Why Use the School Health Index?
The Situation

• Prevalence of youth risk behaviors is **high**, with **unfavorable trends**

• Promoting health and safety behaviors for youth is a **critical public health priority**

• Promoting health and safety behaviors for youth is an **educational priority**
Opinions of U.S. Adults About School Health Programs

• 65% believe schools should play a major role in fighting the obesity problem

• Adults strongly support:
  – Healthier school lunches: 84%
  – Health classes: 82%
  – More physical education: 76%
  – Prohibiting sale of unhealthy foods in school vending machines: 42%

Source: Survey by Lake Snell Perry and Associates for Harvard University, based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,002 adults, May-June 2003
Opinions of Parents of Adolescents About Health Education

• **82%** said that health education is either more important than or as important as other subjects taught in school.

• **74%** said schools should spend more time or the same amount of time teaching health education as they do teaching other subjects.

Source: Gallup Organization for the American Cancer Society, national telephone survey of 1,003 parents of adolescents enrolled in U.S. public schools, 1993
Opinions of Parents of Children in K-12 About Physical Education

• **81%** want their kids to receive daily physical education.

• **15%** believe that children should concentrate on academic subjects at school and leave the physical activities for after school.

Source: Survey by Opinion Research Corp. based on interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,017 adults, February 2000 (margin of error = ±6%)
How School Health Programs Benefit Businesses

• Now:
  – Improved health of employees’ children
  – Lower employee absenteeism and stress, higher productivity

• In the future:
  – A healthy and productive workforce
  – Lower health care costs
School Health Programs

✓ Increase students’ capacity to learn

✓ Reduce absences

✓ Improve physical fitness and mental alertness