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**Parents, Teachers Support School Anti-Obesity Measures  
Nationwide**

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Parents and teachers overwhelmingly agree that soda and candy vending machines in schools across the nation should be converted to provide healthy food.

They also agree that students should be required to take physical education daily at every grade level, according to two national polls of 600 parents and 500 teachers released Thursday by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"If we don't get a handle on this problem of childhood obesity, we will raise the first generation of kids who live sicker and die younger than their parents," said Mike McGinnis, senior vice president of the foundation.

The Fort Worth school district has been studying obesity problems for about five years, Director of Health Services Jackie Thompson said.

"We know that when you look at 80,000 students, you are going to find some students that weigh more than they should, and we are concerned that our students be healthy," Thompson said. "We've been redefining nutrition, looking at exercise programs and at the type of menus that are prepared at school and started preparing healthier foods like salads."

The Fort Worth district will begin training in January to bring a new health program to at least one of its schools, said Molly McCarthy with Pyramid Communications.

Coordinated Approach to Children's Health, or CATCH, incorporates physical education, an in-class nutrition and health curriculum, and changes in school lunch menus to engage elementary school children in healthy behaviors.

- The program's four main objectives are:
- Achieving 50 percent of class time in moderate to vigorous physical activity.
  - Providing opportunities for every student to participate.
  - Promoting activity outside of physical education class.
  - Having fun.

It's used by schools in 30 states, Canada and at schools on U.S. Department of Defense military bases around the world. In Texas, where the program is based, more than 1,000 schools use CATCH.

"There are significant health risks for the 9 million U.S. children who are seriously overweight, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and the propensity to become overweight or obese as adults," Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona said in a foundation news release.

"Schools can become part of the solution by offering healthier choices and opportunities for kids to be more physically active," he said.

There are nearly twice as many overweight children (ages 6-11) and almost three times as many overweight adolescents (ages 12-19) as there were in 1980, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"One thing that's clear is that, even though there is an understanding of the importance of school involvement in physical activity and nutritional practices of kids, we will only see action if parents mobilize to make it clear to decision makers that this is of the highest priority," McGinnis said.