

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

APRIL 08, 2013

FDOH-EC MEDIA CONTACT: Marie Mott

Desk 850/595-6272

SCHOOL DISTRICT CONTACT: Martha Hanna, RN

Desk 850/469-5456

**HEALTH OFFICIALS RELEASE STUDENT BODY MASS INDEX STATISTICS**

**PENSACOLA, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County today released student Body Mass Index (BMI) data. The 2012-2013 data indicates that 64 percent of the students measured fall within a healthy weight range. This number has increased from 61 percent, as measured in 2005-2006. The number of students measured that are classified as obese has decreased from 21 percent in 2005-2006 to 18 percent in 2012-2013. No net change was seen in students classified as either overweight or underweight.

Dr. John Lanza, Director of the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County notes, “While we’re seeing an impact from these efforts in our schools, we still have a long way to go. Facilitating lasting, generational changes can take ten to twenty years or more. We hope to continue to see a downward trend in the incidence of both overweight and obesity in our students.”

**Community-wide Commitment**

Reducing overweight and obesity requires a community-wide commitment. According to Dr. Lanza, “Everyone must do their part to help Escambia County change its culture about nutrition and physical activity. We need a community where good nutrition and regular physical activity are accepted as a normal part of our daily lives. We also need a community environment that enables us to make healthy choices. With 34% of our students overweight or obese, every parent, grandparent, neighbor, and community leader needs to be a role model for good nutrition and regular physical activity.”

The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County has worked closely with the School District of Escambia County to educate students and their families about nutrition and physical activity and to provide students with opportunities to put their knowledge into practice. According to Superintendent Malcolm Thomas, many schools have their own garden in which students actively participate in planting, harvesting, and preparing fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, three elementary schools received a USDA grant that provides a fresh fruit and vegetable cart so students have the opportunity to taste foods they have never tried before. School cafeterias provide a wide variety of nutritious entrées, salads, and wraps, with fresh fruit offered daily. Escambia County schools incorporate innovative ways to encourage physical activity throughout the school day by utilizing curriculum programs such as the Walking Classroom and Stride Track. The Walking Classroom program allows students to listen to lessons on an iPod-like device while walking outside. Stride Track counts the number of laps students walk/run during a physical activity using a barcode scanner. Schools also host Healthy Family nights to encourage and support parents in implementing a healthy lifestyle at home.

School nurses continue to provide targeted nutrition and physical activity classes for students, hoping to instill healthy behaviors at a young age and impact long-term health outcomes. The School District of Escambia County is committed to providing students with opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge, motivation, and behaviors that promote a lifelong commitment to wellness.

### About BMI

BMI is a calculation that expresses the relationship between a person’s weight and height. BMI is often used to screen for health problems associated with an unhealthy body weight. Children’s BMIs are evaluated on a growth curve based on age and gender.

- A BMI greater than the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile for age and gender indicates that a child is overweight.
- A BMI greater than the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for age and gender indicates that a child is obese.
- A BMI less than the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile for age and gender indicates that a child is underweight.

Being overweight or obese during childhood increases a child’s risk of developing certain chronic diseases including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and some cancers. Being overweight or obese as a child also increases the risk of being overweight or obese as an adult.

- The State of Florida requires students’ Body Mass Index to be measured during the first, third and sixth grades. BMIs are also measured for Pre-K students in Escambia County public schools.
- Previous years’ data have included measurements for ninth graders as well. Ninth-grade measurements were eliminated this year due to a decrease in school health nursing staff.
- School health professionals measured 9,941 students in Escambia County this fall.
- Body Mass Index (BMI) data for 2012-2013 school year along with a comparison with prior years are:

	Healthy (>5-<85%)	Overweight* (85-<95%)	Obese* (≥95%)	Underweight (≤5%)
2012-2013	64%	16%	18%	2%
2011-2012	63%	16%	19%	2%
2010-2011	63%	16%	19%	2%
2009-2010	62%	18%	19%	2%
2008-2009	62%	16%	20%	2%
2007-2008	63%	16%	19%	2%
2006-2007	60%	17%	21%	2%
2005-2006	61%	16%	21%	2%

\* In 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) changed the term “at risk for overweight” to “overweight” and changed the term “overweight” to “obese”.

###