



Strong minds. Strong bodies. Strong schools.

A partnership of the RI Departments of Education and Health
with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

thrive report

Vol. 2, Number 1, January 2008

January Issue: Healthy Weight

Core Issue: Healthier
Snacks and Beverages

Fresh from the Field

thrive by the numbers

75 Percentage of Americans who will be overweight or obese by 2015.

1,400 Number of calories in fast food large burger, large fries, and medium drink.

66 Percentage of daily caloric requirements for an average person in the above fast food meal.

24 Percentage of weight increase of children and teenagers by the year 2015 due to lack of physical activity and eating unhealthy food.

80 Percentage of obese children who will become obese adults.

January Focus: Healthy Weight

Welcome to the January edition of the *thrive report* that focuses on healthy weight. Maintaining a healthy weight feels like a struggle for many of us. Calorie balance is like a scale - to remain in balance and maintain your body weight, the calories consumed from foods must be balanced by the calories used in normal body functions, daily activities, and physical activity ([CDC](#)). In simple terms: eat right and exercise. The New Year is always a time for us to reflect on new resolutions for change. Let us make 2008 the year of promoting healthy weight and lifestyle changes.

According to the [RI Department of Health's Initiative for a Healthy Weight](#), something as simple as cutting out one 200-calorie soda per day can result in a 20-pound weight loss in one year **and** if you add 15 minutes of walking a day, you'd lose an additional 10 pounds a year! We know that physical activity and proper nutrition help prevent obesity which also promotes learning and academic achievement. Regular physical activity has multiple immediate and long-term health benefits that include lowering your risk of developing [heart disease](#), [stroke](#), certain [cancers](#), [diabetes](#) and high blood pressure.

Since the 1970's, obesity rates have more than doubled for children aged 2-5 and aged 12-19 and more than tripled for children aged 6-11 resulting in a dramatic increase in Type 2 diabetes in both children and adolescents. In addition, obesity is related to low self-esteem, depression, sleep problems, and being bullied. If current trends continue, some experts predict that children born today may have a lower life expectancy than their parents. To stop this epidemic of unhealthy weight, we need to educate people about physical activity and nutrition and motivate them to make lifestyle changes. So join **thrive** in a 2008 New Year resolution: **Everybody thrive! - healthy weight in 2008!**

The Core Issue: Healthier Snacks and Beverages - RI's Success

10 Percentage of parents with obese children who are very concerned about their child's weight.

36 Percentage of RI high school students who watch 3 or more hours of TV daily.

32 Percentage of RI high school students who get sufficient physical activity.

19 Percentage of RI children entering kindergarten who are obese.

Healthy Weight Links

[CDC BMI Calculator](#)

[thrive Nutrition](#)

[thrive Physical Activity](#)

[RI Department of Health's Initiative for a Healthy Weight](#)

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January 1, 2008 marked another milestone in Rhode Island's efforts to make schools healthier places. Now all Rhode Island elementary, middle and high schools are required by [RI state law](#) to sell or distribute *only* healthier snacks and beverages.

Students and school staff now have access to healthier foods. Although some feel challenged by this transformation, they have come to appreciate the changes and value the important role schools play in promoting health among students and staff. Many attribute this success to the gradual, community-driven approach RI has taken to this issue. Community-based organizations have been involved through the RI Healthy Schools Coalition, and parents and community members have been active in their local [District Health and Wellness Subcommittees](#). (See the [March '07 thrive report](#) for more on RI's approach). School leaders have embraced these changes as well.

RI's law is one of the strongest in the country. Still, healthy nutrition can be confusing. The [definitions of healthier snacks and beverages](#) are part of the RI law. The RI Healthy Schools Coalition's [Nutrition Guidelines for Vending and a la Carte Foods](#) provides guidelines for areas that are not addressed in the law and provides rationales and product examples to help districts with implementation.

Additionally, the state has turned to [Kids First](#) to maintain the [RI Approved Product List](#), which includes items that meet both the state law and the *Nutrition Guidelines*. The approved product list is organized by food product types to make it easier for school staff, school stores, PTOs, and others to find foods they can sell or distribute in schools. Since new foods are submitted to Kids First for review, the list is updated monthly and posted on the **thrive** website at [www.thriveri.org/snacks](#).

With the new law, students are eating healthier during the school day. Schools in RI are places where students can learn about and practice healthy eating, developing positive habits that will last a lifetime.

Fresh from the Field

Submitted by Emo Dinitto, Director of Health and Physical Education, Warwick School Department

The [Warwick Public School Department](#) is proud to lead the way in efforts to connect health and education for school children. The Warwick District Strategic Plan includes the following goal: *to decrease obesity and improve the health and wellness of students through nutrition, physical activity, health education and physical education.*

As part of the District's overall health and wellness efforts, the school department is collecting body mass index (BMI) measures on all students through physical education classes. This

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The *thrive report* can be found at www.thriveri.org/report.html

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information will be used in aggregate to track the progress of the district's wellness program. The BMI collection is the foundation of a district wide effort to improve the physical education curriculum. School Physician, Steven Feldman, MD sent a letter home to all parents of Warwick school children explaining the initiative. Some parents raised questions that were quickly addressed. Parents embraced the district's wellness efforts to connect student health with student success. The BMI information will be collected from October 07 to June 08. Preliminary results demonstrated will be available when all the data is compiled.

Most recently the district entered into partnership with Kent County Hospital to enhance nutrition and physical activity offerings in Warwick's elementary schools. For more information about Warwick's wellness efforts contact Emo Dinitto, Director of Health and Physical Education at dinittoe@warrickschools.org.

To share your first-person success stories in "Fresh from the Field," please email Annemarie.Silvia@ride.ri.gov.

As always, we welcome and encourage your feedback about **thrive**, Rhode Island's Coordinated School Health model. Please email us at rosemary.reilly-chammat@health.ri.gov or midge.sabatini@ride.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

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