Collaborative Systems Modeling to Address Childhood Obesity in Georgia: Informing Policy and Practice

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One child at a time, one step at a time, one healthy meal at a time

Background on CSI

- GHPC received funding from the Healthcare Georgia Foundation to build upon the work of the Legislative Health Policy Certificate Program (LHPCP) in 2007

- GA Legislative Health Policy Certificate Program participants chose childhood obesity as an issue they wanted to learn more about

- A team of 12 (mostly volunteers) worked for five months on developing the model and supporting materials

- The Collaborative Systems Inquiry (CSI) project provided a tool for legislators trained in basic systems thinking to have a more rigorous discussion about an important policy issue

Background on CSI

- GHPC received funding Woodruff Foundation and Georgia Department of Public Health to update the model in 2014

- Fitness assessment data collected on Georgia students informs the model (AR data in last model!)

- Updated literature reviews for "assumptions documents" for all levers/interventions

- New Levers: Breastfeeding, Classroom-based physical activity, Recess

About Modeling

What modeling *can* do

- Present assumptions about the world using an integrated, systemic perspective
- Demonstrate the implications of those assumptions
  - Unintended consequences
  - Time lags
  - Possibilities for policy resistance
- Build consensus on best set of assumptions about what to do

What modeling *can't* do

- Predict the future
- Tell you what to do
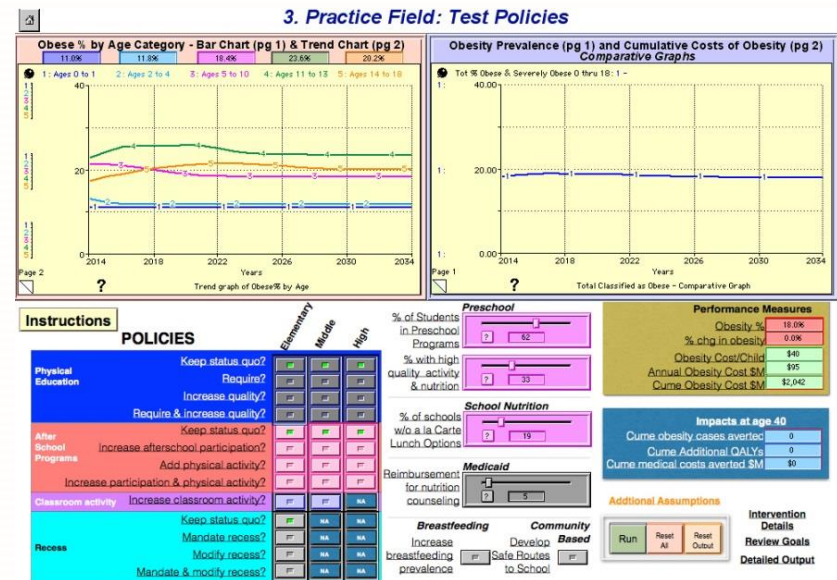
Applying a Six-Question Framework Facilitates Systems Thinking for Public Policies

1. *What* is the important (perhaps troublesome) trend related to health in Georgia? *What* is the shape of this trend over the past several years?

2. *Who* are the stakeholders concerned about the trend?

3. *Why* this trend (what's the cause, what is responsible)?

4. *Where* is there *leverage* (some policy) to address the underlying cause of the trend?

5. *How* will it work? *How* will it play out *over time*? *How* might *unintended consequences* occur? *How* might the policy positively or negatively impact…
   - a) Health status?
   - b) State health spending?
   - c) Health care system?
   - d) Health equity?

6. *When* would the policy create an impact on health status? When would you see an improvement in some other indicators (i.e., spending, services)?

Obesity Model Demonstration

- **Levers:**
  - School Physical Education,
  - Classroom-based Physical Activity,
  - Afterschool Physical Activity and Nutrition,
  - Preschool Physical Activity and Nutrition
  - Competitive Foods in School Nutrition Program,
  - Medical Nutrition Therapy
  - Breastfeeding
  - Safe Routes to Schools