

School-based interventions for obesity

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Thanks to the Let's Move initiative, society is becoming more aware of alarming statistics like 1 in 4 children are obese and childhood obesity has nearly doubled over the past two decades! With this platform, nutrition education and physical activity in the classroom have taken the forefront against this growing epidemic. A study in the January/February 2011 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* explores twenty-six school-based nutrition interventions in the United States.

Investigators performed a content analysis of Kindergarten-12th grade school-based nutrition interventions which fit into the study's ten components proposed for developing future effective school-based nutrition interventions. Findings from this study reveal that classroom [nutrition education](#) (85%) followed by parental involvement at home (62%) were the two intervention components used most often. Less frequent components included establishment of foodservice guidelines (15%), community involvement (15%), inclusion of ethnic/cultural groups (15%), inclusion of incentives for schools (12%), and involvement of parents at school (8%).

This study documents that although many components of nutrition education have been successfully included in our children's school-based interventions, there are still some missing links. "Schools continue to be an important location for [childhood obesity](#) prevention interventions. However, it is imperative that school-based interventions be developed and implemented to achieve maximum results. A periodic review of research on school-based nutrition interventions provides the opportunity to examine previous research and identify successful strategies and

tactics for future studies that will lead to improved health outcomes in children," says lead author Dr. Mary Roseman, who conducted this work while at the University of Kentucky and The University of Mississippi.

Unfortunately, there is limited research about the effectiveness of nutrition education interventions. Now, more than ever, this is an area of research that has to be investigated to ensure that we educate our children how to be healthy, productive adults. The researchers, which also included Dr. Martha Riddell, Registered Dietitian and Professor of Public Health at University of Kentucky, and Jessica Niblock, Registered Dietitian with the Cincinnati Health Department, agree. "With increased awareness, urgency, and funding to support nutrition interventions and research focusing on reversing the rising trend of overweight and obese children in the US, synthesizing findings from previous studies to inform research and program development, and identifying potentially high-impact strategies and tactics are warranted. The 10 recommendations evaluated in this study may be a functional guide for both educators implementing nutrition programs and researchers designing school-based nutrition interventions."

The article emphasizes the importance of providing funding support so that more researchers can access the effectiveness of nutrition education in the classroom along with other links like cafeterias, homes, and communities.

More information: The article is "A Content Analysis of Kindergarten-12th Grade School-based Nutrition Interventions: Making Use of Past Learning" by Mary G. Roseman, PhD, RD, LD; Martha C. Riddell, DrPH, RD; Jessica N. Haynes, MS, RD, LD. It appears in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 43, Issue 1 (January/February 2011).

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