

Parents of overweight kids more likely to give schools failing grades for fighting obesity

May 20 2014

Parents – especially those of overweight children – give schools a failing grade for efforts to encourage healthy habits that combat childhood obesity, according to a new poll from the University of Michigan.

According to the latest University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, [parents](#) with at least one overweight child (25 percent of all parents in the poll) were more likely to give schools a failing grade of D or F for obesity-related efforts than parents of normal-weight children.

Parents of [overweight children](#) were twice as likely to fail the [school](#) on opportunities for children to be physically active and much more likely to give a failing grade for nutrition education than parents without overweight children.

Only for healthy lunch offerings was there was no difference between the grades given by both parents of overweight and normal weight children.

"Children do spend much of their time at school, so it's important that they receive health messages about nutrition and physical activity during the school day," says Matthew M. Davis, M.D., M.A.P.P., director of the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

"It is concerning that parents of the kids who need the most help in this area – kids who are overweight—are saying that schools may not be

doing enough to meet parents' expectations for providing programs and education to address obesity."

Overall, the poll found that 14% of parents gave failing grades (D or F) to their children's schools for nutrition education, and 8% gave failing grades for healthy lunches (8%). Similar proportions of parents gave failing grades to their children's schools for the amount of time for physical activity (12%) and physical education (11%).

The poll was administered in March 2014 and reflects responses from 1,168 parents with a child aged 5 to 17.

There were some positive grades: 29% of parents gave a grade of A to their children's schools for physical education, 28% for physical activity, 22% for healthy lunches, and 17% for nutrition education.

"We know schools are making efforts, but we hope the results of this [poll](#) encourage schools and parents to have more dialogue about the challenge of childhood obesity," says Davis, who also is professor of Public Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and Health Management and Policy at the U-M School of Public Health.

Parents of older children (age 12-17) also were more likely to give their children's schools failing grades than parents of younger children (age 5-11).

"This is worrisome, because older kids who are closer to going off on their own should be exposed to healthy choices about eating habits and [physical activity](#). Schools need to find ways to better partner with parents and community leaders to help send kids off with the right lessons about physical fitness," says Davis, who is professor of pediatrics and internal medicine at the U-M Medical School.

"Each year, our annual National Poll on Children's Health shows that adults nationwide rank [childhood obesity](#) as one of the top 10 health concerns for our kids. We need to keep searching for answers that will protect the health of our kids now and in the future."

More information: [mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/f ... s-passing-or-failing](https://mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/f...s-passing-or-failing)

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

Citation: Parents of overweight kids more likely to give schools failing grades for fighting obesity (2014, May 20) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-parents-overweight-kids-schools-grades.html>

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