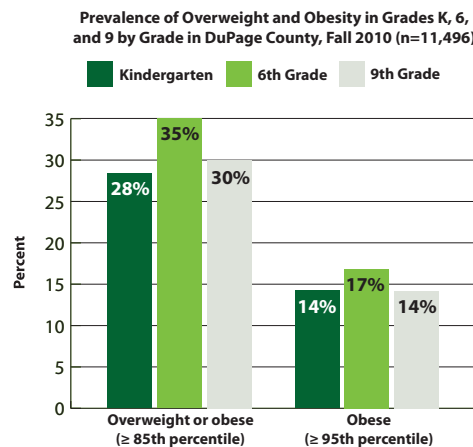
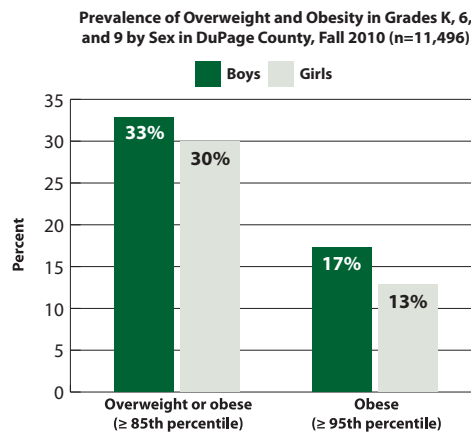
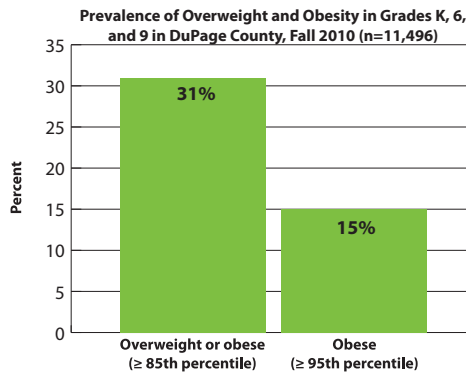


# Prevalence of Obesity among DuPage County School Children and Adolescents



In order to understand the prevalence of obesity in DuPage County, the FORWARD Initiative (Fighting Obesity Reaching healthy Weight Among Residents of DuPage), partnered with the DuPage Regional Office of Education (ROE) and its 245 schools in 42 districts, to obtain data to help determine the status of obesity among children and adolescents in DuPage County.

FORWARD randomly selected 50% of DuPage County public schools<sup>1,2</sup> with a Kindergarten, 6<sup>th</sup>, or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. School superintendents, principals, and school nurses were invited to share, confidentially, the height, weight, sex, date of birth, and date of physical exam from the students' Illinois Child Health Examination (school physical) forms, a requirement for Kindergarten, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> graders for school attendance. During September and October, school nurses, health aides, and other support staff entered these data into FitTrac<sup>3</sup>, a web-based data collection system given to FORWARD by the ROE. FORWARD collected the students' Body Mass Index (BMI) rates and BMI percentile. These data will set the baseline for measuring progress of



the FORWARD Initiative to reverse the obesity trend and aid in the allocation of obesity prevention resources throughout DuPage County. FORWARD will expand this monitoring effort among DuPage County school children and adolescents to include 90% of all schools in 2011 and then the adult population, in order to understand the prevalence of obesity in DuPage County and to inform future work as we address the obesity epidemic.

## Results:

Our rates indicate that nearly 1 in 3 Kindergarteners, 6<sup>th</sup> graders, or 9<sup>th</sup> graders in DuPage are overweight or obese. Of the 11,496 children sampled, 31% were overweight or obese<sup>4</sup> and 15% were obese<sup>5</sup>. According to the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health<sup>6</sup>, which measures rates in 10-17 year-olds, DuPage rates were lower than Illinois rates (34.9% and 20.7%, respectively) and national rates (31.7% and 16.4%, respectively) of overweight and obesity. Females in our sample had rates of overweight and obesity that were 3% and 4% lower than in males, respectively. The sixth grade students sampled had a higher rate of overweight and obesity than the other grade levels. Overweight or obese rates were 5% higher than in 9<sup>th</sup> graders, and 7% higher than in Kindergarteners.

<sup>1</sup> DuPage County schools are defined as schools in districts where the district office is located in DuPage County.

<sup>2</sup> Schools were stratified by FORWARD Region and by grade level. Fifty percent of schools were randomly selected from each stratification. Of the 126 classes invited to participate, 96 (76%) submitted data. Two of those schools only submitted a portion of their data. FORWARD identified a goal for 2010 to obtain data from 50% of DuPage County schools.

<sup>3</sup> FitTrac calculates BMI and BMI percentile using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) standard calculations obtained from Children's BMI Tool for Schools Excel spreadsheet. A portion of sampled schools utilized the CDC Children's BMI Tool for Schools directly for their data entry.

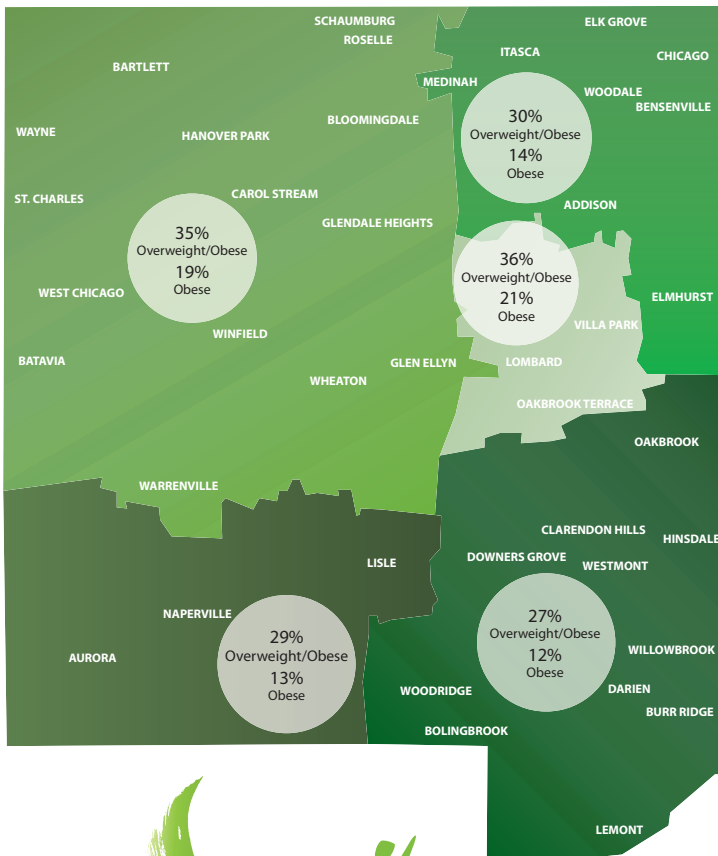
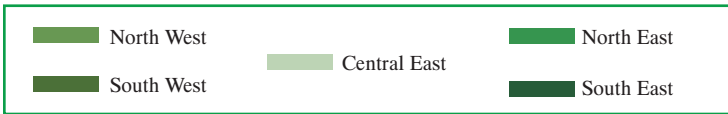
<sup>4</sup> Overweight or obese defined as BMI at or above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile

<sup>5</sup> Obese defined as BMI at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

<sup>6</sup> Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2007 National Survey of Children's Health, Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health website. Retrieved 11/10/10 from [www.nschdata.org](http://www.nschdata.org)

# The FORWARD Regions

Although many of the communities within DuPage share some demographic similarities, there are differences as well. To address this issue, FORWARD developed a regional structure to help address the unique needs of DuPage communities. The FORWARD regions were developed and based on the local service areas of five local YMCAs. The YMCAs provide infrastructure, human resources, facilities, and commitment on a local and national level to reverse the obesity epidemic. FORWARD has partnered with the Elmhurst YMCA to lead the North East FORWARD Region, Fry Family YMCA to lead the South West FORWARD Region, Indian Boundary YMCA to lead the South East FORWARD Region, Tri-Town YMCA to lead the Central East FORWARD Region and the YMCA of Northwestern DuPage County/BR Ryall YMCA to lead the North West FORWARD Region.



**Student Demographics and Characteristics by FORWARD Region\***

	South West	South East	North West	North East	Central East
% Low SES <sup>7</sup>	14.1	8.3	28.2	16.2	31.3
% White	60.6	77.3	51.2	70.4	55.4
% Black	10.0	4.6	5.2	2.7	9.6
% Hispanic	8.9	6.8	29.9	17.8	21.8
% Asian	16.8	7.3	9.6	5.8	9.2
% Overweight/Obesity	29.0	27.0	35.0	30.0	36.0
% Obesity	13.0	12.0	19.0	14.0	21.0

\*Includes only students in sampled school population.

The Central East Region had the highest rates of overweight and obese students, whereas the Southeast Region had the lowest rates. The sample from the Central East Region had an overweight or obese rate and an obese rate that were both 9% higher than in the Southeast Region.

### A note on sensitivity

In an effort to reduce the stigma and to exercise extreme sensitivity toward the issue of weight with regards to children, much care has been taken to conceal the identity of specific schools and school districts when disclosing these data. Furthermore, when talking with children about nutrition and physical activity, FORWARD agrees with many experts that weight should not be the primary focus. Healthy food choices and physical activity should be the focus with a shared goal of promoting a healthy self-esteem and body image.

<sup>7</sup> Low socio-economic status (SES), or low-income students are pupils aged 3 to 17, inclusive, from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. The percentage of low-income students is the count of low-income students divided by the total fall enrollment, multiplied by 100.