

# Wellness in the Schools Evaluation Shows Positive Results on Student Outcomes



## Overview

Wellness in the Schools is a New York City based national non-profit with the vision to end childhood obesity. For over 13 years, we have brought less processed and more scratch-cooked food to school lunch, and more socially-positive fun activities to recess in public schools. Wellness in the Schools currently works in 6 cities, 122 schools, serving over 60,000 children daily. Because healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related diseases [1], Wellness in the Schools set currently works in 122 schools across six cities, serving over 60,000 children daily.



## Objectives

With thanks to a grant from the Newman's Own Foundation, Wellness in the Schools engaged the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Program in Nutrition, Teachers College, Columbia University to conduct a two-year evaluation of Wellness in the Schools. We targeted the following objectives:

*To assess how Wellness in the Schools impacts:*

- Students' school lunch consumption.
- Physical activity and behaviors at recess.
- Students' readiness to learn after lunch/recess.

## How research was collected

The two-year evaluation collected data by observing second and third graders in school lunch and recess, and by having their teachers complete surveys. The evaluation took place during the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years in 14 New York City public schools. Seven of these schools received Wellness in the Schools programming, and seven were matched control schools.

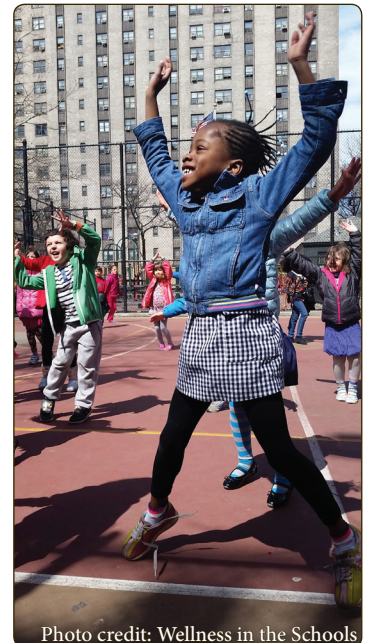


Photo credit: Wellness in the Schools

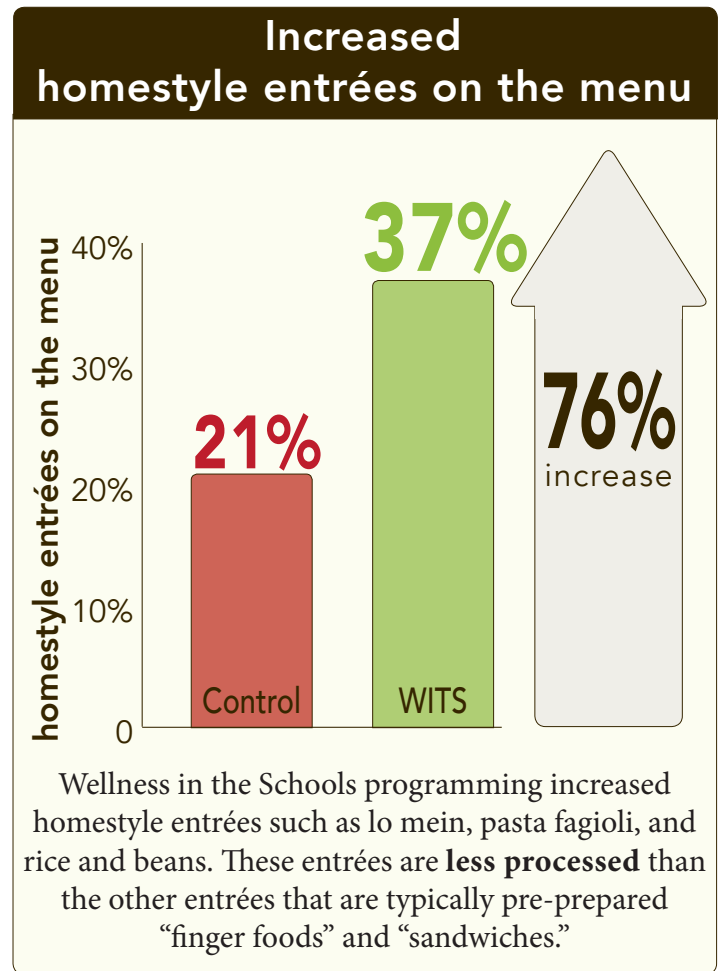
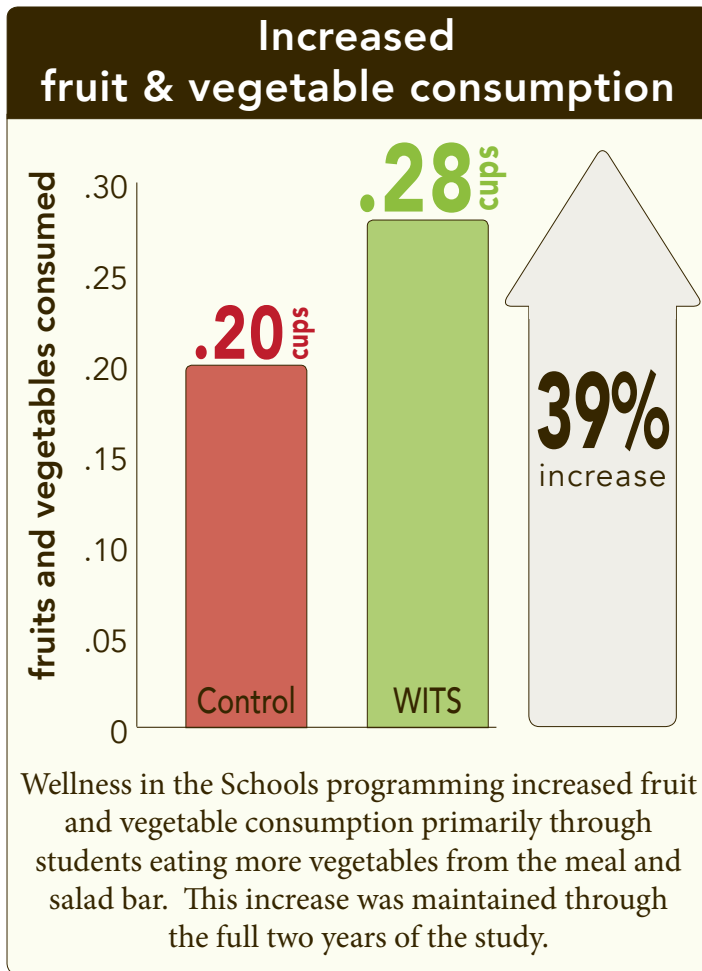


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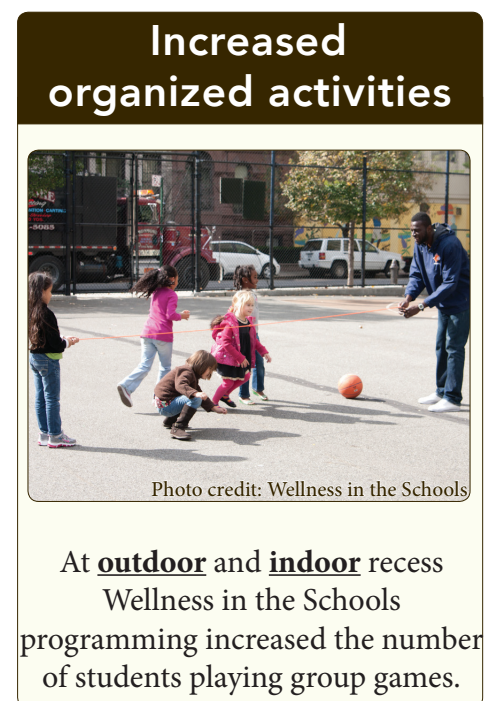
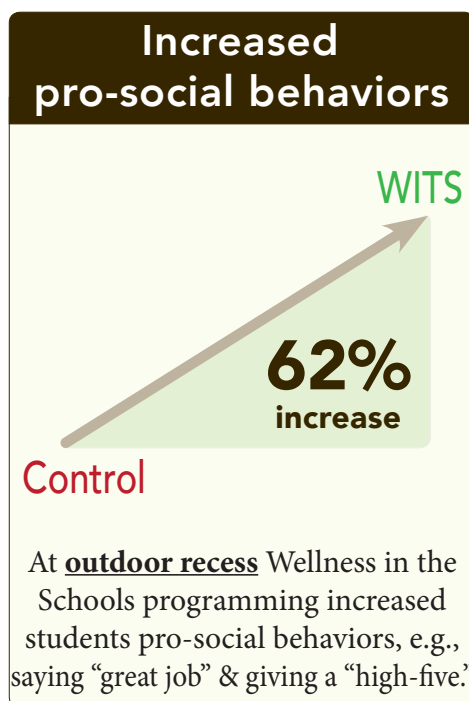
**For the full report on this evaluation or more information contact:**

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## Wellness in the Schools Impact on School Lunch



## Wellness in the Schools Impact on Recess



# Wellness in the Schools Impact on readiness to learn

Decrease in time to get on  
task after lunch and recess

Control

**58%**  
decrease

WITS

Wellness in the Schools decreased how much time teachers reported it took students to be ready for learning when they were back in the classroom after lunch and recess.



Photo credit: Wellness in the Schools

## Promising Practices

During this two-year evaluation, over 20 university-based researchers, under the leadership of Pam Koch, spent significant time in schools collecting data and making thoughtful observations. This was done in collaboration with the wellness professionals (chefs, nutritionists, coaches) from Wellness in the Schools, under the leadership of Founder and Executive Director Nancy Easton. Together we propose the following promising practices that can help improve the effectiveness of food and fitness programming in schools.

- There is great value in providing a wellness professional in schools to usher important wellness activities, classes and events.
  - Chef and nutritionist-led nutrition education increases the consumption of healthy school lunch.
  - Placing chefs and nutritionists at the salad bar encourages children to eat fruits and vegetables.
  - When chefs and nutritionists offer incentives, such as stickers with fruits and vegetables, children eat more fruits and vegetables.
  - Students move more when fitness coaches lead activity breaks during the school day and indoor recess, a very inactive time of day.
  - Wellness professionals can change the culture of schools by developing a holistic plan for year-long wellness events and activities, often not a priority for school leaders.
- There is great value in offering an alternative (less processed) menu to schoolchildren.
- There is great value in providing salad bars in schools.



Photo credit: Wellness in the Schools



Photo credit: Wellness in the Schools

[1] Centers for Disease Control. Childhood Obesity Facts. Accessed on June 26, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm>