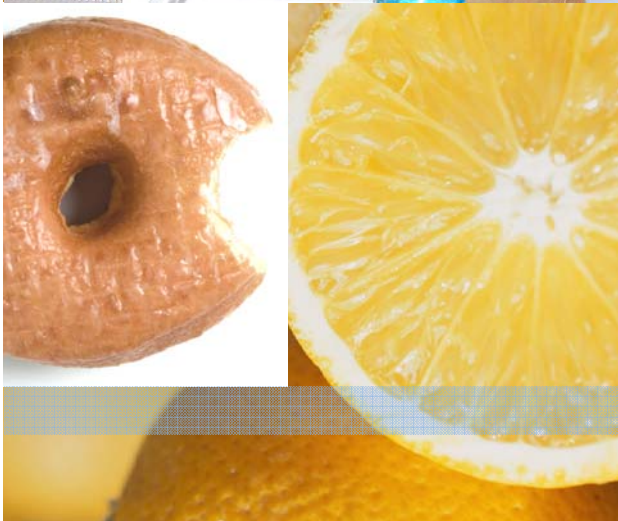


The Keystone Center Youth Policy Summit Student Agreement



June 16-23, 2007

OBESITY IN AMERICA Final Policy Recommendations



The Keystone Center
and
National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools
of Mathematics, Science and Technology



Foreword

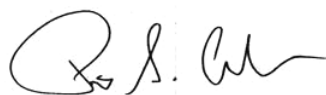
Co-hosted by the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science, and Technology (NCSSSMST) with Keystone Science School and The Center for Science & Public Policy—program divisions of The Keystone Center—the fourth annual Keystone Center Youth Policy Summit focused on Obesity in America. In June 2007, 40 students from 10 math and science schools came together in Keystone, Colorado to develop recommendations for solutions to this ever-increasing problem in the United States.

After months of research and study, these students spent the week of June 16 to 23 working in stakeholder groups, discussing, arguing, developing, and finally reaching resolutions. With guidance from The Keystone Center staff members and Consortium representatives, these 40 high school students produced viable approaches to dealing with a problem that is confounding policy makers in every state in this country.

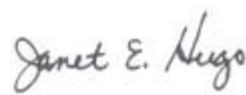
We are proud of the initiative shown by these students and the quality of the product that resulted. We believe you will find the report to be well-researched, thoughtful, and practical. This report comes from the very population of individuals that are affected most by the need to educate and learn about proper nutrition and the effects on health that result from poor diet, unhealthy food choices and lack of adequate physical activity.

Please use this report to assist you in your efforts to help young people make good choices. Distribute it to those individuals who are involved in policy and decision-making on obesity in America.

The Keystone Center and the NCSSSMST support the continuing focus on quality education and opportunities for students in math, science, and technology. You may contact us with questions or find additional information regarding our organizations by visiting our websites at <http://www.ncsssmst.org> and <http://www.keystone.org>.



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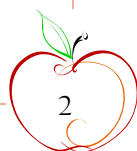


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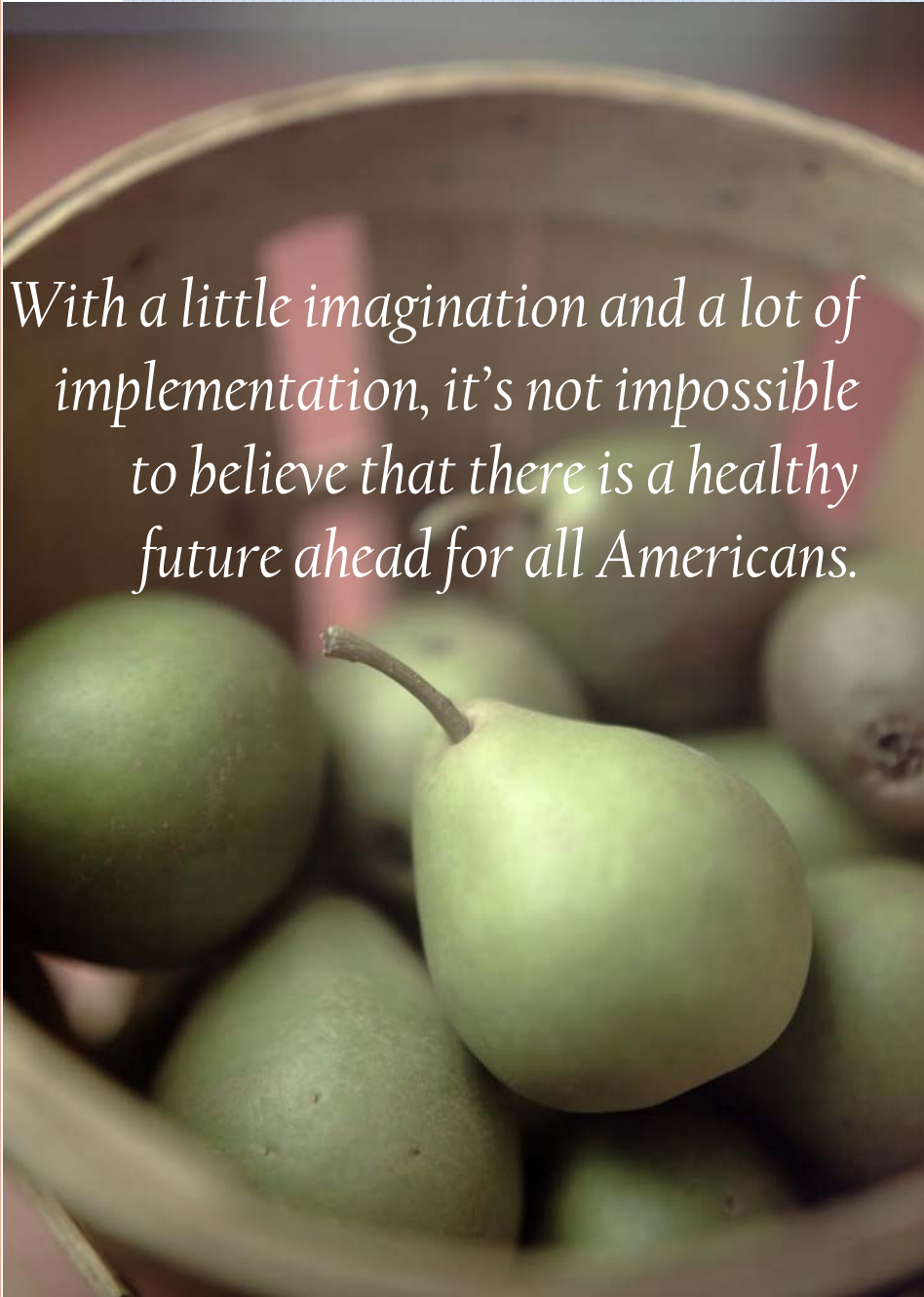
National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Math, Science and Technology

The Consortium is the nation's foremost alliance of schools dedicated to transforming mathematics, science, and technology education to create synergies among schools engaged in educational innovation by shaping national policy, fostering collaboration, and developing, testing, implementing and disseminating exemplary programs.

The Consortium was established in 1988 to provide a forum for schools to exchange information and program ideas and to evolve alliances between them. There are currently 100 institutional members (secondary schools), representing more than 37,000 students and 1,600 educators. These are joined by over 100 affiliate members (colleges, universities, foundations, organizations and corporations) who share the goals of transforming mathematics, science, and technology education.

For more information, visit www.ncssmst.org.



A close-up photograph of a woven basket filled with several green pears. One pear is in sharp focus in the foreground, showing its stem and the texture of its skin. The background is softly blurred, showing more pears and the interior of the basket. The lighting is natural, highlighting the vibrant green color of the fruit.

With a little imagination and a lot of implementation, it's not impossible to believe that there is a healthy future ahead for all Americans.

*~2007 Youth Policy Summit,
Obesity in America*

Program Introduction

The Keystone Center's Youth Policy Summit is designed to advance critical thinking and problem-solving skills in our leaders of the future. The Summit provides a forum for learning how data, knowledge, and negotiation skills can be used to solve pressing social challenges where values and science intersect.

Decision-makers throughout different sectors of society—government, industry, the public health community, the medical professions, schools, etc.—are striving to identify successful, feasible strategies for preventing and treating overweight and obesity throughout the U.S. population. Many Americans do not maintain healthy diets or adequate levels of physical activity despite the availability of information about healthy lifestyles. This Summit seeks to identify reasonable strategies for improving that base of information, educating consumers on how to utilize it, and motivating them to act on what they know by making steadily healthier choices.

Forty of the brightest high school students in the country gathered in Keystone, Colorado, to participate in The Keystone Center's Youth Policy Summit on "Obesity in America." The Summit, an annual collaboration between The Keystone Center and The National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology (NCSSSMST), focused in 2006 on identifying ways to help reverse incidence of overweight and obesity through a wide variety of interventions.

The students prepared for the Summit by engaging in semester-long independent research projects on relevant



“I am especially proud of this program. At Keystone we work with today's thought leaders on vexatious energy and health problems in one of our divisions and with students, teachers, and system administrators to train the next generation to do better. This program brings the best of both worlds together. Bravo to everyone involved!”

—Peter Adler, Ph.D.,
President,
The Keystone Center

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dimensions of the problem—e.g., trends in food consumption and physical activity, government dietary guidance, commercial and social marketing, nutrition standards, and the emotional and psychological impact of obesity.

Throughout their stay in this picturesque mountain town, students also received orientations in interest-based negotiation and problem-solving, and spent a day interacting with a panel of national experts with diverse perspectives and backgrounds. Finally, the students spent three days in intense negotiations, playing the roles of actual key stakeholders and developing consensus recommendations for promoting healthy lifestyles. This resulting report will be disseminated to decision-makers in government, industry, education, and the public health community.

The expert panelists and sponsors of the 2007 Youth Policy Summit on Obesity in America are listed on page 25.



Questions/Issues

What specifically should be done over the next 10 years, by whom, and by when, to bring about the behavior changes necessary to reduce incidence of overweight and obesity significantly in the United States?

1. A good deal of information about healthy lifestyles is already available to Americans. What else might they need to know?

- Consider dietary guidance from government, school curricula, public health messages, and information from other sources such as physicians, coaches, and dietitians.
- Consider how such information is currently being used—by whom, and for what purpose? Is it reaching enough people?
- What do you recommend be done going forward?
- Who would implement any new strategies, and how might they be funded?

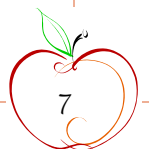
2. What educational strategies are needed to help people use this information appropriately?

- How effective are current efforts? Consider current education around use of the Food Label and MyPyramid, school wellness plans, school curricula, public health announcements, and information for special populations such as dieters and new parents.
- What do you recommend be done going forward?
- Who would implement any new strategies, and how might they be funded?

3. What other strategies (programs or messages) should be used to motivate and inspire people to act upon this knowledge and change their behavior?

- What factors compel people to act on health-related information?
- Are new messages needed, or environmental changes (such as integrated community and neighborhood design, or greater availability of healthier foods)...or both?
- How are messages delivered most effectively? (Factors may include who delivers the message, through what means, with what tone, etc.)
- Who would implement any new strategies, and how might they be funded?

4. What research priorities are most pressing over the next 10 years?



Final Policy Recommendations

Introduction from the Students

In recent years, obesity has become a distinctly pressing issue in American society. Statistics show that as of 2004, 65% of Americans, or two out of every three people, are overweight or obese (Steiner, Elixhauser). If nothing is done to counteract the incidence of obesity in America, it will become an increasingly prevalent crisis that will have a devastating impact on future generations.

This proposal provides information and proposes strategies to aid in the reduction of obesity in the United States. We are recommending the further promotion of programs proven to work, such as Take 10![®], *Dance Dance Revolution*, and Small Steps. In addition, we are recommending innovations such as a percent body fat measurement during physical exams, and a peer-to-peer program for educating and motivating students regarding health lifestyles. These programs, if implemented (or expanded), can help induce the needed behavioral changes. With a little imagination and a lot of implementation, it's not impossible to believe that there is a healthy future ahead for all Americans.

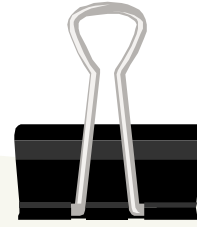


Education: Nutrition Needs

Since the rate of obesity in America has been rising rapidly in recent decades, educating the public about healthy lifestyles has become increasingly important. Promoting proper nutrition and physical activity through the Internet via popular websites is an important education strategy.

An effective way to target younger consumers is by influencing them during the school day. To encourage students to make better choices, we recommend the following changes within school districts: replace higher calorie beverages with no/low calorie choices in school vending machines, encourage healthier beverage choices such as fruit juice and water, promote baked foods over fried foods in school cafeterias, and promote increased use of fresh foods. When possible, gardening programs should be available in schools to increase the amount of accessible fresh food and to promote a healthy hobby.

Supervisors and employees of school cafeterias should be trained and educated about nutrition in order to better provide the students with healthy foods. It would also be beneficial to have a school district nutritionist available as a consultant to students and staff members.



“Keystone really helped me to work with other students in developing my negotiation skills. The Keystone summit was a fun and educational experience...”

-Kyle Schoenstein,
Science and Mathematics
Academy at
Aberdeen, Maryland

Nutrition Education

A major contributing factor in the increase in obesity rates is the lack of sufficient education and knowledge about proper nutrition, physical activity, and other options involving healthy food choices. Programs such as nutrition classes in schools, beginning at an early age, can assist in reducing the prevalence of obesity. Nutrition courses for K-12 students should be funded by the government as part of the educational budget.

Government agencies should provide schools with course guidelines including vital information about physical activity (recommended daily amounts), the benefits of exercise, and general nutritional information for students. Nutrition curricula in schools should include an explanation of the components of the Nutrition Facts label. Schools would be allowed to teach the course in their preferred method, providing that they follow the required guidelines.

Home economics courses in secondary schools should teach and stress the significance of preparing healthy and balanced meals. Also, kindergarten and elementary school classes should promote healthy snacking and beneficial fitness activities for young children.



Health Day

School-aged children are rarely provided with the opportunity to focus on the importance of a healthy lifestyle. With the implementation of a Health Day, students would be given the opportunity to gain more knowledge about their nutritional needs. This could occur once a month at the discretion of the school or school district. During Health Day, increased choices of healthy foods, beverages and snacks should be available in school cafeterias. In addition, guest speakers (nutritionists, fitness representatives, athletes, coaches, parents, teachers, older students, etc.) could discuss the significance and benefits of a healthy diet and physical activity. Health Day could be funded by state governments, Parent-Teacher Organizations, and/or Health Day fundraisers (such as t-shirt sales). Information about upcoming after-school field activities such as intramurals and field games (discussed later in this report) could be highlighted at these events to help raise student awareness of healthy activities at school.




“The school had a way of pulling everybody together when we were all complete strangers to one another. Such an ideological junction of diverse ideas is sure to yield outstanding results. As much as there were leaders and followers, I was pleased that we all had our own personal contributions to the report.”

*~Aaron League,
Science and Mathematics Academy at
Aberdeen High School, Maryland*

Education via Gaming

Interactive games can attract students in a way that substantially encourages them to be more active and consume healthier foods. In a recent study, it was found that 79% of youth played video games often. Due to this, schools should strive to adopt games that promote healthier eating habits and lifestyles in a fun and interactive setting, similar to the typing programs that some schools currently use. One way to increase physical activity through gaming is by incorporating exercise into popular activities for youth. For example, this has occurred with Konami's interactive game *Dance Dance Revolution* (DDR) which encourages users to develop coordination along with aerobic fitness through dancing. This was used in all 765 middle schools in West Virginia as an aerobic exercise and "while not all the kids lost weight, the majority was prevented from gaining any more (Rea)." We recommend that school districts across the country mimic this type of programming in order to produce similar results.



“The Keystone Youth Policy Summit was more than I ever imagined it to be. While I loved the fun activities such as hiking the mountains, playing the drums, and just hanging out in Colorado, I also really enjoyed seeing high school students come together and passionately discussing an issue that so many in the world face today. The energy and knowledge each student put into coming up with a way to prevent obesity has caused me to want to have some career related to obesity or public policy. Keystone has shown me how difficult it is to come up with solutions to issues such as obesity but if all sectors work together, it can be done. Plus, I made some great friends from the Keystone Youth Policy Summit that I will always remember.”

*-Erika Morton,
Academy of Science & Technology,
Houston, Texas*

Public Awareness of Nutrition and Food Labels

The public needs more access to effective education about basic nutrition as well as how to interpret and make use of the Nutrition Facts panel on food labels. Educational campaigns should orient consumers in how to understand and act on the information being conveyed. Also, the labeling should be simple and easy for consumers to understand and include “per container” and “per serving” nutrition facts.

Following this logic, it would be helpful if state and federal legislation required that basic nutritional information is made available on-site in restaurants for consumers, promoting healthy choices while eating out. The information should be easily accessible from an employee if requested by customers. Availability of this information should be noted by an asterisk or footnote on menus or menu boards so as to be clearly visible to the consumer.

Also, promotion for MyPyramid (www.MyPyramid.gov), a program that analyzes nutrition and physical activity online, should increase so that the general population will be better aware of the many features that the site has to offer. Government funding for the MyPyramid advertisement campaign should increase to provide for posters that target shoppers in grocery stores. These posters and frequently updated information about health and nutrition should also be displayed in doctors’ offices and included in school textbooks as well. MyPyramid should be advertised online through links on popular websites so that users can be easily directed to the MyPyramid site. The government should also offer incentives to encourage private companies to display the MyPyramid logo on food and drink packages and informational posters in office break rooms and cafeterias.

Physical Exercise Needs

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends that children and adolescents participate in at least sixty minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week, preferably daily (CDC, 2007). The average child in America gets an average of 43 minutes of daily moderate physical activity (University of Michigan, n.d.).

Today's youth require an increased amount of physical activity in order to lead a healthy lifestyle. To compensate for the lack of physical activity in schools, daily physical education/nutrition classes should be mandatory in elementary schools and highly recommended in middle schools. While physical activity would be the focus, teachers would work to incorporate the importance of nutrition into many lessons. Along with this, a daily recess should be required for all elementary schools. This would allow students to achieve and possibly surpass the CDC recommended daily amount of physical activity, as well as to help youth gain a new perspective on health. By instilling these good habits into young children, the children will have a greater chance of maintaining good health throughout their lives.

One program proven to increase physical activity among elementary school students is Take 10!®. The program asks teachers to take ten minutes out of every class period to allow students to be active. The activity that students participate in will directly relate to the subject matter they are studying (e.g., math games in math class). Just a few minutes of activity will allow students to focus and to be more productive in class. Take 10!® can be easily implemented in schools because the program warrants minimal supplies. Take 10!® has already been successfully implemented in several schools and should be considered for all elementary schools across the nation.

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Other school-based programs that can promote physical activity are intramural sports in middle schools and high schools. These sports, such as basketball or soccer, provide an outlet for students who may not participate in interscholastic sports programs. Every student is encouraged to participate, regardless of skill level. These sports support not only physical activity, but also community building and social involvement. In order to implement an intramural program, teachers and adult community members can volunteer to supervise and facilitate activities.

Role models play a very important part in the endorsement and encouragement of physical activity for youth. Implementing a role model program in elementary and middle schools can have a measurable positive impact on children. Approachable role models would demonstrate a healthy lifestyle, showing young minds that being healthy is “cool” and fun. This mentoring program would utilize older high school students for educating their peers and younger students about key aspects of a healthy lifestyle.

Students Opposing Unhealthy Lifestyles (SOUL) is a proposed organization that would focus on guiding fellow students to lead healthy lives. Members of the student body will carry out nonprofit actions that benefit the community’s youth through nutritional instruction and physical activity. Funding for the group will come from public and private contributions. High school students will travel to area schools (middle and elementary) to tutor younger learners on healthy food choices, nutritional awareness, and proper physical activity. In addition, SOUL will sponsor intramural activities open to association members and others who take interest in the organization.

Another method of promoting physical activity, along with nutrition, is MyPyramid. MyPyramid, although mainly presenting dietary information, also promotes physical activity. The website (www.MyPyramid.gov) offers specialized physical activity information for the individual. Since this program offers individualized advice on physical activity, MyPyramid is not targeted towards a certain demographic; everyone has the ability to increase their awareness and knowledge outside of school or work—reaching a wider audience, such as

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adults in the community. Seeing that this program is already available to all those with internet access and is without cost to users, MyPyramid, if better advertised to the public, can positively affect both youth and adults.

Another way to reach out to communities and promote physical activity is through publicly funded construction of bike paths and sidewalks. These structures would promote easy, cost-free, and safe physical activity for all members of a community. If parents are active on these bike paths and sidewalks, they can encourage their children to be active with them. Ideally, all residential communities would have these safe, easily accessible paths for pedestrians, bikers and other forms of non-motorized recreation.



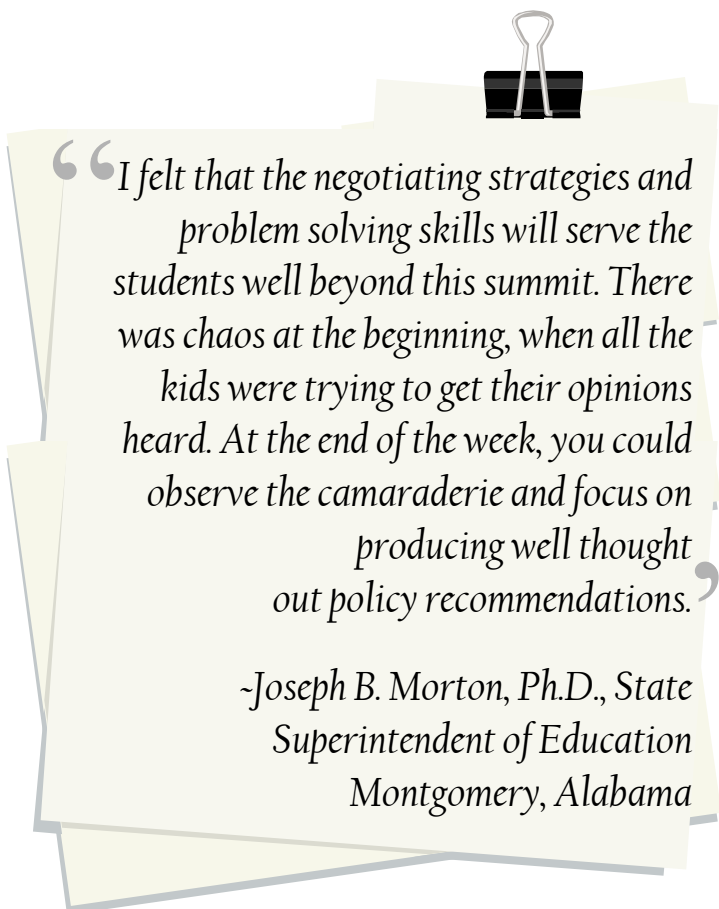
“The Keystone Policy Summit was the best summer leadership experience that I have ever had! Our sessions with the experts were exciting, and it was amazing that so many important people had traveled from all around the country just to talk to us, even though we were only high school students! It was incredible being able to balance the week with daily hiking trips to appreciate Colorado's beauty firsthand, time to socialize and make friends from everywhere imaginable, and, last but definitely not least, hours upon hours of negotiations and policy write ups! I feel so much more informed of different views and, ever since returning, I can't stop spouting the information that I learned from the summit! If it hadn't been for the Keystone Policy Summit, I wouldn't have fallen in love with the great outdoors and I wouldn't have had the nerve to start SOUL at NCSSM to teach the nearby elementary school students!”

*-Kim Thien Vuong,
The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics*

The Role of Parents in Adolescent Healthy Lifestyles

Parents (and other caregivers) can play an important role in informing adolescents about the need to be active and eat healthfully.

Parents should be informed about their child's health and body fat percentage. This can be accomplished through interaction and involvement in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), where information on healthy lifestyles can be provided. In addition, physicals in schools that already check for health issues such as eyesight, hearing, and scoliosis should also check body fat percentage. This should not be a mandatory procedure, but should be done with the parent's consent. All participating parents and students will be informed through a confidential letter containing their results, personalized recommendations based on these results, and additional information for educational resources about healthy lifestyle choices and behaviors.



“I felt that the negotiating strategies and problem solving skills will serve the students well beyond this summit. There was chaos at the beginning, when all the kids were trying to get their opinions heard. At the end of the week, you could observe the camaraderie and focus on producing well thought out policy recommendations.”

*-Joseph B. Morton, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Education
Montgomery, Alabama*

Educating Adults

Adults need opportunities to learn how to live a healthy lifestyle. This can be taught in the workplace, doctors' offices, and through marketing programs. In the workplace, gyms can be incorporated for employee use. When these facilities are used, employees become healthier and have a better attitude towards their work. Companies should also implement a nutritional tutorial into their ethical and informational seminars and required/optional training programs.

Another way to promote healthy lifestyles in the workforce is through informational memos, which could include nutrition facts, recipes, and exercise tips that can be incorporated into the work day and at home. Incentives for promoting the implementation of these types of programs within corporations include healthier, more productive workforces, as well as reduced health costs for employees and the company as a whole through reductions in health care costs and premiums.

Doctors are yet another means of influencing adults. Physicians should inform adults about the effects of leading an unhealthy lifestyle. Yearly physicals should include a body fat percentage test, to give people a tangible idea of what they need to and can do to improve their habits to lead a healthy lifestyle. Doctors can provide informational posters as mentioned previously, and offer videos in their waiting rooms.

Lastly, advertising is an easy way of reaching all age groups. Advertising a healthy lifestyle can be done in many different ways such as on television, public service announcements, videos and DVDs, billboards and posters, magazines, newspapers, and the internet. Advertising campaigns should promote free and widely accessible programs, such as the MyPyramid campaign, and The Small Step campaign funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Small Step campaign consists of little health facts that are advertised in public places to promote small steps that lead to a healthy lifestyle. In a study in Maryland, researchers discovered that placing signs promoting healthy living between adjacent stairs and escalators made a difference in the amount of people using the stairs versus the escalators (Andersen *et al*).

Research-Final Recommendations

Research should be conducted to benefit the health of the nation, and results should be reported widely in appropriate layperson's terms to aid consumers in making positive choices toward healthier lifestyles.

The psychological effects of obesity should be closely observed such that more can be understood about consumer behaviors and attitudes regarding food and physical activity. The observed behaviors can then be used to explain consumer choices, and to suggest strategies that can help guide consumers to healthier food choices through small changes.

Research on mass communications, such as television and radio, must be performed to analyze the most effective techniques for educating the public. Studies should endeavor to determine which methods of communication the public most readily responds to and influences positive food choices and physical activity levels. Proposed educational methods for a healthy lifestyle include distributing newsletters and the use of the Internet; finding the most successful means of contact with the public could possibly ensure a higher percentage of public aspiration to a healthy lifestyle.

The medical industry's involvement in combating obesity plays a vital role in intervention. Researching more medical alternatives would allow a larger percentage of the population to access safer treatment. Current procedures such as gastric bypass surgery, the lap band surgery, and stomach stapling are available for the morbidly obese. All of these alternatives can come with major health complications; nevertheless, the surgeries provide a new chance at life.

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Another alternative to weight loss is diet pills. Dietary supplements may help users lose weight quickly, but they usually have adverse effects. Researchers should be encouraged to conduct studies on the current diet pill products being sold as well as studies that would find safer, more effective medicines for the treatment of obesity in the long term.

Food corporations have a responsibility to research how to manufacture their products in the healthiest way possible. Products should have a high quality taste without sacrificing the nutritional value or raising the amount of preparation time and cost. Studies should be conducted that emphasize use of the healthiest ingredients that preserve a similar or exact taste to the original product. Agribusiness should conduct studies to lower the cost of produce and health foods along with safe genetic modifications to improve the nutritional value of these products. This research would greatly assist consumers who seek low-cost health foods that are quick and convenient to prepare. The investigation and potential creation of healthier alternatives to non-nutritious foods will provide options without sacrificing enjoyment, thereby promoting better behaviors.

The objectivity of researchers and their work is essential to providing valid and useful data. Funding sources should not influence the results of experimentation. It is imperative to the future of obesity investigation that any and all research is done through unbiased organizations.

The advantages of experimental obesity research would aid people from all demographic and socioeconomic categories. The psychological aspects of the research would aid in the full understanding of the different consumer thought processes and behaviors which lead to obesity. Additionally, discovering safe ways to contest obesity in humans medicinally (and possibly surgically) would facilitate the reduction of obese persons in the country.

Conclusion

By implementing the solutions that we have discussed in this proposal, we feel that the obesity problem in America can be dramatically reduced while promoting a healthier lifestyle for all Americans. Any steps taken related to these programs will aid in minimizing one of the largest medical issues in today's society. We hope that you take these suggestions into consideration to make our country healthier for ourselves and for generations to come.

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2007 Participating Schools, *Teachers* and Students

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The Keystone Center Policy Summit 2007
Agreement-Signature Page



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