

# A BEGINNING BASELINE

FORWARD looks at Illinois School Physical Data from School Partners



To obtain a deeper understanding about the magnitude of obesity and overweight in DuPage County, Illinois, FORWARD partnered with the Regional Office of Education and local schools to collect data from the Illinois School Physical in order to piece together a more accurate picture of childhood overweight. Required for Kindergarten, Sixth and Ninth graders for school attendance, the school physical (Illinois Child Health Exam) is one of the best sources currently for uniform data collection at a group level for children.

During the month of March, FORWARD asked schools to input height, weight and age information from a portion of their school physicals to begin to build a baseline. FORWARD adopted a local data collection system called Fittrac which allows schools to input the data from any computer with internet access. Fittrac de-identifies the data to protect student information but allows FORWARD to analyze and report back results to the schools and then when appropriate, to the community. FORWARD's goal, by the Fall of 2010, is to obtain a representative sample for all schools in DuPage County.

**PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY IN GRADES K, 6TH, AND 9TH FROM SELF-SELECTED SCHOOLS IN DUPAGE COUNTY, 2009-2010**

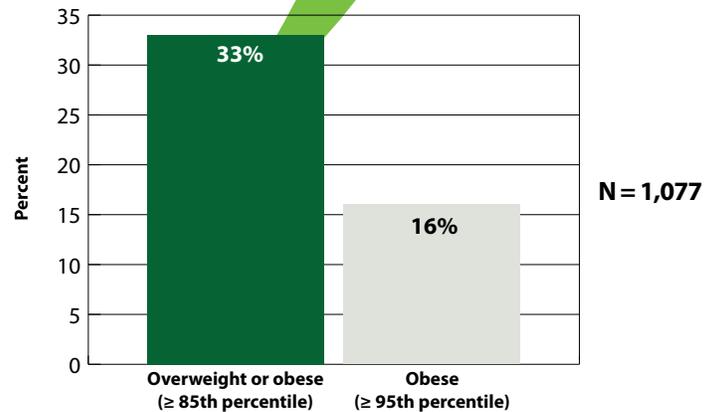
**44 schools (self-selected) participated in this initial collection to give us the baseline from across DuPage County:**

32 Elementary Schools, 7 Jr High/Middle Schools, 5 High Schools.

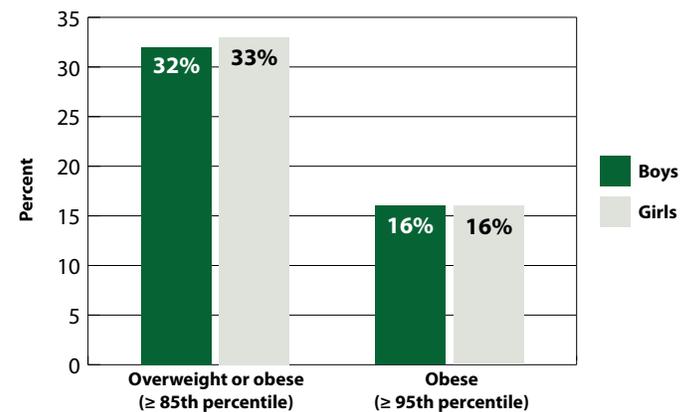
**OVERALL RATES SUGGEST THAT 1 IN 3 CHILDREN ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE.**

The *Percentage of Overweight and Obese in grades K, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> from Self-selected schools in DuPage County* is a sampling which represents over 1, 077 students. 16% of the children were at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile (commonly referred to as obese) and 33% of the total students we at or above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile (commonly referred to as overweight).

**PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY<sup>1,2</sup>**



**PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY BY SEX<sup>1,2</sup>**



**Kindergarten**

A total of 578 Kindergarteners School Physical Exams was assessed and 16% of the students were considered obese, 35% overweight or obese and 61% had a normal BMI (5<sup>th</sup>-85<sup>th</sup> percentile).

**6th Grade**

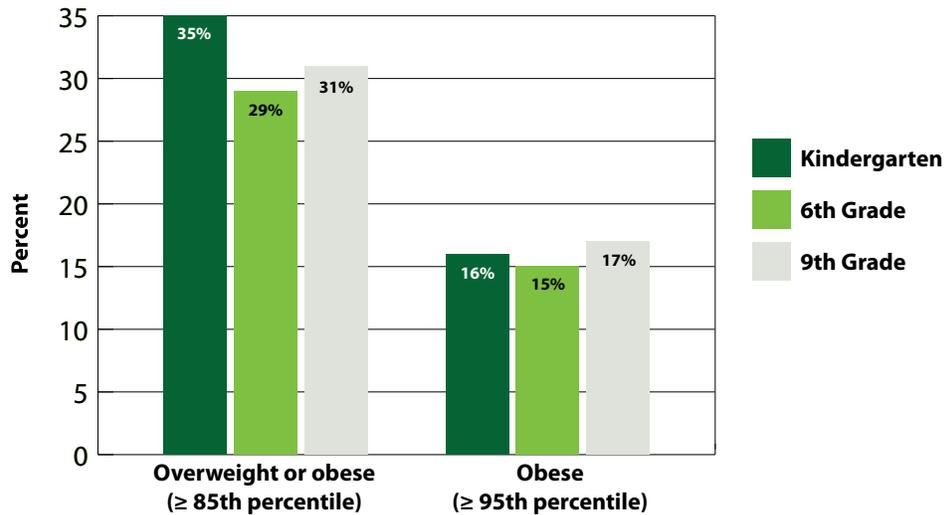
A total of 206 6<sup>th</sup> graders School Physical Exams was assessed and 15% of the students were Obese, 29% overweight or obese and 67% had a normal BMI.

**9th Grade**

A total of 293 9<sup>th</sup> graders School Physical Exams was assessed and 17% of the students were obese, 31% overweight or obese and 68% had a normal BMI.

*This information continues to suggest that DuPage rates are reflective of the current rates nation-wide. Additional information that will be gathered through our data collection plan is needed to know more about our local situation.*

PERCENTAGE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY BY GRADE<sup>1,2</sup>



## FORWARD

### Long-Term Data Collection Plan:

In order to make informed decisions to address policy, system and environmental changes, and to monitor progress to reverse the trend of obesity in DuPage County, data must be collected and analyzed in a systemic and ongoing manner. To achieve this, a robust, reliable and representative data collection system must be developed to measure the status of obesity and overweight and the trends for both children and adults. A variety of sources including medical, public and private schools and community groups are needed. The data presented in this report build on the FORWARD Snapshot created in October, 2009. Data presented at that time were collected from various and available sources from a variety of age groups and settings. The data in this portfolio provide a beginning to a uniform collection source for children. FORWARD will build on this baseline by collecting data each Fall from all school physicals available in DuPage County. Each Spring FORWARD will work with partners to report outcomes and impacts of community sources on measures such as health, physical fitness and nutrition.

#### **A NOTE ON THE SENSITIVITY OF BMI AND CHILDREN:**

In an effort to reduce stigma and to exercise extreme sensitivity to the issue of weight with regards to children, much care has been taken to conceal the identity of specific children and schools when disclosing data. Furthermore, when talking with children about nutrition and physical activity, FORWARD agrees with many experts that weight should not be the primary focus. Healthy food choices, play, and physical activity should be the focus with a shared goal to promote healthy self-esteem and body image and to reduce weight-based teasing or bullying.

<sup>1</sup>School physicals can be completed within one year of submission by the school's required date so in some cases data may reflect collection as early as October 2008. A standardized date of collection, October 15, 2009 was used for this data analysis.

<sup>2</sup>Forty-four schools volunteered to report all or a portion of their students' data for Kindergarten, 6th, and 9th grades during Spring 2010.

*Thank you to all the schools and FORWARD partners who participated in this effort.*

For more information and to participate in future data collection, please contact FORWARD: [forward@dupagehealth.org](mailto:forward@dupagehealth.org), 630.221.7037, [www.forwarddupage.org](http://www.forwarddupage.org)