

## California

# California's Investment in Training for School Leaders Yields Huge Benefits for Students

### Problem Overview

In 2006, less than 30% of California students in grades 5, 7, and 9 met the fitness standards for the state's FITNESSGRAM, an annual physical fitness test given to students in selected grades in the state's public schools. In recent years, many of California's school districts have seen substantial reductions in resources available for supporting efforts to improve student health. To address the growing concerns over student health and fitness, school health leaders in California needed to expand their knowledge and skills to build organizational capacity and promote school health programs.

### Program/Activity Description

Funded by the CDC to promote coordinated school health (CSH), the California Department of Education's School Health Connections Program collaborated with the state Department of Health Services to conduct state- and local-level leadership institutes. These were modeled after the American Cancer Society's (ACS) National School Health Leadership Institutes and were conducted in partnership with the ACS, California Division, which also provided local staff and financial support. Since 2005, more than 40 district teams in California have participated in School Health Leadership Institutes, learning how to build organizational capacity for promoting school health programs and how to leverage other resources to support these programs.

### Program/Activity Outcome

A significant outgrowth of the leadership institutes is the increased capacity of school leaders to leverage additional resources for improving school health programs:

- The El Dorado High School District obtained a Carol M. White Award for almost \$100,000 for 3 years to improve physical education programs.
- The Los Angeles Unified School District created a CSH District Council, launched CSH pilot programs, formally adopted a Policy and Blueprint on Wellness, and created the District's first comprehensive program to address childhood obesity and diabetes.

Through the leadership institutes, school health leaders continue to develop the skills they need to promote investment in children's health and manage new sources of revenue.

