

What's Working: Early Impact of the Federally Mandated Local Wellness Policy in Rural, Low Income Elementary Schools



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Overview

1. Project Goals
2. Local Wellness Policy
3. Study design and methods
4. Results
5. Implications for policy and practice

1. “What’s Working” Project Goals



Goal 1: Track trends in physical activity and nutrition in rural/urban, low income elementary schools

Goal 2: Identify environment and policy features related to physical activity and nutrition

Goal 3: Describe impact of local wellness policies

Goal 4: Communicate findings

Focus of Today's Presentation

- Describe physical activity trends in rural schools (before and after LWP went into effect)
- Describe the relationship between these trends and school district LWPs
- Identify barriers and facilitators related to LWP implementation

LWP = Local Wellness Policy

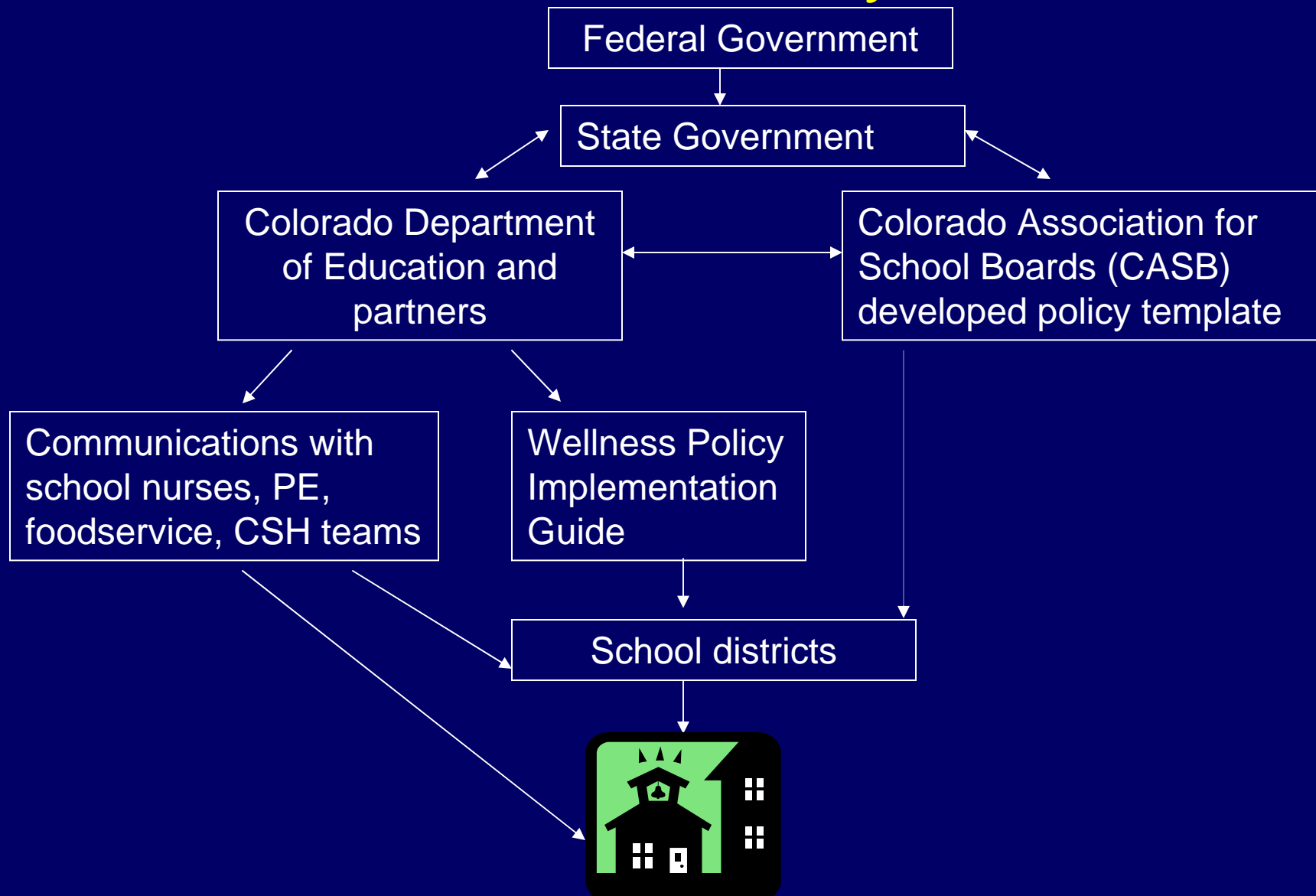
2. Local Wellness Policy

Section 204 of Public Law 108-265 June 30, 2004
Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004

Purpose:

- 1) Start a conversation in school communities around wellness
- 2) Increase physical activity and healthy eating opportunities for students

From the Federal Government to Colorado Elementary Schools



Language in CASB Template re: Physical Activity

- A requirement or encouragement that periods of physical activity be at least 150 minutes per week for elementary students
- Increased opportunities for physical activity through daily recess and a range of after-school programs
- An encouragement that schools follow National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommendations

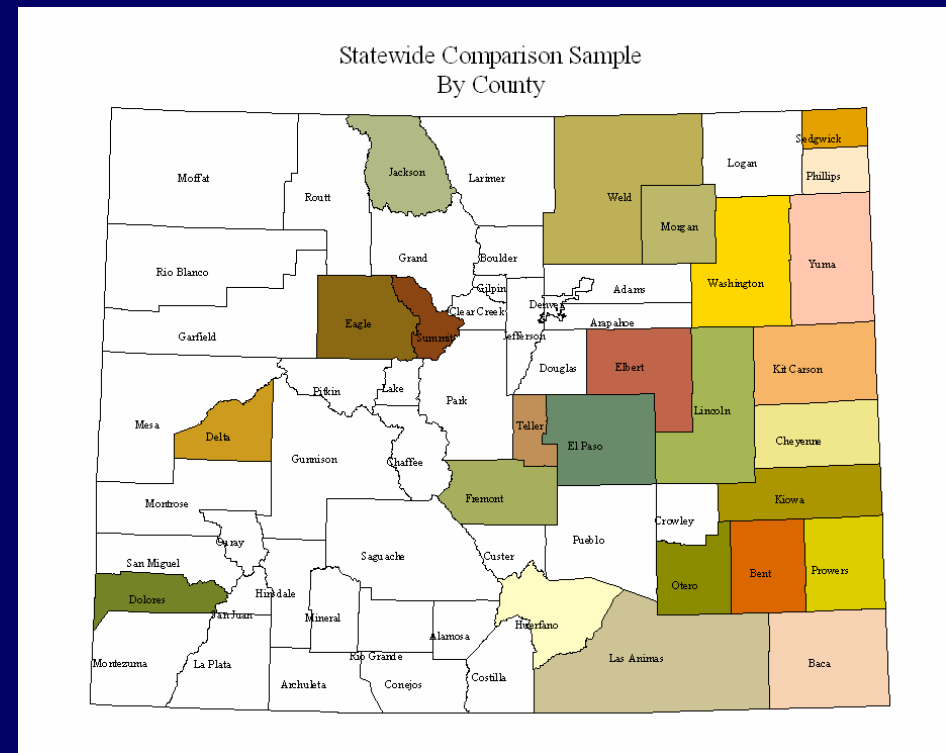
3. Study Sample, Methods, Design

Random Sample:

- 45 low income, rural elementary schools sent survey
- 18 of the 45 selected for key informant interviews

Methods:

- Survey
- Key informant interviews
- LWP content analysis



Pre/Post Design

LWP went
into effect



2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Survey (n = 32; 71% response rate)	Survey (n = 41; 91% response rate)	Survey (n = 38; 82% response rate)
	Key Informant Interviews (n = 13; 72%)	LWPs collected and coded (n = 32; 82%)

School Environment & Policy Survey

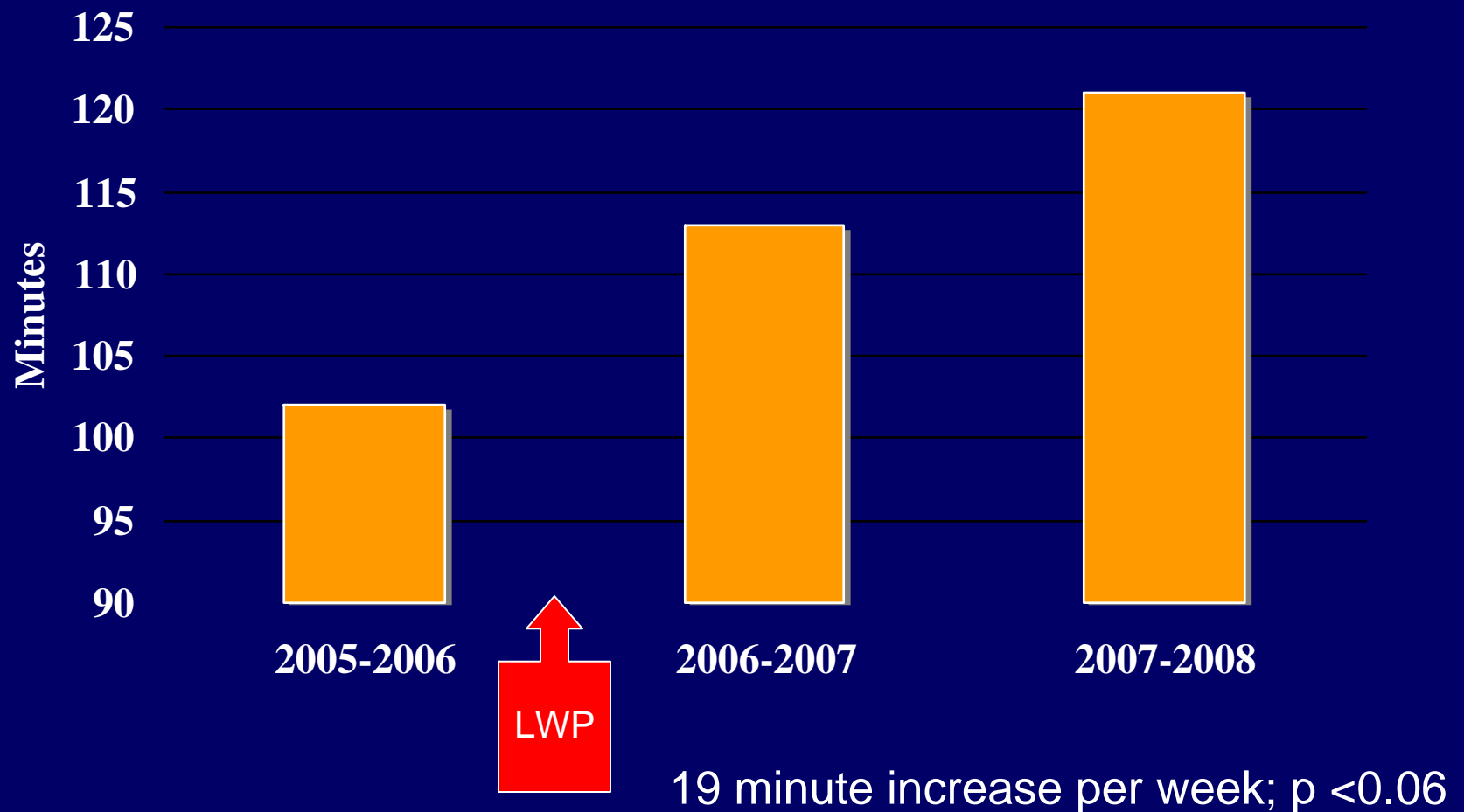
Created by the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center

- Assesses changes in school environments and policies related to nutrition and physical activity
- Items adapted from the SHI, SHPPS, Michigan Healthy Schools Action Tool
- 3 Modules completed by Principal, Foodservice, PE

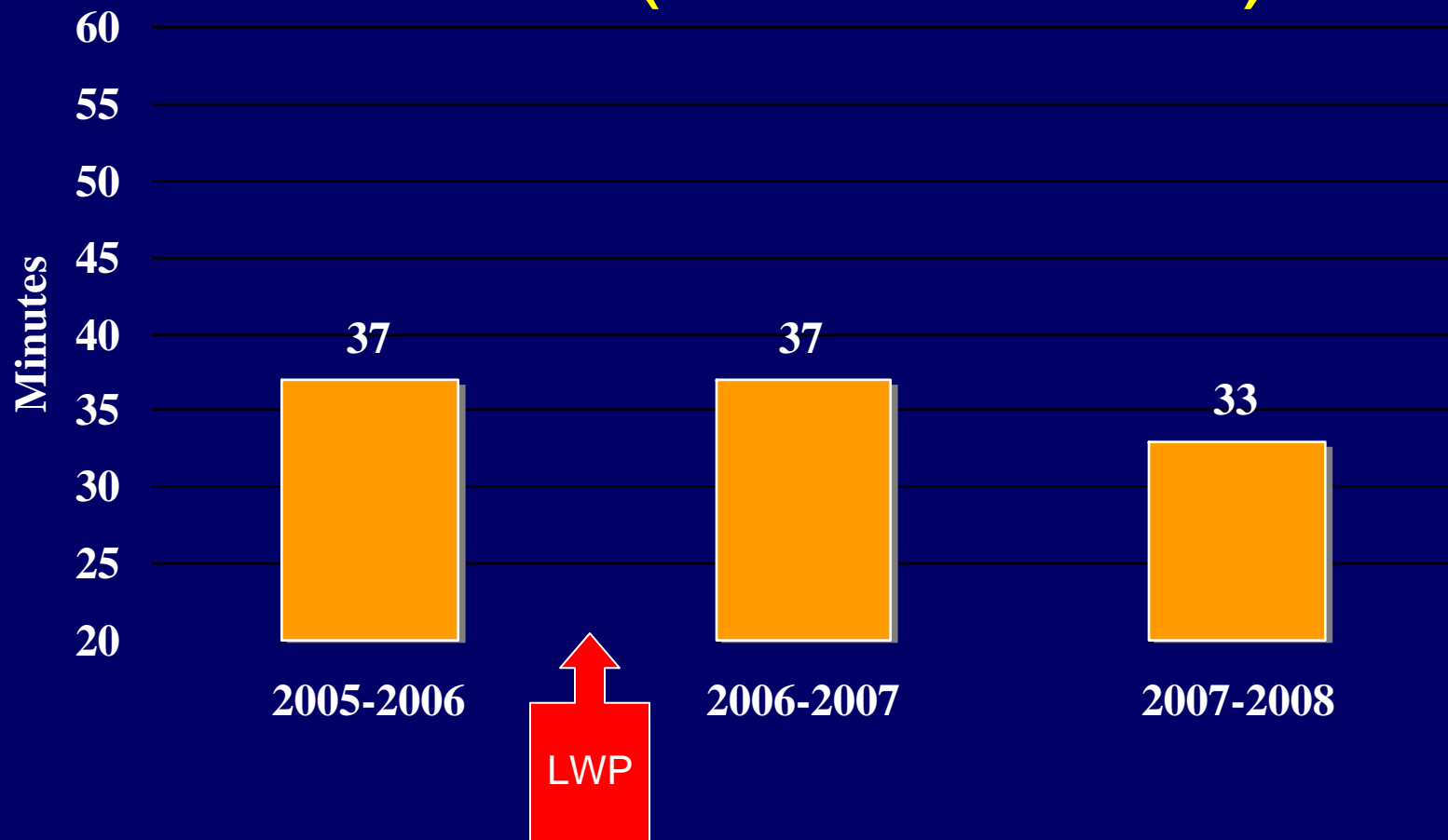


4. Results

Trends in Weekly Minutes of Physical Education (5th Graders)



Trends in Daily Minutes of Recess (5th Graders)



3.83 minutes per day or
19 minute decrease per week; $p < 0.06$

To what extent are these trends
related to district
Local Wellness Policies (LWP)?

Have principals read their Local Wellness Policy?

- In fall 2006, 73% of principals read their LWP
- In fall 2007, 70% of principals read their LWP

Are trends in physical activity opportunities related to principals' awareness of LWPs?

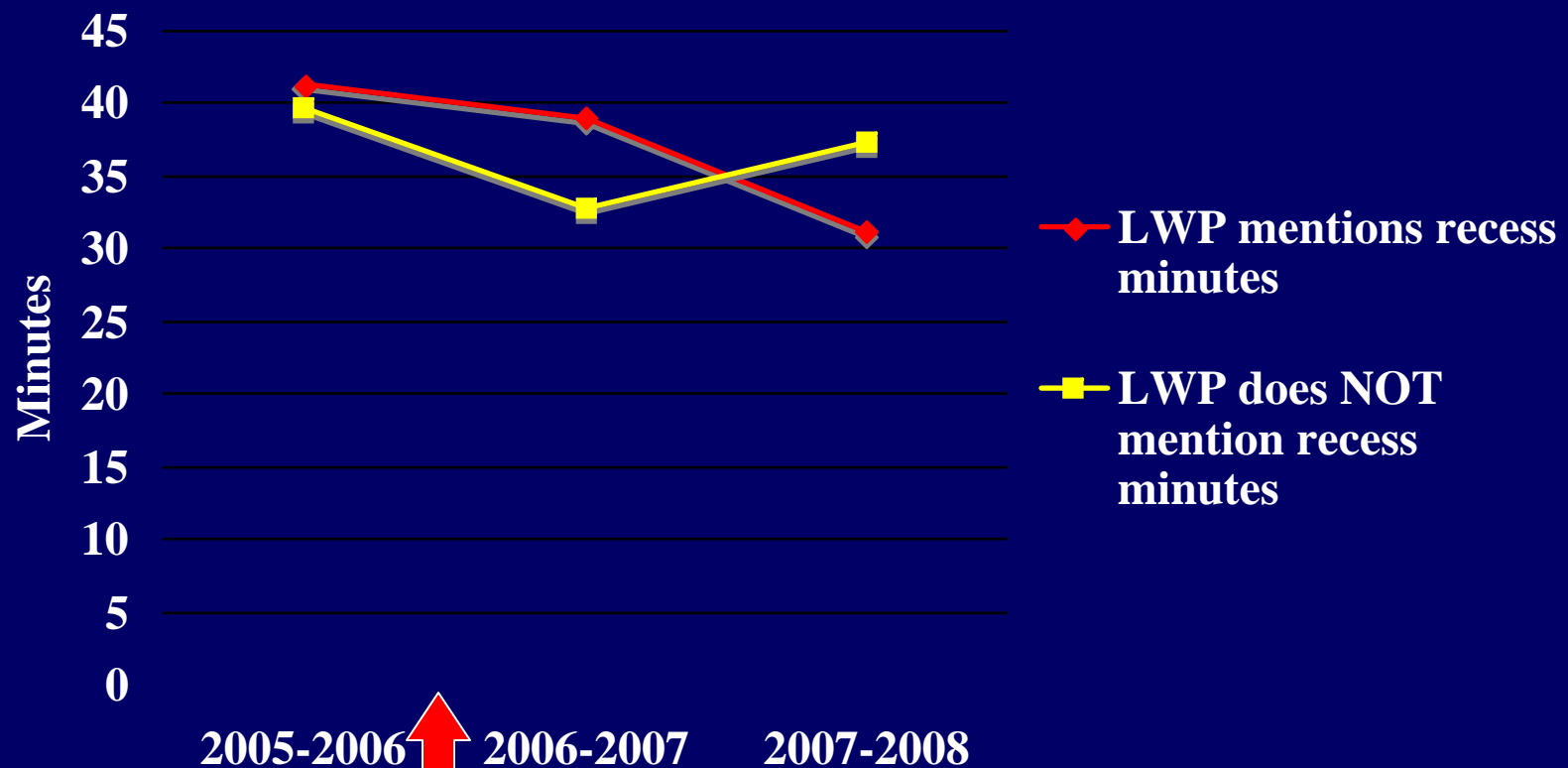
- Did principals familiar with the LWP increase their PE minutes more than principals unfamiliar? **NO** ($p = 0.80$)
- Did principals familiar with the LWP increase their recess minutes more than principals unfamiliar? **KIND OF;**
5 minutes more ($p = 0.09$)

If LWP addresses PE time, are there bigger increases in PE?

- Addresses time per week of PE for elementary school students
 - 0 = not mentioned ($n = 21$)
 - 1 = specifies number of times per week without duration; specifies total amount of PE, but it is less than 150 minutes/week; OR suggests that schools follow NASPE standards ($n = 11$)
 - 2 = specifies 150 minutes/week or more of PE; OR requires schools to follow NASPE standards ($n = 0$)
- NO ($p = 0.30$)

Many thanks for the RWJF Healthy Eating Research Workgroup 1 for developing and sharing this coding protocol!

Does the rate of decrease in recess minutes depend on whether the LWP mentions recess minutes?



LWP

Yes, but recess time is lower when mentioned in LWPs; $p = 0.05$

Qualitative Interviews

Sample:

- 9 District-level Local Wellness Policy (LWP) Contacts
- 13 Principals

Interview Questions:

1. *How was the LWP developed in your district?*
2. *What barriers/facilitators influenced its development?*
3. *How familiar are you with its contents?*
4. *How is your school implementing the LWP?*

Finding:

- LWP implementation at the local school building was low to not at all

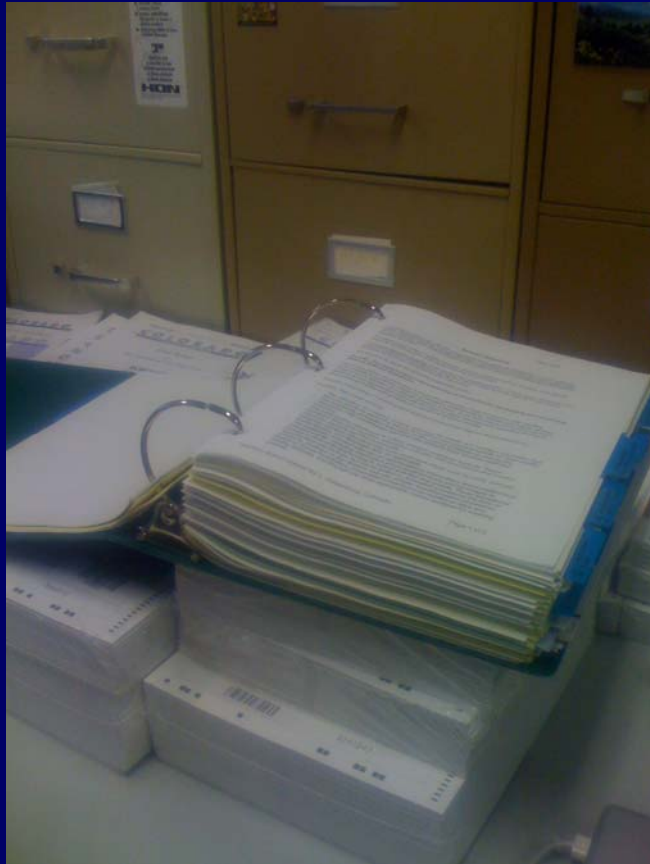
What got in the way of the LWP having greater impact?

- Weak policy language
- Competing pressures on schools
- Low resources
- Principals' unfamiliarity with LWP contents
- Lack of accountability mechanisms

Low LWP Implementation - Weak Policy Language -

- “*encourage*” and “*aspire to*” rather than “*require*”
- Most districts adopted a “minimalist” approach to LWP development
 - Input from few stakeholders
 - Virtual adoption of CASB template

Low LWP Implementation - Competing Pressures -



- LWP was one of numerous policy directives received by school districts during 2005-06
- Existing priorities
- *“What we continue to hear is No Child Left Behind. I haven’t heard ‘Don’t leave fat kids behind’. It’s about keeping kids academically fit. That’s foremost on our minds.”*
(Superintendent)

Low LWP Implementation

– Low Resources -

- LWP is an unfunded mandate
 - “Right now [the LWP] is a policy in a book. It’s hard to put in place with no time, resources, and materials. We have a lot of other strings pulling on us harder than this string.”
(principal)

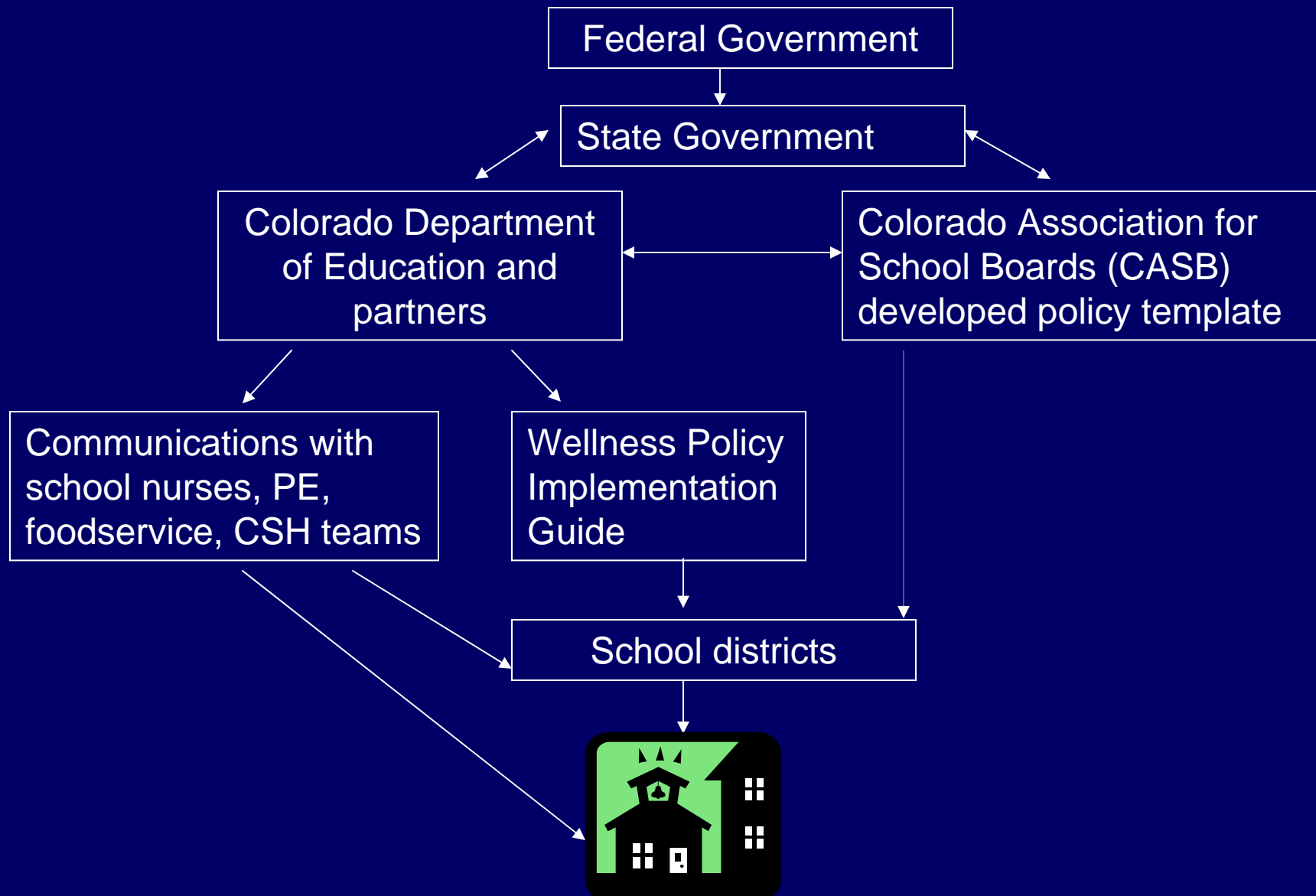
Low LWP Implementation - Principals' Unfamiliarity -

- Most principals not familiar with contents of their LWP
- Small minority of principals were familiar with LWP contents
- Influence of a champion in the school community (e.g., parent, nurse, superintendent)

Low LWP Implementation – Lack of Accountability Mechanisms –

- Districts' resources and priorities focused on No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- *“There’s no inspection or reporting involved in the LWP, no teeth involved, nobody’s watching to see if we’ve done it or not. There’s a higher financial loss with NCLB compared to LWP. So we’ll focus on NCLB.”*
(Superintendent)

Where do we go from here?





Thank you!

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