

SPECIAL TOPICS IN PUBLIC HEALTH
ORIGINAL RESEARCH: FEATURED ABSTRACT FROM THE
18TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Using CDC's *School Health Index* to Improve the Physical Activity and Nutrition Environments in 15 Michigan Public Schools

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PEER REVIEWED

The childhood obesity crisis was addressed in Michigan by implementing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *SHI: School Health Index* in 15 schools during the 2002–2003 school year.

The Michigan departments of education and community health have partnered to encourage schools to improve their physical activity and nutrition environments by using the *School Health Index*. Fifteen Michigan public schools agreed to implement *School Health Index* and report their results during the 2002–2003 school year in return for \$1000.

Each school was required to form a Coordinated School Health Team (CSHT), designate a team leader (on-site coordinator), and work with a trained *School Health Index* implementation facilitator. Facilitators assisted the on-site coordinator and CSHT through *School Health Index* implementation.

Evaluation results indicated that using the *School Health Index* encouraged schools to create and maintain building-level CSHTs, increased on-site coordinators' familiarity with physical activity and nutrition policies,

and encouraged physical activity and nutrition promotion activities. Moreover, this process increased staff and student opportunities to be physically active and, in addition, increased the number of nutrition learning opportunities during school hours. Despite these successes, some schools experienced difficulty maintaining their teams over the year and lacked administrative support.

In summary, the *School Health Index* is a valuable, free tool for a committed school staff member or public health agency representative to use in mobilizing a school to offer more physical activity and nutrition education opportunities and to serve healthier food.

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