

**National Coordinating Committee on School Health and Safety  
Different Paths, One Goal: Working Together for Educated, Safe, and  
Healthy Students**

**Eighth Annual Meeting  
June 8, 2005**

**Meeting Summary**

The eighth annual meeting of the National Coordinating Committee on School Health and Safety (NCCSHS) was held on June 8, 2005, in Arlington, Virginia. The meeting's theme centered on how to improve the collaborative effort to achieve educated, safe, and healthy students in schools nationwide.

**Participating Federal and Non-Federal Agencies and Organizations**

Participating agencies and organizations represented at the meeting included:

*Federal Agencies*

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
Food and Nutrition Service

U.S. Department of Education (ED)  
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
Division of Adolescent and School Health  
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)  
Bureau of Maternal and Child Health  
Bureau of Primary Health Care  
Office of Adolescent Health  
Indian Health Service (IHS)  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
National Institute for Child Health and Human Development  
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute  
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Office of the Secretary

U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Indoor Environments Division

*Non-Federal Organizations, Foundations, and Other Participants*

Academy for Educational Development  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Health Education  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of School Administrators  
American Dental Association  
American Diabetes Association  
American Institute for Research  
American Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychological Association  
American School Counselor Association  
American School Health Association  
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Center for Health and Health Care in Schools  
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Children's Dental Health Project  
Chronic Disease Directors  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Council of Chief State School Officers  
Economic Policy Institute  
Education Development Center  
Harvard School of Public Health  
National Association for Sport and Physical Education  
National Association of Health Education Centers  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Boards of Education  
National Middle School Association  
National PTA  
National Resource Center on Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
National School Boards Association  
Michigan Department of Community Health  
Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association  
School Nutrition Association  
Society for Public Health Education  
The Congressional Hunger Center  
The Education Trust  
University of California, San Diego  
Widmeyer Communications

## **Overview**

Participants represented six Federal agencies and 42 national non-governmental organizations, universities and others whose goals are to produce and maintain quality programs for improvements in health and education. The meeting featured speakers, opportunities for networking, roundtable sessions, a large group discussion, and opportunities for dialogue among committee members. Speakers also addressed specific questions from the participants following their presentations.

Issues and strategies for achieving a population of educated, safe, and healthy students and ways to combat the various barriers and limitations to improving healthy students were addressed. Participants were asked to consider the mission and vision statement of NCCSHS during their discussions, particularly the continued discussion among Federal partners and members of non-Federal organizations to reinforce existing collaborations.

Following the large group discussion, the membership of NCCSHS held a brief business meeting during which they discussed the editorial subcommittee's progress; in particular, updates to the NCCSHS Web site and new articles to be published in the *Journal of School Health*. Nominations for the new co-chair of NCCSHS were also collected.

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Theresa Lewallen, 2004-05 Chair of NCCSHS and Director of the Health in Education Initiative at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development welcomed the participants to the meeting. She also thanked the steering committee for help in planning the meeting and provided a brief overview of the agenda.

## **Opening Keynote Address: The Department of Education's Role in Promoting School Health and Safety**

Ms. Lewallen introduced the keynote speaker, Deborah Price, Assistant Deputy Secretary in the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools in ED. Ms. Price provided an overview of ED and what its role is in promoting school health and safety, particularly in the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

### *Overview of ED: Mission and Funding*

Established in 1980, ED is a relatively new Federal agency. Its mission is to:

- Strengthen the Federal commitment to assuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual.
- Supplement and complement the efforts of states, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the states, the private sector, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education.
- Encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs.
- Promote improvements in the quality and usefulness of education through federally supported research, evaluation, and information sharing.
- Improve the coordination of Federal education programs.
- Improve the management of Federal education activities.

- Increase the accountability of Federal education programs to the President, the Congress, and the public.

ED administers programs in almost every education area, ranging from preschool to postdoctorate education. The agency serves approximately 15,000 school districts and more than 53 million students attending more than 92,000 public schools and 27,000 private schools. State and local partners utilize the majority of ED's funds. (Approximately 10 percent of total funding in K-12 education is Federal.) Offering grants, loans, and work-study programs to 8 million postsecondary students, ED provides more than \$600 billion in student assistance. However, it is limited in some areas such as curriculum development, due to local control and the decentralized, community-based nature of educational decision-making.

### *Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools*

Ms. Price also discussed the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools and its overall contributions to ED. The Office administers, coordinates, and recommends policy for improving the quality and excellence of programs and activities and addresses issues such as bullying and truancy. It highlights and recognizes the importance of health issues in schools to maximize students' educational achievements. Effective education strategies cannot be successful unless these issues are addressed (e.g., students' physical health, school climate).

Staff members focus on initiatives in the following areas: health, mental health, environmental health, physical education, emergency and crisis management, alcohol and drug abuse, student drug testing, mentoring, and character education. Its collaborations with other Federal agencies such as DHHS, USDA, DOJ, CDC, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Office of the Surgeon General help to foster success in these initiatives.

The Office is challenged to address various nonacademic issues in different ways, including: (1) State Formula Grants, which are funds delegated to states (amount of dollars per student); and (2) Discretionary Grants, a competitive grant program.

### *State Formula Grants*

Ms. Price explained that of the funds reserved for State Formula Grants, approximately 80 percent is allocated for local education agencies (LEAs), while the remaining 20 percent is given to governors' offices for program use at their discretion. State Formula Grants must include drug and violence prevention activities. They may be used for development of instructional materials; counseling services; professional development programs for school personnel, law enforcement officials, judicial officials, and community leaders; peer mediation; mentoring programs; and implementation of character education programs. ED expects LEAs to use funds in ways supported by research.

The disadvantage of State Formula Grants is that the funds are based on dollars per student. Therefore, small communities with a small student population have a smaller amount of money to utilize. Therefore, one challenge for these schools is to design effective prevention education programs with limited funds.

## *Discretionary Grants*

To mitigate this disadvantage, small communities can apply for Discretionary Grants. These grants allow schools to focus on one area, address specific needs, and “get the best bang for their buck.” Discretionary Grants include the following:

1. *Carol M. White Physical Education for Progress Grants*—These grants support local education agencies and community organizations to develop comprehensive programs that coordinate physical health and education and promote understanding of nutrition and physical health. Now a 3-year grant, it provides schools the time they need to receive resources, develop and implement the program, and begin to realize the desired results.

Sample program elements include physical education and assessment, instruction in various motor skills and physical activities, development of instruction and cognitive concepts about motor skills and physical fitness, opportunities to develop positive social cooperation skills, instruction in healthy eating habits and nutrition, and opportunities for professional development for physical education teachers.

She indicated that the new requirements of this program involve measurement. Schools must increase the percentage of students served by the grant who are: (1) participating in physical education activities, and (2) making progress towards meeting their state physical education standards.

2. *Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grants*—Related directly to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, these grants assist schools in developing programs to address emergencies and crises. Emergencies and crises are defined as any events that interrupt the students’ learning environment (e.g., a school shooting, hurricane, or accident). Grantees have 18 months to implement their program. These programs focus on planning and preparation for any emergency or crisis, effective program practice, and implementation of action plans.

Elements of this program include: (1) mitigation and prevention, (2) preparation and formulation of a response plan, (3) practicing the response plan, and (4) formulation of a recovery plan.

3. *School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) Grants*—Similar to the Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grants, SERV grants also fund programs to address school crises. If a school had a crisis, it is eligible for a SERV grant. The grant provides an initial \$50,000 to implement a response plan (e.g., incorporate counselors to train teachers in crisis response). However, this grant is not applicable to crises declared “disasters” by the Federal government, as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for providing these funds. If the grantee needs additional funding, it can apply for a supplementary grant of up to \$250,000.
4. *Safe Schools, Healthy Students Grants*—An effort of DOJ and SAMHSA, this is a 3-year grant program that provides \$1–3 million per year. It fosters collaborations with local law enforcement and mental health agencies to promote health and mental health development in students and prevent violence in youth using evidence-based programs with demonstrated long-term positive effects.

To effect dramatic change, schools receiving this grant must partner with communities under the program's elements, which include: (1) safe school environments; (2) violence, alcohol, and other drug prevention and early intervention; (3) school and community mental health preventive and treatment intervention services; (4) early childhood psychological, emotional, and development services; (5) supporting and connecting schools and communities; and (6) safe school policies.

5. *Elementary/Secondary School Counseling Grants*—This grant program focuses on improving children's mental health in schools and enables LEAs to establish or expand elementary school counseling programs (i.e., hire and train qualified school counselors and psychologists, child and adolescent psychologists, and social workers). ED awards this grant to schools that have the greatest need for new and additional counseling services for children in schools served. Applicants must propose the most innovative methods to foster initiation and expansion of their school counseling program and show potential for replication and dissemination.
6. *Integration of Schools and Mental Health Systems Grants*—These grants focus on state education agencies (SEAs), LEAs, and tribes to: (1) develop capacity, infrastructure and linkages between schools and mental health services, and (2) develop required policies and protocols. These grants are not intended for provision of mental health services directly; rather, they are intended only for program set-up.

Grantees must address the following program elements, including: (1) develop and improve collaborative efforts, (2) develop and enhance crisis intervention services, (3) provide training, (4) provide technical assistance, (5) provide linguistically appropriate and culturally competent services, and (6) evaluate the program's effectiveness in increasing students' access to quality mental health services.

#### *Additional Grant Information*

Ms. Price mentioned that the Office funds additional grants in other areas such as character education and mentoring, and she referred the participants to the Office's Web site for more information (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html>). Although it is a challenge for schools to implement programs without grant assistance, applicants denied funds can still use the information on the Web site to initiate a program on their own (e.g., emergency and crisis mitigation information is applicable to grantees and nongrantees).

She also emphasized that grantees should not maintain dependency on grant funds. Grants are intended to help grantees develop programs that can be sustained once the grant money is exhausted.

Ms. Price reaffirmed the partnerships that ED has maintained (such as with NCCSHS), and she acknowledged the work NCCSHS performs in changing students' lives. Although ED provides funds and programs, committees such as NCCSHS make possible the positive change these funds can have by implementing programs. Without these partnerships, ED's effectiveness would be limited.

#### **Questions for Assistant Deputy Secretary Price**

1. *Regarding the President's budget, what is the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools' response to budget proposals that "zero out" programs, and how would these initiatives be integrated into*

*existing programs? One concern is that capacity building, which is considered a value, is no longer a priority.*

Ms. Price replied the State Formula Grant funds were eliminated in the President's budget because of its disadvantages. Although these funds have been used effectively in many areas, it averaged to approximately \$8 per student/per year. In communities with a small number of students that received these dollars it was a small amount of money, and the majority of communities that received these funds were in this category.

Additionally, it was not evident where and how the funds were used because the program did not mandate any standards. These funds were transferable, so the Office was not aware if the funds were used for safe and drug-free school issues. Overall, the program as currently constituted was not as effective as hoped, and incorporating the standards would have compromised the program's flexibility. It is more effective to use funds for a targeted program focused on research-based initiatives that will yield results.

She reminded the committee that grant programs have a cycle; they are designed to meet a specific need, and that once this need is met, these funds are often used in other ways. Programs using grant funds should be sustainable once the funds are exhausted.

- 2. The Office commits to collaborations with other Federal agencies. However, national education organizations also play a valuable role in achieving educated, safe, and healthy students. What is the likelihood that the Office and national education organizations can coordinate to discuss relevant issues related to health and safety in schools?*

Ms. Price reiterated her commitment to meeting with national organizations to discuss issues related to health and safety in schools and to making these issues a priority.

- 3. ED is giving priority to student drug testing, but the \$87.5 million set aside for funding discretionary grants does not seem to evaluate the effectiveness of drug testing programs in schools. Is ED ensuring these schools have programs to address issues related to students who use drugs (i.e., ways to decrease drug use and increase their school attendance)?*

Ms. Price noted that the student drug testing program is a separate funding item and is not part of the \$87.5 million that will fund Discretionary Grants. The \$87.5 million will fund effective, research-based programs for drug, alcohol, and violence prevention. However, there is a \$10 million budget set aside to implement student drug testing programs in 2005. Programs to address student drug use are a requirement in the application, and student drug testing programs must be part of a comprehensive plan to address drug use in schools (i.e., it should not be the sole vehicle schools are using to address this issue). The program is not meant to be punitive; rather, it is meant to help curb student drug use and to prevent students from using again. A percentage of the \$10 million (\$1.5 million) will be used to implement a national evaluation program.

- 4. It is important to support effective, research-based programs, but money has been spent on programs without supportive research. A research base for student drug testing and zero-tolerance policies is required by law, but is ED establishing a research base that indicates the most effective strategies to address these areas? Are there examples of whether these strategies work, what the outcomes are, or what the effects have been?*

Ms. Price indicated that although the student drug testing and zero-tolerance issues are closely related, they remain separate. Zero-tolerance is required by Federal law, but states are responsible for its definition and implementation. Regarding student drug testing, schools are prohibited from using it as a punitive measure. The intention is to stop student drug users from using. Schools should distinguish whether student drug users are using them casually or if they have a severe problem. In either case, schools should communicate to these students that using drugs—regardless of how frequent—is a serious issue. Schools also should apply the appropriate cessation methods to provide help to those students using drugs (i.e., if they are casual users, provide intervention immediately).

There is some research that shows whether these strategies are effective, but it is difficult to compare the programs because states define the issues differently. Also, ED's grant programs do not address the zero-tolerance law specifically, so none of the funds are used for research to determine effectiveness. DOJ, among others, has conducted research in this area.

### **Strategies for Closing the Education Gap: Presenter #1**

Ms. Lewallen thanked Ms. Price and introduced Mr. Ross Weiner, Policy Director at The Education Trust, who presented different strategies to close the education gap and foster positive learning outcomes among the nation's children based on data and research results.

Education professionals have been monitoring the education gap and its effects on student achievement for decades. Mr. Weiner defined the education gap as the difference in learning outcomes between underprivileged children (typically African American or other minorities) and privileged children (typically White).

#### *Analysis: Data on the Education Gap*

Mr. Weiner presented data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP administered a nationwide test to students that allowed analysts to see these data in multiple ways. It revealed large gaps between students of different races and ethnicities. In the past, progress had been made in narrowing the gap, particularly between African American and White high school students. It narrowed by 21 points (more than 50 percent) in the late 1980s, but by the late 1990s, the gap widened by 30 points. Additional longitudinal data will be released during the summer of 2005 that will reveal the current status of the education gap.

Regarding trends in education gap data, Mr. Weiner noted the following:

- Extensive data is typically collected in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics, as these are critical transition periods for students (e.g., at the fourth-grade reading level, students should be able to transfer these skills to other curriculum areas).
- When data were examined by income level, more than one-half of students from low-income households were reading below the basic level at the end of the fourth grade. Approximately one-quarter of students from higher income levels were reading below the basic level. Similar results were found in mathematics.

He discussed the role of poverty and racial prejudice on student achievement. Research shows they have a negative effect. The challenge is to increase student achievement, thereby decreasing the gap

nationwide. Public education professionals should have a specific and deliberate plan to improve and confront the challenges to improve public education for students caught in the achievement gap.

### *Gaps in Opportunity*

Minority students from low-income households receive fewer opportunities to learn in school. African American and Latino/a students are less likely to be enrolled in advanced mathematics and science courses and finish a college preparatory curriculum. When asked why they do not take higher level courses, students responded that friends and teachers often discourage them from taking these classes. This finding discredits the popular misconception that they are uninterested in taking advanced classes.

Mr. Weiner noted that students can perform no better than the assignments they are given (e.g., a writing assignment intended for the seventh-grade level may be more complex than a writing assignment in another school district at the same grade level). What is considered “A” work in poor schools would earn a “C” in many affluent schools. Across different schools nationwide, expectations for what students will learn are drastically different.

Regarding data on gaps in opportunity, Mr. Weiner noted the following:

- High-level classes have a positive effect on students because they challenge students and increase academic performance. How can education professionals ensure that students are afforded the best opportunities?
- In a survey administered to high school dropouts, participants were asked to explain why they dropped out. Some thought they were not engaged; school was “boring,” and they were not learning enough. These teenagers also thought their coursework was not as rigorous as it should have been.
- Teacher quality should be measured and monitored more closely. Underprivileged and minority students are commonly taught by less experienced teachers (i.e., teachers with less than 3 years experience).
- Low-achieving students are less likely to be assigned effective teachers. There are more classes in high-poverty, high-minority schools taught by out-of-field teachers.
- Teachers in the schools with fewest White students in Illinois are 5 times more likely to have a teacher who failed a teacher licensure test and 23 times more likely to have teachers who failed 5 or more times.
- Less money is spent on minority students from low-income households in poorer schools than on White students from higher income households and more affluent schools. On average, \$900 (of state and local funds) more is spent per student from the more affluent schools than those from poorer schools, indicating a misallocation of resources.
- Students learn more in challenging college preparatory courses.

### *Successes in Narrowing the Education Gap*

Despite challenges, some progress has been made, and some schools are improving education for their students. Two examples of such schools are Centennial Place Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia and West Jasper Elementary School in Jasper, Alabama.

- *Centennial Place Elementary School*—A top-rated school in Georgia, 93 percent of the students are African American, and 69 percent are from low-income households. Almost all of the students met the reading and mathematics requirements last year.
- *West Jasper Elementary School*—The student population is extremely diverse, and almost three of every four students are from low-income households. West Jasper Elementary School has been recognized nationally, and similar to Centennial Place Elementary School, it has been rated as one of the best schools in the state during the past few years.

These schools' successes indicate that education professionals need to consider if income levels cause gaps in education.

Mr. Weiner also provided data from other states. Students from low-income households in South Carolina learn more in mathematics by the end of eighth grade than any other state in the country. In 1998, low-income African American students in Delaware were 32 points below the national average in reading. By the end of 2003, this gap narrowed to 8 points, showing significant progress in narrowing the reading gap in this area.

### *Strategies for Narrowing the Education Gap*

To help narrow the gap in other schools nationwide, the following strategies should be employed:

- Act on a belief that all children can succeed and change current beliefs about students' capabilities.
- Invest in high-quality early childhood education.
- Incorporate rigorous, challenging curricula for all.
- Distribute teacher talent equitably (e.g., assign some of the best teachers to low-income students for 5 consecutive years).
- Communicate clear and high expectations.

Mr. Weiner concluded by noting that school curricula are extremely important tools for narrowing the gap. Strong high school curricula can improve the percentage of students who complete college and ultimately narrow gaps.

### **Strategies for Closing the Education Gap: Presenter #2**

Dr. Eileen Foley, Senior Economist with the Economic Policy Institute also presented data trends in the education gap and various strategies to narrow the gap based on research.

### *Overview of the Education Gap in the United States*

According to data from the Rand Corporation, approximately 20 percent of the mathematics gap narrowed in the 1970s and 1980s between African American and White children, and 32 percent of the gap closed between Latino/a children and White children. Although minority students' achievement improved, White children's performance was substantially higher. The gap narrowed by 1990, and African American high school graduates were a few points ahead of White eighth graders. This progress has not continued.

NAEP data shows the reading gap has neither widened nor narrowed significantly, despite substantial investments in this area. African American and Latino/a children's performance rose in the 1970s, but progress has stalled since then. These data cause education professionals to ask what is causing the gap, what caused it to close, and how this affects public policy.

### *Why the Education Gap Exists: Social Explanations*

Dr. Foley outlined two explanations for the education gap: far right and far left. The "far right" explanation attributes the education gap to genetics, and the "far left" explanation attributes it to social reasons (e.g., low wages, inadequate schools, and racism). The social explanation as to why the gap exists is considered outdated and was based primarily on socioeconomic status (SES; defined as parents' income and education). However, poverty is not a complete explanation because the gap exists despite income level.

The theory that the gap is caused by genetic factors has since been discredited by subsequent studies. One such study was performed in the 1970s, which examined the intelligence quotient (IQ) of children of White mothers and African American fathers versus children of African American mothers and White fathers. The IQs of children of White mothers and African American fathers were nine points higher than children of African American mothers and White fathers. Those supporting the genetic argument would expect the IQs to be identical, as the genetics were the same. However, supporters of the social explanation would expect the children raised by White mothers and African American fathers to have higher IQs because their situation would afford greater social advantages.

Some factors undermine the validity of the SES explanation. One of these factors is the way SES is defined (parents' income and education). The SES explanation did not consider the differences that exist among African American and White families with regard to wealth, albeit they have the same average income. On average, the schools and colleges that White families have attended are substantially better than the schools African American parents attended. The SES of the grandparents of the White families was more advantaged, which positively affects future generations. An interesting finding is that non-poor African Americans are more likely to live in "poverty tracks" than poor Whites. Therefore, the definition of poverty is not valid.

A second factor is the negative stereotyping of African American and Latino/a children. One theory states that the environmental experiences of African American children have left them vulnerable to stereotypes, depressing their performance. This theory helped to understand data that showed African American students' performance in selective colleges and universities was substantially lower than would have been predicted based on high school and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores.

Dr. Foley also noted the following:

- One interpretation of the gap is that it has been and continues to be a "school effect," but other factors exist.
- Overall, White children continue to live in more privileged homes and enjoy the advantages that are associated with living in them.
- The gap typically widens during the summer rather than during the school year.
- Teachers are not distributed equally, partly because teachers are attracted to settings within which they think they can be most effective.
- Generally, class sizes are larger in schools with predominantly African American students.

## *Strategies for Narrowing the Education Gap*

Dr. Foley presented several strategies to help narrow the education gap, as follows:

1. Incorporate specific changes within schools (e.g., create smaller class sizes, particularly from kindergarten to third grade). Research also has shown that children of minorities perform better in smaller class sizes rather than larger ones.
2. Gradually increase requirements to enter the teaching profession. Teachers with the least skills are highly concentrated in schools that serve the more underprivileged students.
3. Provide equal school resources. However, providing equal school resources should be distinguished from providing *adequate* resources.
4. Encourage teachers with better verbal skills to teach minority students. Data shows that students from lower income households need teachers with better verbal skills more than students from higher income households.
5. Place minority students in smaller classes.
6. Increase and develop sound teacher professional development programs. Research has shown that teachers base their judgment on students' past performance. Teachers need to recognize students' hidden potential. Students should be in schools that expect them to perform at their ability levels. Also, there has been a rise in school segregation, and this has a negative effect on African American and Hispanic students.

Dr. Foley concluded by stating that schools can make a difference. Strategies are “constrained by the social structure of inequality,” and they need to emphasize more school, better school, preschool, after school, and summer school. Also, the education gap will continue to increase unless social inequalities are addressed.

### **Questions and Comments for Mr. Weiner and Dr. Foley**

1. *How can education professionals address the obstacles that are preventing students from learning such as social barriers and health and mental health issues? It is important to address these in improving the students' learning environment.*

Dr. Foley agreed and suggested there be more coordination with community schools. These schools are open all year and they provide various social services, social support services, and education interventions. She noted that both Mr. Weiner's presentation and her presentation focused primarily on the mainstream schools because they are held accountable for education interventions. More ways are needed to integrate these other interventions in schools. Principals should be given the time they need to manage the curriculum.

2. *Pediatricians are encouraged to promote literacy for children 1–5 years old. It is difficult to accomplish this when many obstacles exist (e.g., the home environment is not conducive to learning). These seem to be important issues, but the data presented seems to deny they are as important as education professionals think they are. How is this accounted for?*

Mr. Weiner indicated that he does not minimize these additional factors, but he noted it is difficult to compare these issues nationwide. It is important to consider how the education gap is measured. Schools are expected to raise their students “above the basic bar” and determine where this bar is. Over time, the bar can be raised, and commensurate changes can be made. Stating that students are

reaching and surpassing the bar does not necessarily mean they have ample skills to be successful in life. Education professionals should find ways to locate, replicate, and celebrate successes.

Dr. Foley noted that there is opportunity for improvement, and schools play a powerful role in narrowing the gap. However, more needs to be done to connect schools and communities to help narrow the gap.

- 3. If education professionals want to improve education for underprivileged students, they have to be intentional about implementing practices and policies to change their students' experiences. It is essential to transfer this intentionality from the classroom to community and health partnerships and determine what other methods high-achieving schools are using. Education professionals have not determined how to document this intentionality or help school leaders add it to their list of strategies.*

Mr. Weiner agreed with this statement and noted this is a relatively new concept within public education's timeline. It is not enough to simply "do the best" for students because cognitive skills are required for their success. Education professionals need to ask, "What are the different pieces that need to be put in place?" Dr. Foley stressed the need for more data (from community schools) that examine the interventions across social services and school services.

One participant commented on several studies related to Latino/a student dropout rates. There was little or no mention of Latina student pregnancy rates. Surprisingly, there was a significant difference between the data that education professionals were analyzing and data health professionals were analyzing. Mr. Weiner noted that life-altering events (i.e., teenage pregnancies) can result from the lack of adequate and challenging opportunities in schools. Health and education professionals need to collaborate, as these issues are the responsibility of all professionals in the field, not simply one agency or organization.

### **Federal Initiatives: What's New, and How Do We Get Involved?**

NCCSHS held two roundtable sessions during which members interacted with Federal staff and one another to discuss health- and school-related issues. Participants could choose to attend the following sessions:

Session Title	Federal Representative and Agency
<b>Future Implications of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines and Food Guidance System on School Meals</b>	<i>Clare Miller</i> Food and Nutrition Service U.S. Department of Agriculture
<b>Get SMASHED!! New Tools To Fight Underage Drinking and Alcohol-Related Driving. What Works?</b>	<i>Cheryl Neverman</i> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration U.S. Department of Transportation
<b>Media Smart Youth</b>	<i>Jill Center</i> National Institute of Child Health and Human Development National Institutes of Health U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<b>National Initiative To Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010</b>	<i>Trina Anglin</i> Health Resources and Services Administration U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<b>Stop Bullying Now! Teens as Teachers in Violence Prevention</b>	<i>Seeta Gowda</i> Health Resources and Services Administration U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<b>What Works Clearinghouse</b>	<i>Terry Wilson-Carb</i> What Works Clearinghouse American Institutes for Research
<b>School Mental Health</b>	<i>Isadora Hare</i> Health Resources and Services Administration U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<b>School Mental Health, Overweight and Obesity</b>	<i>Victor Medrano</i> DASH Liaison to U.S. Department of Education Centers for Disease Control and Prevention U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### **School Wellness Policies and the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act**

Ms. Lewallen introduced Clare Miller, Senior Nutritionist in the Child Nutrition Division of the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, who provided an overview of school wellness policies and the Child Nutrition Act, two issues of high interest to NCCSHS.

#### *Local Wellness Policies: An Overview*

Ms. Miller stated that the Local Wellness Policy provision of the Act has generated great interest among health and education professionals nationwide including groups such as public health officials, state agencies, nutrition organizations, and other school personnel. The Local Wellness Policy is a part of Section 204 of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act. Participating LEAs in the National School Breakfast or Lunch program must establish a local wellness policy no later than the first day of school beginning after June 30, 2006. The law transcends USDA-funded meal programs to influence child

health and allows local school districts to incorporate various health-related programs and policies. Additionally, the responsibility remains at the local level rather than at the state or Federal level.

### *Why Promote Local Wellness Policies?*

Wellness policies should be promoted in schools because they address interrelated interests of health and education. Schools cannot educate effectively if students are not healthy and fit physically, socially, and mentally. According to the nation's leading health authorities, "schools should take an active role in preventing disabling chronic health conditions that create misery and consume a burdensome share of the nation's resources." Ms. Miller also referenced *Healthy People 2010*, an initiative that outlines health objectives for the nation to achieve during the first decade of the new century. The publication for the initiative noted that, "schools have more influence on the lives of young people than any other social institution except the family, and provide a setting in which friendship networks develop, socialization occurs, and norms that govern behavior are developed and reinforced."

### *Criteria for Local Wellness Policies*

At a minimum, local wellness policies are accountable for the following criteria:

- Set goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness.
- Develop nutrition guidelines for all foods available during the day to promote student health and reduce childhood overweight.
- Provide assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations issued by the Secretary of Agriculture.
- Enact a plan for measuring implementation of the school wellness policy, including designation of at least one individual to maintain the responsibility for program operation.

### *Who Is Involved?*

Ms. Miller highlighted the various parties responsible for partnering to ensure the policies' success. These include parents, students, and representatives of the school food authority (SFA), representatives of the school board, school administrators, and members of the public. The program does not remain static; rather, it is a dynamic process that begins with implementation and evaluation. Once evaluations are made, relevant improvements are necessary.

### *The Wellness Policy Timeline*

Local wellness policies have a three-part life cycle: (1) implementation, (2) evaluation, and (3) improvement. School districts are currently formulating draft local policies. Once they are developed, policies will undergo the approval process. The policies should be implemented by June 30, 2006. Ms. Miller noted that the process of developing these policies is as important as the final product.

### *Federal Responsibilities*

USDA is responsible for coordination with ED and CDC to provide technical assistance including examples and best practices for LEAs, SFAs, and state agencies. The USDA cannot mandate

specifically what school districts should develop, but school districts should consider USDA’s suggestions as they develop and implement policies.

The Federal interagency work group consists of representatives from the Food and Nutrition Service (USDA), Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (ED), Division of Adolescent and School Health (CDC), National Food Service Management Institute, and Congressional Hunger Fellows. It was founded to:

- Search out and identify examples, models, best practices, resources, and model policy language.
- Develop and post user-friendly Web pages.
- Communicate with state and local educational agencies.

#### *Local Wellness Policy Collaborators*

Local wellness policies are maintained by collaborations among more than 18 education or health-related organizations. These entities: (1) provide input and comment on resource development, (2) assist with identifying local school district models and resources, and (3) assist LEAs with establishing, implementing, and sustaining local wellness policies.

#### *USDA’s HealthierUS School Challenge*

Because the law does not require USDA to mandate specific requirements for the local wellness policies, a voluntary certification program for schools was created—the USDA’s HealthierUS School Challenge. It recognizes a school’s commitment to the health and well-being of its students. It also congratulates schools that are leaders in improving nutritional quality of the meals served, providing students with more nutritious, healthy food and beverage choices, and providing opportunities for nutrition education and physical activity.

### **Communicating About Complex Issues**

The meeting’s final speaker was Adam Shapiro, Assistant Vice President at Widmeyer Communications, a public relations agency located in Washington, D.C. Mr. Shapiro presented strategies for how NCCSHS members can improve their communication skills and how they can “tell their stories” to the general public.

#### *Communication: Back to the Basics*

Mr. Shapiro stated communication has not evolved much since the primitive years. He noted all stories have a basic framework: a beginning, middle, and end and include other common aspects such as symbolism and foreshadowing. Basic storylines are successful in communicating what the storyteller wants the audience to know. He challenged the participants to examine current health and safety issues and identify natural stories, characters, and plot devices within them.

#### *The Responsive Chord Theory of Communications*

Media theorist, professor, and writer Tony Schwartz posited the Responsive Chord Theory of Communications (RCT), which states “the emotional connection is the path of least resistance to

understanding and acceptance.” Advertisements based on this theory are successful because the emotion solicited from the audience is often “raw and honest.” One example is a famous political television commercial used during former President Lyndon Johnson’s presidential campaign against Barry Goldwater in 1964, which depicted a little girl plucking a daisy prior to an image of a nuclear blast’s billowing mushroom cloud. The commercial aired only once as a paid advertisement because the message was communicated successfully.

Mr. Shapiro commented the response to any advertisement must occur in the audience rather than in the advertisement. How does the audience feel after watching the advertisement? How do they respond? The most important design element of a public service announcement or message is the emotional response. It also is used to track the reaction and tension the audience feels after watching an advertisement. Any form of human communication can reach the responsive chord.

He also explained that if the desired response of the advertisement is anger, the advertisement should not show anger. Rather, the audience should *feel* anger as a genuine response.

When emotion remains in the audience, it creates a unique response in each person. Responsive chord advertisements often ask questions that will evoke feelings already present in the audience. Effective response chord advertisements often foster public distrust, especially towards large corporations (e.g., effective advertisements pitted against the tobacco companies).

#### *Widmeyer Communications and the Stop Bullying Now! Campaign*

The concepts he addressed were incorporated in the “Stop Bullying Now!” campaign that Widmeyer Communications developed for DHHS (see <http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/>). They convened a youth expert panel comprised of students from schools nationwide to address bullying in schools. The panel consisted of bullies, students who are bullied regularly, and bystanders (students who witnessed bullying but did nothing to stop it). The panel provided valuable feedback about the “Stop Bullying Now!” campaign’s cartoon characters, stating which stories resonated with them and which ones did not. The Web site has received up to 18,000 hits a week and has been used in NBC’s *The More You Know* campaign, a series of television public service announcements. Its message has been communicated to many organizations to increase awareness of bullying in schools.

#### *Recommendations for NCCSHS Members*

He encouraged the participants to think of themselves as television reporters. These journalists must interact with people daily and persuade people to share their stories. This method can be a model for NCCSHS members. They should ask people for their stories and use their “natural sense” of what is interesting and relevant as the guide.

Robert Dotson, a television storyteller, advises not to ask too many questions when interviewing people, but to make observations. These observations allow people to reveal their emotions more freely. NCCSHS members should consider stories they read as children because the messages in these stories remain relevant today.

Storytelling and the RCT are used daily by advertisers to sell products. The goal is to use this tactic to communicate what NCCSHS thinks are the important issues in health and education. NCCSHS

members should identify those involved with the issues and ask them to communicate why these issues matter and how they can be addressed.

### **Questions and Comments for Mr. Shapiro**

1. *These issues are extremely complex, and most often, education professionals must address these issues in politically driven environments. How can education professionals consider and discuss these complex issues in a way that returns to the basics (returns to the “story”) without losing the complexities?*

Mr. Shapiro suggested that to be successful, education professionals need to believe the story and its messages so others can be convinced and commit to the story. RCT is one technique to accomplish this. He used reading as an example—someone taught him how to read, he saw it was an essential tool in education, so his conclusion was that everyone should be literate. The issue’s basic message should have knowledge and core essentials behind it.

2. *Is it more effective to use animation or human beings to help communicate the message?*

Mr. Shapiro noted that the answer would depend on the type of message being sent. For the “Stop Bullying Now!” campaign, Widmeyer Communications thought it would be easier to use animation to communicate the message. He and his colleagues realized there were many differences in the teenagers they were targeting. Animation allowed them to avoid further stigmatizing of teens and encourage the audience to see the issue clearly.

3. *Many at NCCSHS profess—to educators and the public—that healthy students and healthy schools are requirements for promoting academic success among students. This concept may appeal to the head rather than the heart, so what is an example of a responsive chord in school health? Also, how can this concept be used in persuading policymakers and decisionmakers who have the funds to promote school health, but thus far have not seemed interested in doing so?*

He suggested using overweight in students as a possible mechanism to communicate the message. Some participants thought this might not be effective, as there are population groups that see overweight as a sign of wealth. Mr. Shapiro recommended that NCCSHS consider the strongest reason why it is not good to have an overweight population. One participant noted that this society has an obsession with being thin, and not everyone has the same concept of overweight (people considered thin may have a different conception of what is considered overweight). The focus should remain on health, not on weight.

4. *Overweight is not the only issue health and education professionals address. Other issues include mental health and asthma. NCCSHS is starting to understand what messages may persuade people. Additionally, health and education are second-level topics for policymakers and decisionmakers (top-level topics include defense spending and the economy). How can NCCSHS make these issues high priority? If education is improved for the nation’s students, then perhaps it will have a positive effect on the economy as well.*

Mr. Shapiro agreed, but he stated that NCCSHS and other health and education organizations have an important advantage, which is longevity. Issues posed by NCCSHS and other organizations are long-term issues, and they are becoming evident to other stakeholders. He illustrated this by using

an example from the General Motors Corporation, which is implementing a hunter safety health program for its employees who work in the more rural plants. Companies are recognizing the benefits of having health programs that encourage healthy eating and exercising among their employees.

5. *Complex issues typically yield multiple opinions, and stories sometimes reveal both points of view. Most often, those with the louder voice and most resources can tell their stories more frequently, therefore having more influence. What can be done when there are conflicting stories and opinions? What should the schools be doing and not doing? How do NCCSHS members maneuver their stories to the forefront?*

Mr. Shapiro agreed and reinforced this dilemma—if a certain entity has the money to advertise in *TIME* magazine or some other widely publicized medium, they are more likely to be successful. Regardless of an organization's resources, the story must be communicated. It may be as simple as determination, believing the story is the right one, and being confident. Also, alliances with people in the field can strengthen the message.

One participant commented that education professionals try to appease the multiple audiences involved; particularly, the professional audiences to whom they are held accountable. The messages sent to this group are often complex. Parents most often influence school boards and politicians, but the messages given to them may be too simple for professional colleagues. Also, education professionals should confront the negativity some parents may feel towards health, education, and physical education based on experiences they may have had in school.

6. *Students sometimes have health-related issues that have negative effects on their education (e.g., in the classroom, they are more worried about their health problem than schoolwork). Often, teachers and school nurses fail to recognize that students' poor academic performance may be caused by a health-related issue. Teachers and school nurses should make health referrals when necessary, but typically, this does not happen, partly because they do not think to make one. How can health and education professionals increase teachers' and school nurses' awareness that students' poor academic performance could be caused by a health-related issue? How can the amount of health referrals be increased?*

Mr. Shapiro acknowledged this as a challenge for health and education professionals. He noted that the relationship between school personnel and the principal is extremely important. Additional channels could be the school superintendent or the chief state school officer. Regardless, it is essential that school personnel understand that the principal's role is influential.

7. *Students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and related medication issues are increasingly important for health and education professionals. Teachers need to speak with parents when students' academic performance is compromised by a learning disorder, but often, this conversation does not occur. This also prevents conversation between the teacher and the doctor. Typically, parents and teachers are afraid of making the situation worse. Education professionals may not have the power of the media, and lately, some celebrities' well-publicized comments discourage medication use to treat students diagnosed with ADHD. How can education professionals help increase awareness of this issue without help from the media? How can they communicate the message when celebrities have so much influence?*

Mr. Shapiro agreed this is an important issue and a story that should be told prior to an unfortunate event (e.g., a student does not receive a referral and a serious problem happens as a result). The primary issue remains the students' health in school, but the secondary issue has become the negative impact caused by celebrities and their highly publicized statements. Mr. Shapiro credited celebrities for their talents, but stated they should not have a negative impact on the professional relationship of teachers and doctors in addressing health- and school-related issues such as ADHD. Although the message may not reach a national news show, the advantage is that the health- or school-related organization's credibility and professional credentials provide weight to the message.

8. *Regarding conflicting opinions about an issue, some voices are more demanding. Proponents on each side of an issue think their story is the correct one. Are there any tips that may help those with less demanding voices maintain professionalism to make the message more credible and compelling?*

He suggested that education professionals find the "wedge issue" (e.g., in politics, the environment is often a wedge issue) that will penetrate the other side and at least convince them of one piece of the argument. They may not agree entirely, but if they can be convinced on one issue, they will be somewhat neutralized. The argument may be enough to convince them to vote the other way.

### **Large Group Discussion: Working Together Toward the Goal**

Facilitated by Ms. Lewallen, NCCSHS members participated in a large group discussion based on three questions regarding the different messages NCCSHS members may communicate to their constituents and using the suggestions Mr. Shapiro provided in his presentation. (These questions were provided in the meeting folder. Many of these issues were addressed in the discussion following Mr. Shapiro's presentation.)

One participant noted she used some data from The Education Trust—not for communication with constituents who know these data—but for communication with health professionals about health disparities. The education gap is synonymous with health disparities. The students who suffer lower education outcomes are likely to be the same set of students who suffer from the effects of health disparities.

Another suggestion addressed the public's role and how they can become more involved in the community. Schools often have campaigns to raise additional funds, which is an opportunity for education professionals to tell their stories or send their messages. Typically, so much focus is placed on the need for the campaign's success that the opportunity to send these messages to the public is lost. The public needs to be more aware of the various nuances for creating healthy and safe schools for students nationwide. Members of the public who do not have children also benefit from safe and healthy schools because the students become better citizens for the community. Also, those without children can be assured their taxes are being spent wisely.

It is also important that NCCSHS members consider how to tell their stories and what vehicles can be used in telling them. Other suggestions included using the Internet as another vehicle and to personalize stories in a way that engages audience members.

Another participant emphasized that schools and teachers play a crucial role in narrowing the education gap. Often, children do not have support systems at home that they need to foster positive academic achievement. Teachers are role models for their students, and education professionals should empower them as much as possible so they can be effective. For example, teachers should be aware of nutrition and healthy eating habits and incorporate these concepts into the curriculum using interdisciplinary methods.

### **NCCSHS Business and Officer Nominations**

Ms. Lewallen reminded the NCCSHS members that the business meeting is typically held during the Fall Issues Meeting, which will be held this September. She introduced Bill Potts-Datema, Director of Partnerships for Children's Health at the Harvard School of Public Health. Mr. Potts-Datema updated the group on the editorial review subcommittee's progress as follows:

- *NCCSHS Web Site*—Limited funds have made it difficult to make significant revisions to the Web site. However, smaller changes have been made, such as the addition of new resources. If NCCSHS members want to add other resources, they should contact Mr. Potts-Datema. The site address is [www.healthy-students.org](http://www.healthy-students.org).
- *Articles*—The first NCCSHS-sponsored article will be published in the *Journal of School Health* in August. Other articles will be included once the peer review process is complete. Several of the articles focus on different aspects of health status and student performance. For more information or to address questions, NCCSHS members should contact Mr. Potts-Datema.
- *Additional Items*—NCCSHS members are encouraged to share any articles, ideas, or resources. These materials will be incorporated provided funding is available.

Ms. Lewallen briefly described the non-Federal Chair position for NCCSHS, which is a 2-year elective office. The position offers many opportunities to meet and work with various individuals in the Federal and non-Federal arenas. The Chair also collaborates closely with the Federal co-chair. She requested all interested NCCSHS members to nominate individuals and submit the nomination(s) before leaving the meeting. All nominees will be considered and contacted, and the election will be held via e-mail this summer. The new Chair will be announced at the Fall Issues Meeting.

### **Wrap-up, Evaluations, and Adjournment**

Ms. Lewallen thanked the speakers and participants for attending and participating in the discussions. She reminded the group to complete and submit the evaluation and nomination forms before departing. The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.