

Relationship of School District Wellness Policies on Student Physical Activity Behaviors

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Background

Arizona's SNAP-Ed program—guided by the evidence-based Social Ecological model³—posits that individual behaviors are multifactorial and impacted by settings-based policies. SNAP-Ed staff supported partner schools with physical activity policy interventions, including Local Wellness Policy (LWP) revisions, and concurrently administered the Kids Activity and Nutrition Questionnaire (KAN-Q) to measure student physical activity behaviors. Little is known about the relationship between the strength of LWPs and students' physical activity behaviors.

Objective. Understand how the quality of school districts' LWPs relates to students' physical activity (PA) outcomes.

Methods

Participants. 248 students across 7 schools in Arizona were included in the study.

Measures and Outcomes. We used two assessment tools:

KAN-Q. SNAP-Ed staff administered the KAN-Q—which includes a PA scale—to 4th-8th grade students in schools where SNAP-Ed staff supported direct education (DE); policy, systems, and environment (PSE); or multilevel (DE + PSE) interventions.

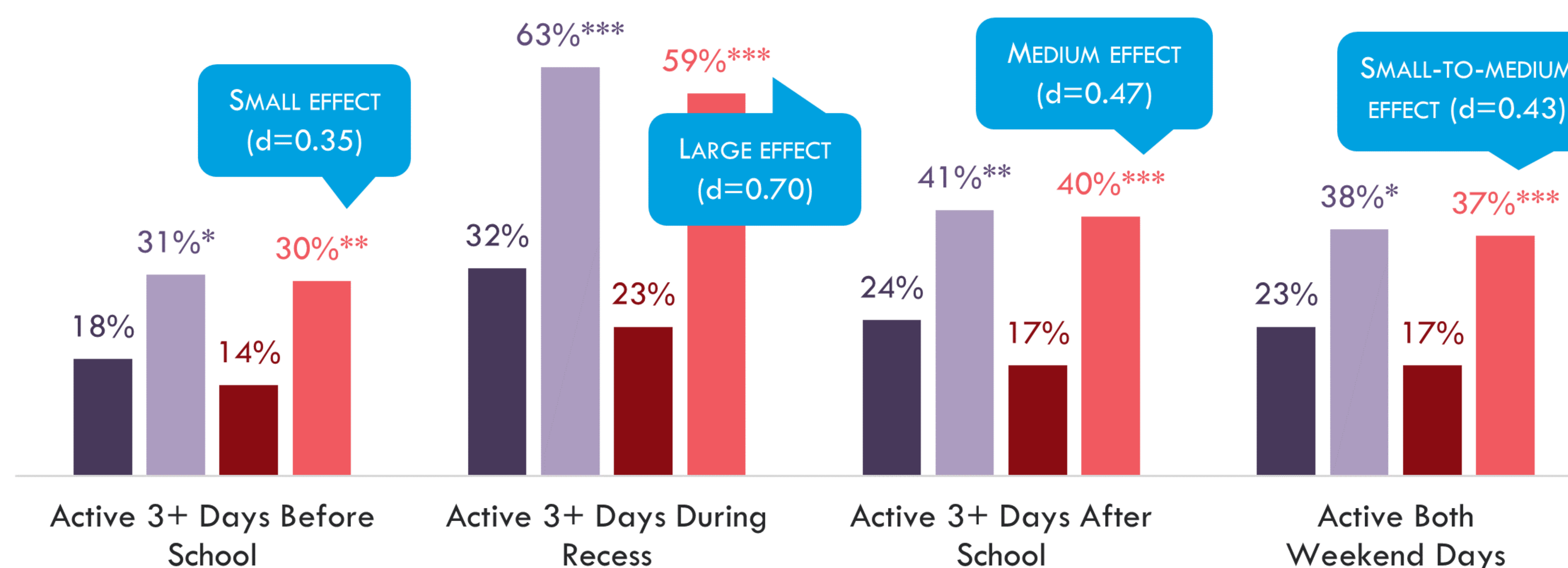
WELLSAT. We used the WellsAT to assess the comprehensiveness and strength of partner districts' LWPs, from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest).

Using these tools, we analyzed the number of weekly and weekend PA bouts for students attending districts with stronger versus higher scoring LWPs. We also explored how students' PA bouts varied by WellsAT scores for recess and before/after school PA programs.

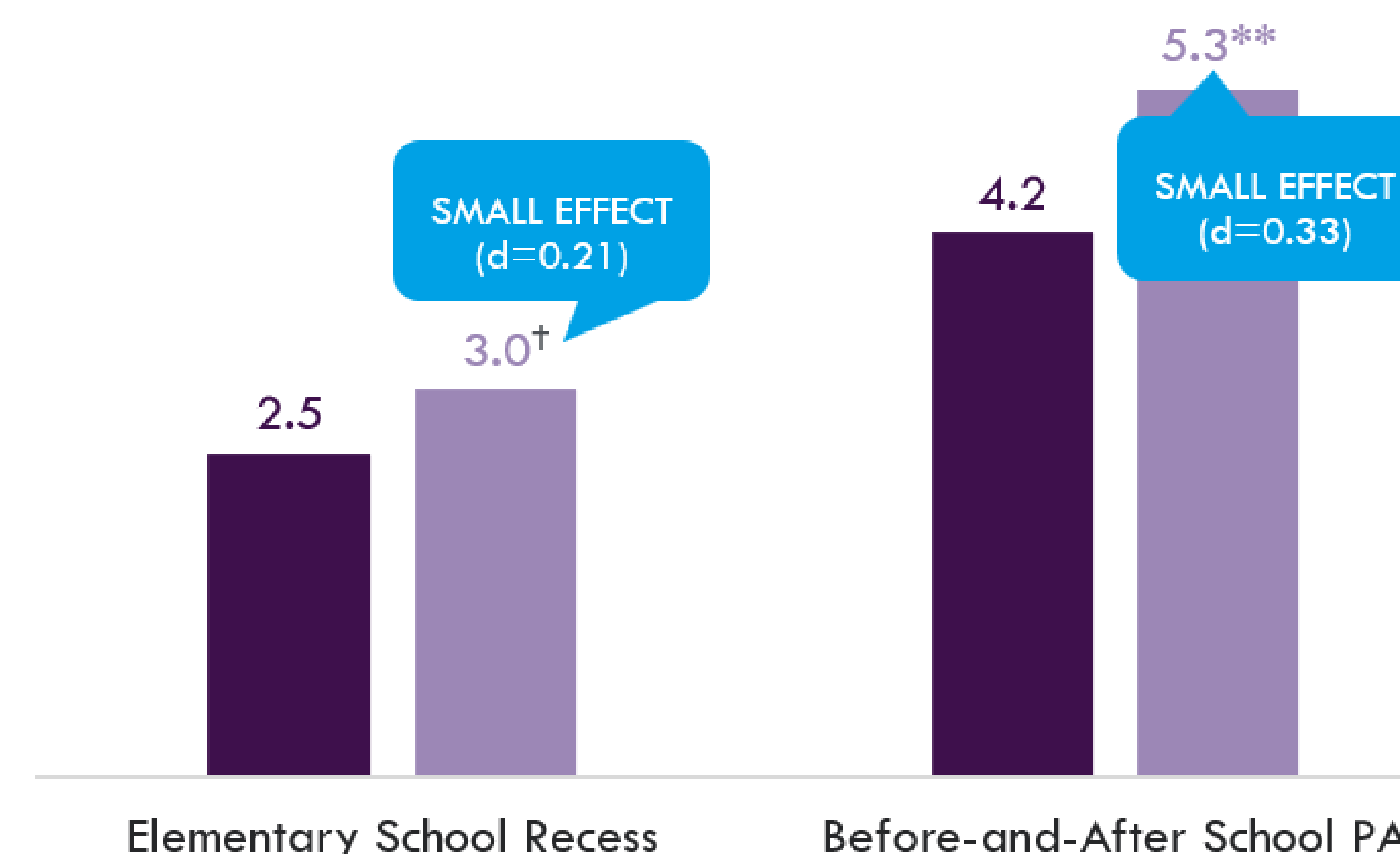
Data Analysis. We used chi-square and Mann-Whitney U tests for between group analyses to compare WellsAT scores with the number of student weekly and weekend PA bouts.

Results

The % of active students was greater in districts with **MORE COMPREHENSIVE** versus **LESS COMPREHENSIVE** policies. More students were also active in districts with **STRONGER** versus **WEAKER** policy language (n=248).



On average, students reported more recess and before/after school PA bouts in districts with **HIGHER** versus **LOWER** recess and before-and-after school physical activity programs LWP scores (n=248).



Note: Statistical significance indicates differences: [†] p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Conclusion

More comprehensive and stronger school LWPs were related to an increased number of PA bouts for 4th-8th grade students in SNAP-Ed supported districts. The findings support the idea that efforts to improve district policy can influence student behavior outcomes.

³United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). FY 2022 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) Plan Guidance. 2022. The USDA is an equal-opportunity provider.