and schools, alike, need to be places for “healthy minds in healthy bodies.” While providing appropriate and school-linked academic support is important, after school programs should also:

- Provide a healthy snack.
- Involve all youth in daily physical activity.
- Establish ongoing staff training.
- Offer opportunities for youth engagement and development.

**What a few programs are doing:**

*In South Los Angeles, middle schoolers have the opportunity to demonstrate their physical activity skills, such as hip hop dance, to elementary students.*

*Youth in Shasta County led an effort to get a community gym in the city of Anderson in order to have a place to be active outside of school hours.*

*Youth in Central California take pictures of food and physical activity environments in their community to create postcards that they now use in their advocacy work with city councils.*

*Berkeley Youth Alternatives teens, as part of Team Nutrition, have developed their own food policy. They do peer-to-peer advocacy with younger youth.*

*In Chula Vista, professional golfer Pat Perez spearheaded a free golf program focusing on Latino youth that includes deaf and hard of hearing students.*

*Oakland’s School Yard Initiative, at its initial demonstration schools, has made the school a centerpiece of the community, with after school programming, schoolyard access for the community during non-school hours, and on-site weekly after school farmers markets linked to cooking classes in the after school program.*
California boasts a number of excellent programs, yet after school programming continues to face challenges. This brief summarizes the current state of after school programming nationally and in California, reviews baseline evaluation data about after school practices in the HEAC program, and presents challenges and opportunities that emerged from the discussion among these experts in the field. It concludes with a set of recommendations from the participants in this dynamic, forward-thinking discussion (See Appendix for list of participants).

Federal and State Strategies to Support Healthier After School Programs: An Overview

Federal
In the mid-1990s, after school programming was the fastest growing of any federal program, expanding from $1 million in federal expenditures to $1 billion in six years, as a result of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) funding. This increase was fueled by concern for working families, learning, and children’s safety. Funding for 21st CCLC was increased to $1.1 billion for fiscal year 2008. However, the Bush administration proposed a significant reduction in the program budget for 2009, along with other changes. The 21st CCLC falls under federal educational law; No Child Left Behind requires the program to focus more narrowly on academics. California’s share of the 21st CCLC was about $129 million for 2007-2008.

State
Though other states are putting money into after school programming, none equals California’s level of commitment. California has thousands of programs and programs at almost all of the highest-need schools, while other states are still in earlier stages of development and implementation. With the passage of the ASES Program in 2002, California made the largest public investment in after school sites of any state in the country. By April 2007, the California Department of Education (CDE) had awarded $550 million in grants. HEAC schools were able to secure $3.3 million of these funds to support after school programs in HEAC sites. The California Department of Education gave priority for the ASES grants in its first grant cycle to

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CDE is developing two electronic manuals, one to help programs introduce healthier snacks, the other to improve physical activity after school.

Policy
The CDE After School Program is working to provide tools and resources to ASES and 21st Century funded programs in California to implement high quality, comprehensive programs and to help foster healthier food and physical activity opportunities. To this end, CDE is developing two electronic manuals, one to help programs introduce healthier snacks, the other to improve physical activity after school. CDE's e-manual will help after school programs implement California's school nutrition standards, required in CDE-funded after school programs. While no comparable legislated standards yet exist for physical activity in after school settings, state Senate Bill 638 (Torlakson) contained language that required CDE to develop voluntary physical activity guidelines by July 2009. As a result, CDE convened an expert panel of state and national physical activity and physical education experts to develop core guidelines. (These, however, remain voluntary, in an environment in which after school programs are under immense pressures to focus on academics). A companion e-manual to the expert panel physical activity guidelines is being developed to provide tools, resources and implementation strategies. While the nutrition and physical activity guidelines and supporting tools and trainings promise to be of great benefit for all state funded after school programs, their use is not currently required in after school programs not funded by CDE.

Initial HEAC Evaluation Findings for After School Food and Physical Activity Environments

To what extent are after school programs supporting physical activity and healthy eating? Findings from the initial assessments of HEAC after school programs give a clear picture of the improvements still needed in the after school setting. Assessments were conducted in each of the six HEAC sites in the spring of 2005 (before the major infusion of funds from ASES). Of the 19 HEAC after school programs, 17 were school-based and two were community-based. Of particular note are findings that (a) many

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foods in after school programs were unhealthy, (b) programs were providing time for participants to be physically active, and yet (c) structure and duration of the physical activity sessions made a difference in how active youth were.

After school programs receiving ASES and 21st CCLC funding will be required to implement the state school nutrition standards (SB 12 & 965) in after school settings. Therefore, close attention is now being paid to the foods and beverages available in after school settings in order to identify what improvements need to be made.

At the initial assessment, prior to HEAC intervention, food adherence to state school nutrition standards was poor (See Figure 1). While available beverages generally adhered to standards, snack foods failed to meet the minimum nutrient standards in most of the

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**FIGURE 1**

Food Adherence to SB 12\(^1\) in HEAC After School Programs (N=19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary</strong></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle</strong></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Ages</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) California Senate Bills 12 and 965 were passed in 2005, with a required implementation date of July 1, 2007 in all schools K-12. SB 12 regulates food served outside of the federally-reimbursable meal program (“competitive” foods) and SB 965 regulates competitive beverages. Foods are required to adhere to minimum standards regarding their calorie, fat and sugar content, whereas beverages are regulated by category (sodas, sports drinks, 100% fruit juices, etc.) Currently, SB 12 and 965 only apply to the regular school day, but ASES funded programs are now required to adopt the same standards for their funded after school programs.
While available beverages generally adhered to standards, snack foods failed to meet the minimum nutrient standards...

### FIGURE 2
**Unhealthy Foods Found in HEAC After School Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cake Product</th>
<th>Candy Bar or Snack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Freshley’s Jumbo Honey Bun Cake</td>
<td>Candy-Warheads-Original-Assorted Flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit Kat Big Kat</td>
<td>Candy-Wonka-Chewy Runts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snickers</td>
<td>Chips-Cheetos-Crunchy Dangerously Cheesy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twix</td>
<td>Chips-Cheetos-Crunchy Flamin Hot King Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-Blue Raspberry</td>
<td>Chips-Doritos-Nacho Cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-Cherry</td>
<td>Chips-Fritos-Chili Cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-Extremes 5 Flavors</td>
<td>Chips-Lays-Cheddar And Sour Cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-Green Apple</td>
<td>Chips-Sunchips-Harvest Cheddar Multigrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-Orange</td>
<td>Cookies-Austin-Lemon Oh’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-Strawberry</td>
<td>Cookies-Austin-Vanilla Cremes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-Watermelon</td>
<td>Cookies-Cookie Jar-Giant Candy Cookie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airheads-White Mystery</td>
<td>Cookies-Cookie Jar-Giant Chocolate Chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Lucas-Sweet N’ Sour Mango Powder</td>
<td>Cookies-Laguna Bakery-Chocolate Chip Homestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certs-Peppermint</td>
<td>Cookies-Laguna Bakery-Chocolate With Fudge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulces-Vero Mango Lollipop-El Original</td>
<td>Chips Homestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heide-Gummy Bears</td>
<td>Cookies-Laguna Bakery-Oatmeal Raisin Homestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hershey’s Take 5 Candy Bar</td>
<td>Cookies-Oatmeal Cranberry Raisin Walnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jolly Rancher-Chewy Lollipops</td>
<td>Cookies-Trail Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifesavers-Wintogreen Mints</td>
<td>Cookies-Famous Amos-Chocolate Chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupag-Salted Plums With Chili</td>
<td>Cookies-Grandma’s-Homestyle Oatmeal Raisin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;M-Peanut</td>
<td>Cookies-Grandma’s-Rich And Chewy Chocolate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;M-Plain</td>
<td>Chip Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentos Fruit</td>
<td>Cracker Snacks-Austin-Cheese Crackers With Peanut Butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Vines-Original Red Candy</td>
<td>Cracker Snacks-Austin-Crackers With Peanut Butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reese’s Pieces-Peanuts And Peanut Butter With Nuts</td>
<td>Cracker Snacks-Austin-Wheat Crackers With Cheddar Cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skittles-Original Fruit</td>
<td>Cracker Snacks-Cheez It-Original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skittles-Sour</td>
<td>Donuts-Freshley’s-Mini Frosted Donuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skittles-Tropical</td>
<td>Fruit Snacks-Nabisco-Strawberry Nonfat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skittles-Wild Berry</td>
<td>Hard Candy-Wrigley’s-Life Savers-5 Flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starburst-Fruit Chews-Baja California</td>
<td>Seeds-Kels-Sunflower Kernels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starburst-Fruit Chews-Tropical</td>
<td>Snack Mix-Gardetto’s-Original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starburst-Original</td>
<td>Toaster Pastry-Kelloggs-Frosted Strawberry Pop Tarts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Daddy-Milk Caramel Pop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Food and beverage data were collected as part of environmental assessments conducted at after school program sites. Observers recorded the brand names, types and sizes of all food and beverage products available to program participants.*
venues in which foods were available in programs for all age levels. Venues included vending machines, school stores and snack bars, as well as the program-provided snack. The foods most frequently found in these programs were candy, chips and cookies.

It can be difficult to know which food items adhere and which do not adhere to the state school nutrition standards. An initial assessment conducted in the HEAC after school programs serving middle school students found mostly candies and cookies (see Figure 2). None of these foods adhere to the SB 12 nutrition standards.

After school programs provide an opportunity for children to engage in active play after the school day. Program administrators were asked to describe the types and the duration of activities offered at their sites. Of the 18 programs offering time for program participants to play, 12 programs averaged at least 61 minutes of playtime per program day (Figure 3). Playtime consisted of both structured and unstructured (or free) play. During structured playtime, less than half (44 percent) of the HEAC after school programs required all program participants to take part. Unstructured play periods fared even worse in terms of requiring physical activity, with only 12 percent of programs mandating that the time be used solely for physical activity.

![Figure 3](image)

**Average Daily Minutes of Total Play, All Grades Combined**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF PROGRAMS</th>
<th>AVERAGE DAILY MINUTES OF TOTAL PLAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-90</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-120</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121-180</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 4](image)

**Minutes of Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity in Physical Activity Sessions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP SIZE AND TYPE</th>
<th>MINUTES OF MVPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 20 PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; = 20 PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Trained observers measured the intensity of participants’ exertion during the programs’ physical activity sessions.*
Across all programs, participants had the most MVPA (24.4 minutes) while taking part in structured physical activity sessions, regardless of class size.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children get 60 minutes of daily physical activity, with 50% of that time devoted to moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for optimal health. This is generally thought to be much easier to accomplish when group sizes are smaller. However, at HEAC sites, program participants achieved more MVPA due to the presence of structure than because of small group sizes. Across all programs, participants had the most MVPA (24.4 minutes) while taking part in structured physical activity sessions, regardless of class size (see Figure 4). This was more MVPA than was achieved during the school day, highlighting the important role after school programming can play in helping children and youth meet their recommended daily activity level.

The duration of the physical activity period also influences activity levels (Figure 5). When program participants took part in structured and unstructured activities that were less than 30 minutes in length, participants engaged in little or no MVPA. However, when the sessions were longer than 30 minutes, participants in both structured and unstructured activities were able to get significant amounts of MVPA. These findings can be helpful to after school program administrators in making decisions about allocating sufficient time and offering appropriate types of programs that will engage students in adequate physical activity.

Challenges and Opportunities

Looking forward, it is clear that there are both challenges and opportunities for promoting healthier after school environments. Here it was asked: What do after school programs need, to be able to provide healthy snacks and daily physical activity for youth? What is the best way to involve and engage youth and provide for youth development? How can these programs
recruit and retain well-trained and effective staff? What stands in the way of these goals, and how can we reach them?

Healthy snacks and physical activity opportunities support academic success.

Challenges:
- The overwhelming emphasis on academics has pushed everything else—nutrition, physical activity, youth development—to the side.

Opportunities:
- Some school districts have gone as far as withholding physical activity for academically underachieving students until they raise their grades!
- Increasingly, research has demonstrated that vigorous physical activity supports academic achievement and success.
- Daily physical activity can be set aside and protected in after school program curricula.

Oakland - School-based After School Snapshot

In a community where there’s not a lot of things to do, the school becomes the hub of activity – both during the school day and when school’s not in session. Before school, it is the place to go to get a healthier meal than the soda and hot chips available at the local corner market. The nutrition policies for the school apply to before and after school too so nutrition standards are set for all foods served on school grounds – no matter what the time of day. Those served in vending machines have even been taste tested to choose which ones to sell. After school, it is the place where a produce stand comes once a week – and at prices the families can afford. There are samples of the fruits and vegetables so people can try something new before they buy it. The after school program is at the school so the children don’t have to worry about crossing busy streets. There are lots of different programs to choose from. You can learn how to fix a bike – and then earn one to ride. You can work on computers. You can learn all about plants in the school garden. There’s a class to learn how to cook healthy foods that taste good too. The schoolyard is being fixed up so all the children can play there – and play games that the children choose themselves. Everyone spends some time outside on the schoolyard doing physical activities, no matter what program you go to inside. The after school programs are working on establishing physical activity policies to insure that all youth get regular activity each day. The snacks get gobbled up every day because there may not be much food waiting for them at home – it’s the last meal some of the children get, until they return the next morning.
• A dedicated source of health/public health funding for after school programs would help assure that programs could resist cutting their physical activity or health elements despite academic pressures.

After school programs can provide healthy snacks.

Challenges:
• Though after school programs benefit from receiving snacks that meet federal and/or state nutrition guidelines, these snacks tend to be pre-packaged, and though they are better than non-adhering foods, are nevertheless still high in sugar and fat.
• In order to provide a healthy snack that includes fruits, vegetables and other fresh foods, programs need facilities for storage and preparation.
• School based programs, which could in theory make use of food service facilities for this purpose, frequently run into barriers because of food handling and safety restrictions or restrictions posed by food services management.

Baldwin Park - Community-based After School Snapshot

After school the youth go to the new Teen Center. Lots of different organizations run their programs and share the space at the Center. It used to be that there was only homework help after school unless you had signed up in an outside sports league. Now there are lots of different programs you can choose from – and you can still get that homework help. There is a cooking class at least once a week to learn how to make simple, healthy and tasty foods. There are options for physical activity where you don’t have to be an athlete to join in and have fun. There are classes to learn how to make changes in the community – a way for youth to have a voice in making their community a healthier, safer and better place to grow up in. You can be part of “Healthy Teens on the Move” and make a difference – and that really feels good! The city has made a “Healthy Policy Yields Healthy Minds” policy that now includes the Teen Center – that means that only healthy foods can be served and sold on any city-owned property or city-run program – for youth and adults too. What a great way to reach so many programs at once. In addition, Healthy Teens on the Move have worked with the city to adopt a Parks Master Plan. This plan includes recommendations from the youth for lighting, safety and facilities to increase use, walkability and proximity of parks to neighborhoods.
• Community-based programs may have no access to kitchen facilities.

Opportunities:
• Active participation in local school wellness policy implementation can facilitate the creation of a healthy eating environment for youth during and after school.
• Community and school-based after school programs have the opportunity to go beyond existing nutrition standards to provide healthier snacks.
• In some schools, after school programs have been able to make arrangements with their food services departments to be able to use refrigeration and food prep areas.
• Produce delivery services can deliver fresh produce regularly, thus reducing need for longer cold storage.

Kern County After School Program Snapshot (CCROPP)

In 2005, older children had access to physical activity programs after school, but no such program existed for children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. This all changed when the Greenfield Walking Group, a group of parents who met in a Network for a Healthy California nutrition class at the Greenfield Family Resource Center, partnered with the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) to consider how to improve children’s access to physical activity and healthy eating opportunities.

These groups worked with the Kern County school district to increase younger children’s access to after school physical activity programs to be staffed, in large part, by 30-40 AmeriCorps members. The school district demonstrated to government stakeholders that they were engaging parents in their children’s education, their AmeriCorps members could augment their service hours and training, and younger children could now engage in organized physical activity.

Genuine community involvement, political will, decision-maker support, and content-area expertise were the key ingredients to enacting policy change. “The program became so popular,” says Jennifer Lopez, the CCROPP community lead for Kern County, “because it was what the kids and the parents wanted.” But in 2007, the school district lost its AmeriCorps funding. Expansion cannot be possible without financial resources; these need to be allocated consistently to ensure that policies that have been adopted can also be implemented.
Collecting and sharing these solutions across sites, and clarifying what training may be needed to assure safety in food handling techniques, could enable more after school programs to serve fresh foods.

Physical activity in after school programs increases opportunities for moderate to vigorous physical activity.

Challenges:
- Frequently, physical activity opportunities are not offered or are of poor quality involving little or none of the recommended “moderate to vigorous” activity.
- Physical activity is frequently optional, with many of the least fit youth opting out.
- Staff often haven’t received training in how to engage youth in physical activity, how to make it fun, culturally appropriate, and appealing to athletes and non-athletes alike.
- Neither school-based nor community-based programs are under any requirements to meet physical activity guidelines—the California Department of Education’s guidelines for physical activity will be optional for programs.

Opportunities:
- Resources and training are forthcoming from the California Department of Education to assist programs in developing and bolstering their physical activity components.
- One way to infuse physical activity is to incorporate short physical activity breaks into the academic part of programming.
- Scheduled physical activity programming that is at least 30 minutes in duration maximizes the opportunity for achieving moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- School districts are extending the physical activity requirements in federally mandated school wellness policies to after school time.
- In the absence of state standards for after school physical activity, some cities are applying physical activity and nutrition standards to all city facilities used for after school programming.

Program monitoring can ensure healthy after school environments.

Challenges:
- Categorical Program Monitoring (CPM) for California’s after school programs (ASES and 21st CCLC), at present, looks at homework support, attendance in the program, and instructor-student ratios. This encourages programs to concentrate primarily on those aspects of the program rather than physical activity or nutrition.
• State nutrition and physical activity policies and guidelines do not apply to community-based after school programs.

Opportunities:
• By adding a simple indicator on the CPM assessment that looks at health, programs would be encouraged to, and validated for, considering children’s health part of their charge and mission.
• Community-based after school programs could be engaged in developing and implementing nutrition and physical activity policies through education, training and collaboration.
• Including provisions for after school in local school wellness policies can extend physical activity opportunities for youth.

Trained staff are key to ensuring healthy after school environments.

Challenges:
• After school and out-of-school programming are naturally subject to ongoing staff turnover. After school programs offer part time employment; they frequently hire young people with energy, youth focus, and part time availability. Those staff move on to the next phases of their educations and careers or to seek and find full time employment.

• Requirements for after school personnel by school districts are currently modeled on the certifications needed for classroom instructional aides.

Opportunities:
• The need for hiring and training is constant. With a well-developed recruitment and training system in place, programs can remain strong and dynamic despite inevitable staff changes.
• Offering links to a career path (such as recreation specialist) can serve as a valuable tool for recruiting and retaining high quality staff.
• Trained staff can be role models for healthy eating and physical activity for their students.
• Pilot programs are being created to both provide a community college certificate training program and to recruit and train retirees to become after school workers.

Youth have an important role to play in shaping after school programs.

Challenges:
• The emphasis on academics has detracted not only from physical activity and nutrition in programs, but also from youth engagement and overall youth development, missing
opportunities to prepare youth for their roles as community members and future leaders.

**Opportunities:**
- CDE-funded programs (ASES and 21st CCLC) are highly encouraged to incorporate youth development strategies in their programming.
- Some of the key opportunities exemplified in programs with strong youth engagement include: Creating mentoring structures and career paths for youth, engaging community and youth in program planning and decision-making, developing youth leadership and advocacy skills and involving youth in leading nutrition and physical activity efforts, as well as teaching and modeling them for younger members.

After school programs need adequate funding to create healthy environments for children.

**Challenges:**
- Though ASES established or provided support for thousands of school-based programs, these programs sometimes have lacked sufficient funding to offer comprehensive, whole-child programming.
- Many excellent community-based after school programs struggle under a severe shortage of funding.

**Opportunities:**
- Federal matching funding is available for snacks served by after school programs.
- Collaborations and joint use agreements between school-based and community-based after school programs and organizations with appropriate resources, such as the YMCA and Parks and Recreation Departments, can stretch program dollars.
- In order to support community based programs, and to assure the kind of complete programming that will develop the whole child, continued attention and advocacy for full funding will be required going forward.

...after school programs have a vital role to play in ensuring healthy nutrition and physical activity environments for children and youth.
Recommendations

After school programs have a vital role to play, not only by providing academic support, but also by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. The following strategies can help ensure that after school programs create healthy environments for our children and youth.

• Provide a healthy snack in after school programs.
  – Encourage the adoption and monitoring of nutrition standards in all after school programs.
  – Increase the number of fresh fruits and vegetables served as after school snacks.
  – Encourage after school programs to participate in federally funded reimbursable snack programs.

• Involve all youth participating in the program in daily physical activity.
  – Mobilize parents, youth and community members to advocate to officials and policy makers for daily physical activity in after school programming.
  – Build on guidelines developed by school districts, state departments of education and after school organizations to implement physical activity standards for after school programs.

• Establish ongoing staff training.
  – Provide professional development to staff that includes nutrition and physical activity training.
  – Work with teachers’ unions and other stakeholders to ensure that licensing and certification for after school personnel are appropriate.

• Offer opportunities for youth engagement and development.
  – Involve youth in selecting snack menus and developing physical activity programming that have wide and diverse appeal.
  – Train and mentor older youth as assistant staff in after school programs for younger children, as a way of developing the after school workforce while expanding youth employment opportunities.

• Link after school programs to community resources.
  – Partner with programs and venues that offer weekend and vacation options.
  – Build relationships with advocates for healthy youth and healthy places, including adult mentors and civic decision makers.
– Develop “safety zones” around after school sites.

After school programs reach a broad group of children and youth on school campuses and in the community. We need coordination between school- and community-based after school programs, implementation of nutrition and physical activity standards, full utilization of existing community resources, sharing of lessons learned and best practices, and advocacy by parents and youth to create healthful after school environments.

Adequate, stable and dedicated funding sources are needed in order to achieve these goals and to support and sustain the progress being made in improving nutrition and physical activity environments in after school programs.

Useful Resources

Organizations
Action for Healthy Kids
(www.actionforhealthykids.org)

Afterschool Alliance
(www.afterschoolalliance.org)

Alliance for a Healthier Generation
(www.healthiergeneration.org)

California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness
(www.canfit.org)

California Afterschool Network
(www.afterschoolnetwork.org)

California After School Resource Center
(www.californiaafterschool.org)

California Department of Education – Before and After School Programs
(www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as)

California Healthy Kids Resource Center
(www.californiahealthykids.org)

Central Valley Afterschool Foundation
(www.centralvalleyafterschool.org)

Healthy Eating, Active Communities
(www.healthyeatingactivecommunities.org)

Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program
(www.ccropp.org)

National Afterschool Association
(www.naaweb.org)
Guidelines and Tool Kits
California Department of Education Afterschool Physical Activity Guidelines and Nutrition and Physical Activity Implementation E-manuals:
http://californiaafterschool.org/Pages/nutrition.html
http://californiaafterschool.org/Pages/physical__activity.html

The CDE physical activity guidelines are forthcoming.

Reports and Policy Briefs


Samuels & Associates, California Project LEAN, the Partnership for the Public's Health, the Center for Weight and Health, University of California, Berkeley, and The California Endowment, Key Lessons from California Schools Working to Change School Food Environments. 2007.


Appendix

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