



# Creating school environments to make the healthy choice the easiest choice

## THE HEALTH IMPACT OF OBESITY ON KIDS



*“In my practice today, I see children and teens with type 2 diabetes and even high blood pressure. These are conditions I rarely or never saw in the past.”*

**BRIAN CRESS, MD**  
Stillwater Medical Group  
PowerUp Medical Advisor

## A SOCIAL MOVEMENT FOR EATING WELL AND MOVING MORE

Since 2011, HealthPartners has been working with schools and communities to improve the health of kids and families.

## THE CHALLENGE: UNHEALTHY FOOD CHOICES AND LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Unhealthy food and lack of physical activity are leading contributors to obesity and other health challenges in our country. Reversing the obesity epidemic must begin with kids. That's because habits that are established during childhood usually persist into adulthood.

## WHERE TO START

The first step is to inspire kids and families to eat at least five fruits and vegetables and be physically active on most days. That doesn't happen often enough. In Minnesota, most fifth-graders eat a fruit or vegetable only once a day or less. And only 1 in 4 get the recommended amount of physical activity.<sup>1</sup>

1. 2016 Minnesota Student Survey



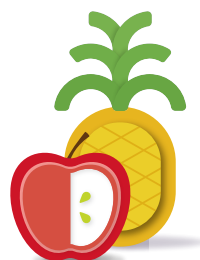
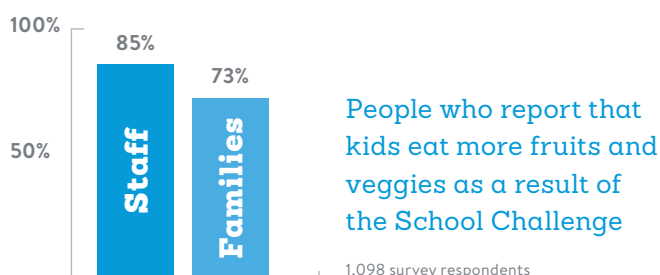
About this report: For more than 20 years, HealthPartners has been tracking progress on achieving its mission to improve health and well-being. We do this by establishing specific goals about every three to five years. Called Partners for Better Health Goals, they identify opportunities to improve health and well-being not just for individual patients, but for all of the people we serve. This report is one strategic initiative to improve health and well-being for our patients, members and community.

## Health outside of the exam room

Health professionals play a key role in advising families about making lifestyle changes. Children's choices; however, are strongly swayed by where they live. A healthy environment shapes their ability to choose healthy foods and be active.<sup>2</sup>

## School Challenge asks kids to 'Try for Five'

Beginning in 2012, HealthPartners School Challenge program began working with elementary schools to encourage kids to move more and to try for five fruits and vegetables every day.



“ My son asked me to pack him a salad for lunch today. This is a miracle. Seriously. You have worked some magic. Thank you! ”

POWERUP PARENT



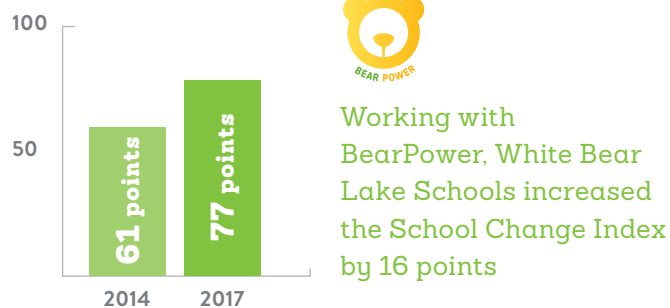
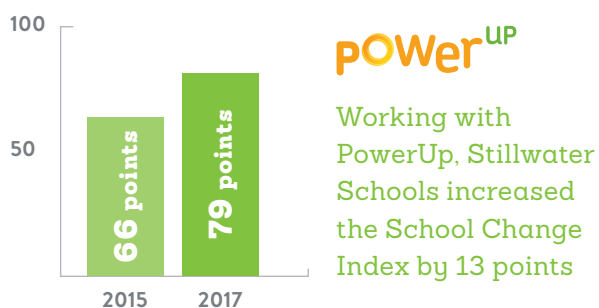
### CHOMP THE CARROT SUPER-HERO

Chomp is a key strategy to reach kids and families with fun messages around eating better and moving more.

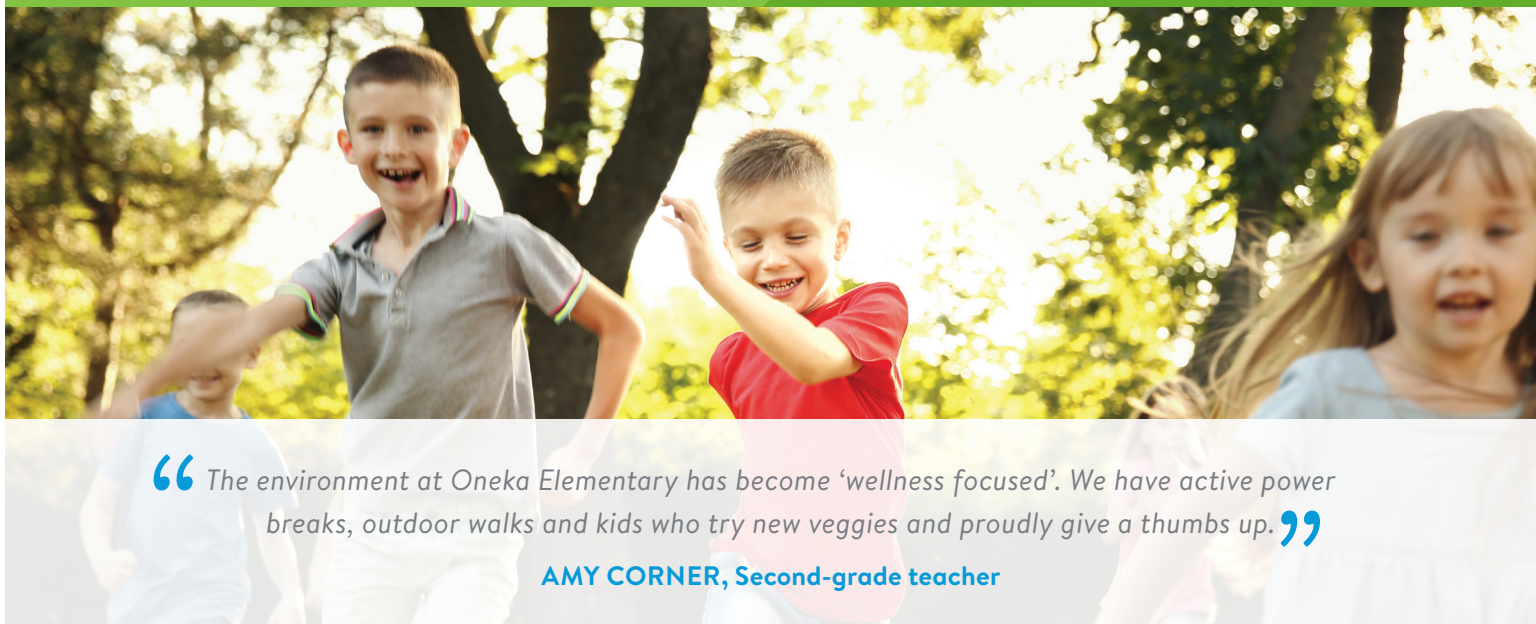
## Case study

### STILLWATER AREA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT WELLNESS POLICY HARDWIRES CHANGE

The School Change Index provided the foundation for a new wellness policy in Stillwater, Minnesota. The policy ensures that all schools will continue to strengthen practices over time around eating well and moving more. The policy was implemented in the 2016-2017 school year. In that year, the School Change Index increased 13 points.



2. [Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation](#); Institute of Medicine; May 2012  
[Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States](#); July 2009



“The environment at Oneka Elementary has become ‘wellness focused’. We have active power breaks, outdoor walks and kids who try new veggies and proudly give a thumbs up.”

AMY CORNER, Second-grade teacher

## School Change Index helps create a healthy school environment

Changing habits is hard without an environment that supports healthy behaviors. To create such an environment, PowerUp and BearPower work with schools to develop the School Change Index. The Index assesses school practices and policies around food and physical activity. This includes reducing sugary drinks and food in the classroom, offering healthy foods at school events, and providing opportunities for children to be physically active during the school day.



“Our teachers are incorporating more activity and movement in their lessons and reducing the amount of sugar kids are consuming. The students really enjoy the creative ways teachers are celebrating events such as Halloween and Valentine’s Day. They’re doing more active things like Monster Mini-Golf and fun runs.”

CARISSA KEISTER  
Community Engagement Manager  
Stillwater Area Public Schools



## The School Change Index measures progress on 36 practices that promote eating well and moving more.

### PRACTICES INCLUDE:

- Avoiding sugary treats in classrooms or as rewards
- Offering healthy food and drinks at school events
- Not advertising branded food and beverages
- Providing daily physical activity/brain breaks in classrooms
- Allowing 15-30 minutes of recess daily
- Not using screen time as a reward
- Granting physical activity as a reward

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➤ For recipes, resources and more information, go to [PowerUp4kids.org](https://PowerUp4kids.org) and [yumpower.com](https://yumpower.com).  
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