



From page 362-363 of the Institute of Medicine report “Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention”

## BOX 9-2 The CATCH School-Based Food, Nutrition and Physical Education Program

### Background

The Coordinated Approach To Child Health (CATCH) program\* was designed in the 1980s to improve physical activity and diet and to prevent the onset of tobacco use (Perry et al., 1990). In recent years, the CATCH program has aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s coordinated school health model, in which eight components work interactively to educate young people about and provide support for a healthful lifestyle. The five main components of CATCH are (1) K-8 classroom curricula focusing on food, nutrition, and physical activity; (2) physical education activities; (3) child nutrition services; (4) family involvement; (5) community involvement. An evidence base supports the program’s efficacy in improving diet and increasing physical activity and preventing the onset of obesity in children.

### Results and Evidence

- Results of long-term follow-up indicate that changes in diet and physical activity were maintained 3 years post-intervention, until the children were in eighth grade (Nader et al., 1999).
- CATCH has been proven effective in promoting health among inner-city, border, rural, privileged, and underprivileged children. A school randomized replication study of CATCH in El Paso found significant effects in reducing the rate of overweight and risk of overweight among a cohort of children in grades 3-5. By fifth grade, the rate of increase was 2 percent for girls and 1 percent for boys in intervention schools, compared with 13 and 9 percent, respectively, in control schools (Coleman et al., 2005).
- PASS & CATCH, a version of CATCH making extensive use of classroom physical activities, has been shown to improve disadvantaged children’s Stanford math and reading scores (Murray et al., under review).
- CATCH augments existing school health programming by inviting local community youth organizations to participate in the process of creating a healthier school environment. The effects of community support cannot be underestimated.
- An El Paso demonstration study of CATCH plus community support found a 7 percent reduction in child obesity prevalence (Hoelscher et al., 2010a).
- A recent Travis County demonstration study of CATCH showed an 8 percent reduction in overweight and obesity among fourth graders (Hoelscher et al., 2010b).
- According to a recent cost-effectiveness study of CATCH, the program’s cost-effectiveness ratio was approximately \$900 (representing the intervention cost per quality-adjusted life-year saved), and the net benefit was \$68,125 (based on a comparison of the present value of averted future costs due to obesity with the cost of the CATCH intervention) (Brown et al., 2007).

\*Formerly known as the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health.