



the **why** & the **how**

Creating Healthy Communities for Our Children

Let's Go!





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Let's Go! is a program of **The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital**  At Maine Medical Center

the why & the how

2015 has been another great year at *Let's Go!*. Last year, we promised to build lasting partnerships, evolve with new evidence, roll out new tools, and eat well and move more—and we have delivered on all of this and more to help prevent childhood obesity!

In our ninth annual report, we wanted to dig deep and highlight our evidence-based Strategies for Success, showing you **why** they are important and **how** they are changing environments and impacting healthy choices. Hundreds of people across Maine are using these strategies to effect change in the places where they live, learn, work, and play, and the movement continues to grow. We've also shared our evaluation results and some real-life examples of healthy eating and active living in our communities.

Finally, you'll hear a little bit about our newest endeavor, our connection with the Smarter Lunchrooms movement, and how school cafeterias across Maine are using the principles of behavioral economics to nudge children and teens to make healthier choices in the lunchroom.

Thank you for joining us as we work to create healthy communities that help make the healthy choice the easy choice for kids and their families.



Tory Rogers, MD
Director, Let's Go!
The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at
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Let's Go!, a program of The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center, is a nationally recognized childhood obesity prevention initiative. Our goal is to increase physical activity and healthy eating among children, through policy and environmental change.

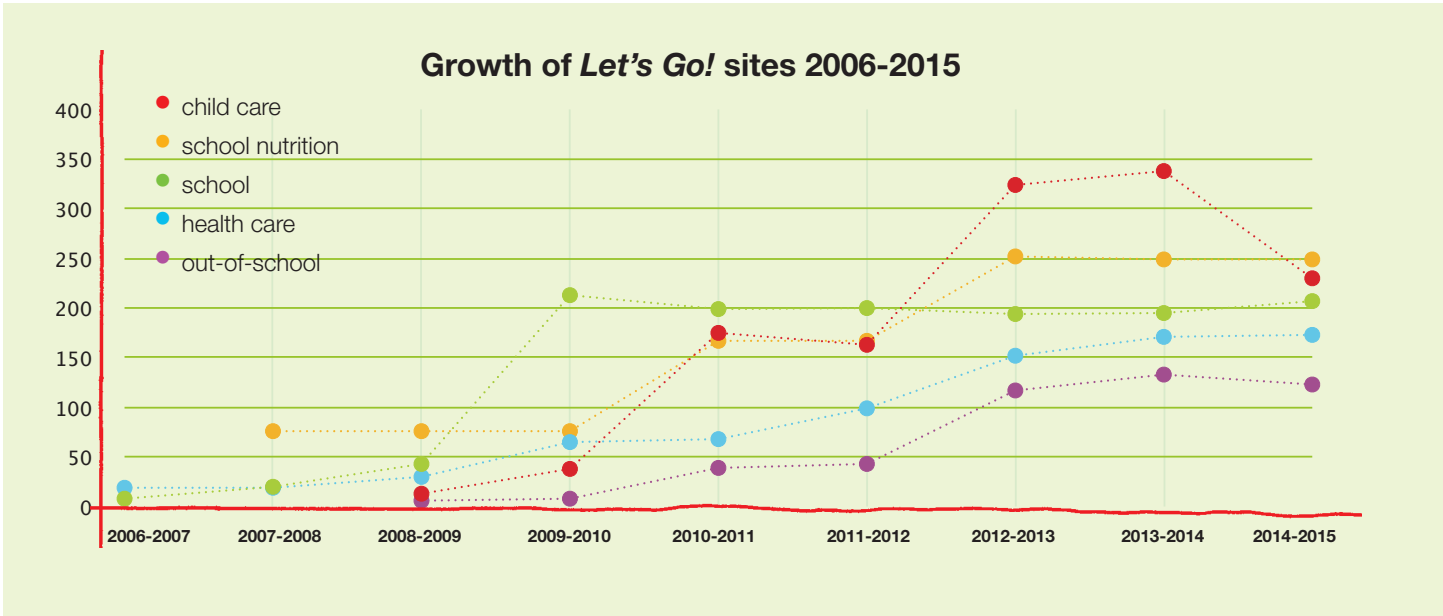
it's about **children** and **their families**

Let's Go! is designed to reach children and teens ages 0-18. In 2015, *Let's Go!* reached:

- More than 8,000 children in child care programs
- Nearly 65,000 students in schools

Many of these same children attend out-of-school programs, visit health care practices, and participate in school lunch programs. Through those programs and practices, *Let's Go!* reached:

- Over 8,500 children in out-of-school programs
- More than 350,000 children in health care practices in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts
- Nearly 94,000 children in school cafeterias





climb!

it's about **healthy habits**

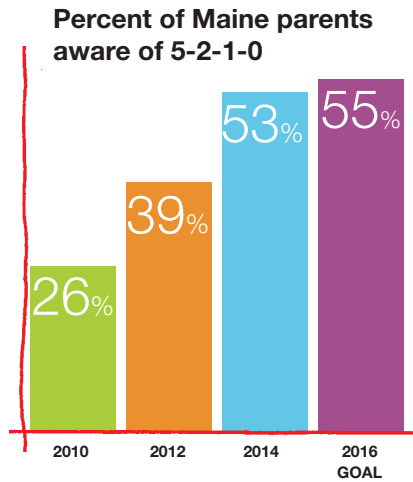
Let's Go! focuses on increasing opportunities for healthy eating and active living. The program encourages behavior change through a simple evidence-based message:

- 5** or more fruits & vegetables
- 2** hours or less recreational screen time*
- 1** hour or more of physical activity
- 0** sugary drinks, more water

*Keep TV/Computer out of the bedroom. No screen time under the age of 2.

Every *Let's Go!* registered child care program, school, out-of-school program, and health care practice promotes the message by displaying a 5-2-1-0 poster.

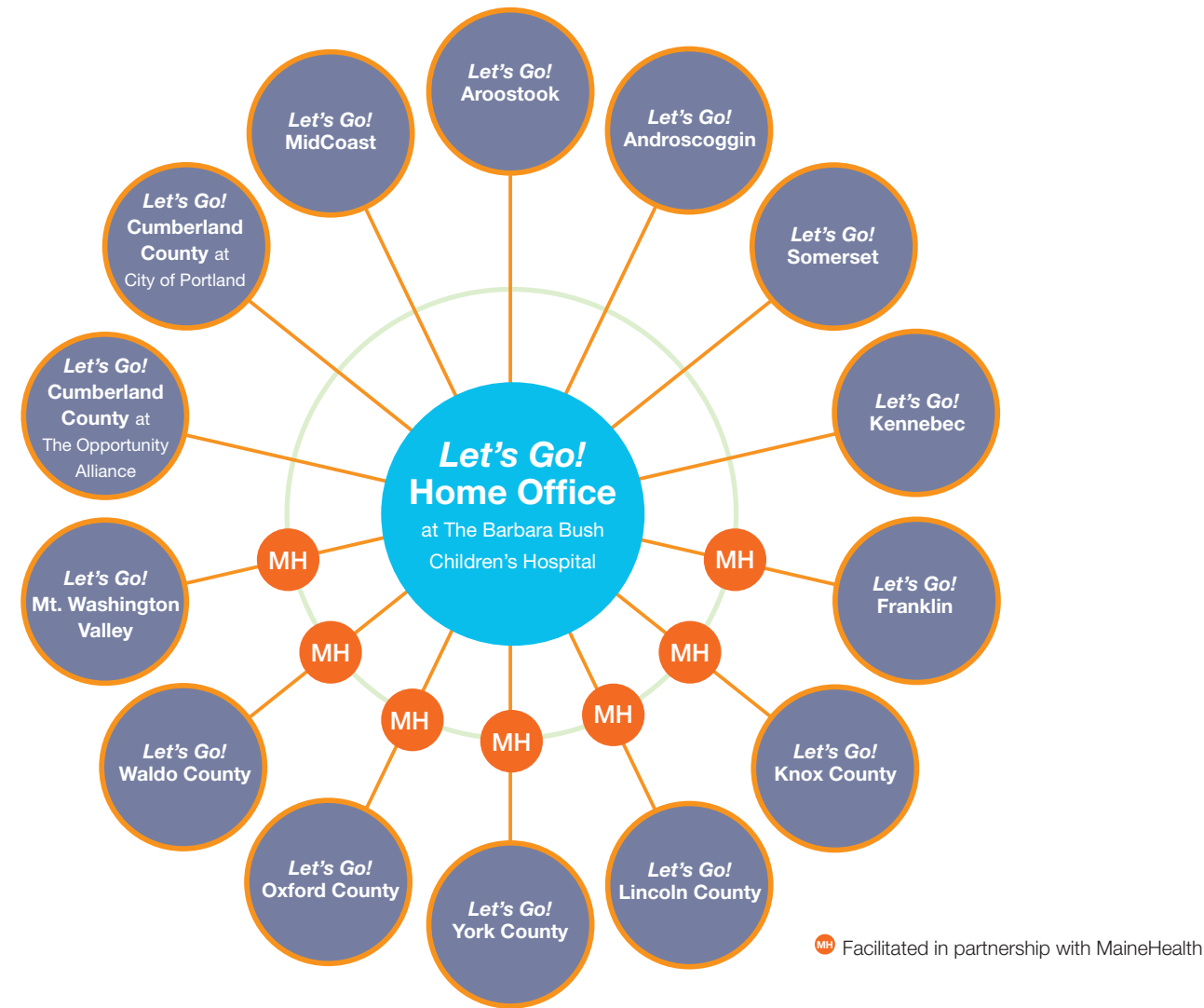
In addition, *Let's Go!* reinforces the 5-2-1-0 message with parents across the state through radio commercials, television ads, digital ads, bus ads, and Facebook. Roughly half of Maine parents have indicated awareness of the 5-2-1-0 message, and they say their top two sources for information about 5-2-1-0 are schools and doctors' offices.



Source: Critical Insights on Maine Tracking Survey (n=200 in 2010; n=254 in 2012; n=233 in 2014).

it's about **collaboration**

A team of health and nutrition experts at the *Let's Go!* Home Office develops trainings, resources, and evaluation tools and disseminates them through a network of partners across Maine and neighboring communities. These Dissemination Partners (DPs) are local organizations committed to implementing *Let's Go!* in their communities. DPs play a critical role in supporting and connecting all of the *Let's Go!* work.



Let's Go! **Dissemination Partners** 2015

At the core of every DP is a *Let's Go!* Coordinator. The *Let's Go!* Coordinator works in multiple settings with site champions to help them change environments and policies using the program's evidence-based strategies. Together Coordinators and site champions support the 5-2-1-0 message and behaviors.

In 2015, local *Let's Go!* Coordinators worked with:

230 child care programs

207 schools

249 school cafeterias

123 out-of-school programs

173 health care practices

reaching more than **350,000 children and their families.**

it's about **changing environments**

Let's Go! focuses on changing environments and policies wherever children and families live, learn, work, and play.



a **multi-setting** approach

Child care programs, schools, out-of-school programs, and health care practices register with *Let's Go!* and receive trainings, printed toolkits, technical assistance, and other helpful resources each year. Workplaces do not register, but have access to our free online Workplace Toolkit. Communities are considered to be on board when they have registered sites in at least three settings.

Environments change when sites successfully implement the program's evidence-based strategies. Our *Let's Go!* Coordinators deliver trainings and resources to teach site champions **why** each strategy is important and provide tried-and-true suggestions for **how** to implement each strategy at their site.



it's about using the **Let's Go!** strategies

STRATEGY I: Limit unhealthy choices for snacks and celebrations; provide healthy choices.

why it's important Snacks are now a bigger part of kids' diets than in the past; in fact, more than 27% of a child's daily calories come from snacks, and unhealthy snack choices are a major factor linked with childhood obesity. Serving healthy snacks to kids supports lifelong healthy habits, and helps reduce the risk of developing chronic health conditions. Research also shows that healthy snacking can improve kids' behavior, focus, and attention, while unhealthy diets actually decrease academic performance.¹⁻³

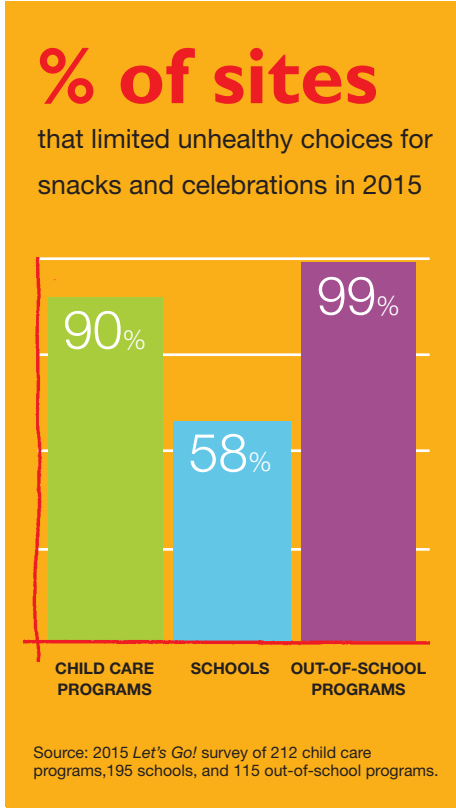
This year,

417

Let's Go! sites limited unhealthy choices for snacks and celebrations.

did you know?

Only 16% of Maine high school students eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables daily.⁴



“*Let's Go!* has really helped [us] become a healthy, active place for children. We shared many of the same core values as 5-2-1-0, but never had the policies in place to back them up.... Thanks to *Let's Go!*, our celebrations are much healthier and parents are more receptive to following our healthy guidelines.”

CATHY-JO DODGE,
DIRECTOR, THE PLAYROOM

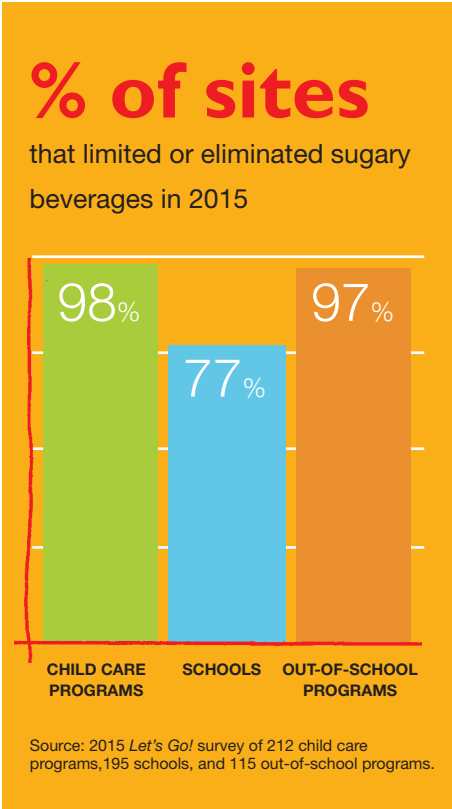


how it comes to life A high school snack shack collaborated with school nutrition staff and a local market to switch out the usual unhealthy snacks for healthy, local choices—think carrot sticks instead of potato chips—with no decrease in sales or profits.

STRATEGY 2: Limit or eliminate sugary drinks; provide water.

why it's important Research shows that sugar-sweetened beverages contribute to childhood obesity. Consumption of these drinks has increased dramatically since the 1970s, and is now estimated to comprise 10-15% of kids' total caloric intake for the day. Yet for all the calories, these drinks offer no nutritional benefits. In contrast, water is a free, no-calorie, easily accessible option that is linked to a number of health benefits.⁵⁻⁶

This year,
468
Let's Go! sites
limited or eliminated
sugary drinks.



“ I love that this program provides the support and training to pass along to the children and parents about healthy eating and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. ”

CHARLEE BRIGGS, OWNER,
CHARLEE BRIGGS CHILD CARE

did you know?
A 12-oz. serving of soda has the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar.⁷

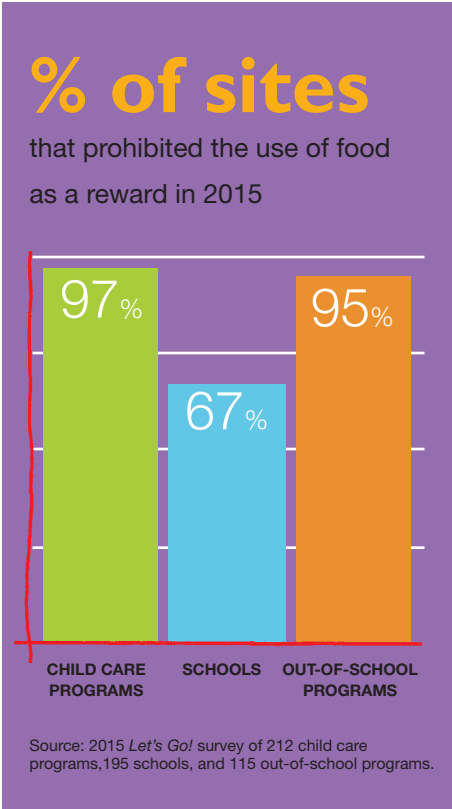


how it comes to life Schools are installing water filling stations and handing out free water bottles, and kids now consider it “cool” to keep a water bottle on their desk. Child care programs let kids decorate and personalize their water bottles with stickers.

STRATEGY 3: Prohibit the use of food as a reward.

why it's important Using food as a reward for good behavior and academic performance is common, but studies show that the practice puts kids at risk for excess weight gain and obesity. Food rewards tend to be high in sugar, salt, and fat, and tend to be offered multiple times a day, priming kids to establish lifelong unhealthy habits, like eating outside of meal and snack times and developing a preference for unhealthy foods.⁸⁻⁹

This year,
445
Let's Go! sites
prohibited using food
as a reward.



“ I loved the one-on-one time [with my *Let's Go!* Coordinator] to gain advice on alternatives for rewards, birthday celebrations, and healthy snack ideas.”

DONNA BISKUP, OWNER,
DONNA'S DAYCARE AFTER SCHOOL

did you know?
Let's Go! tracked the calories consumed in food rewards by a first grader and in just one day, it added up to over 800 calories.

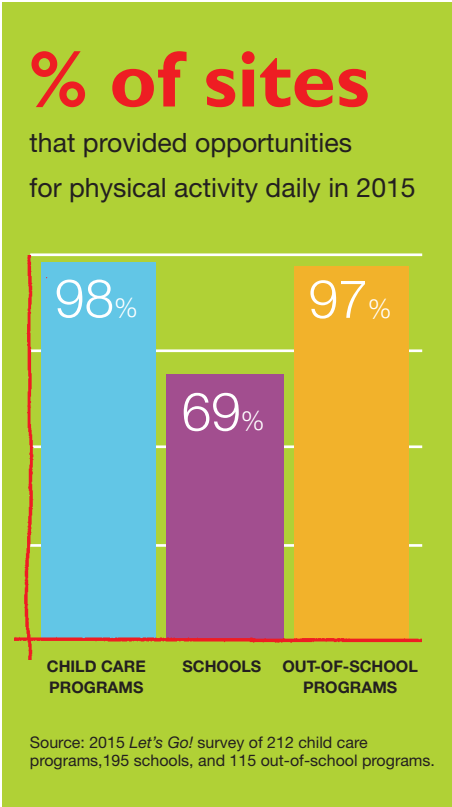


how it comes to life Instead of sugary treats as a reward for good behavior or accomplishments, kids in out-of-school programs are being given “Reward Bags,” which are filled with special toys they don’t normally have access to, like light-up Frisbees and giant beach balls.

STRATEGY 4: Provide opportunities to get physical activity every day.

why it's important Kids who are physically active on a daily basis are less likely to be overweight or obese, and are less likely to develop risk factors for chronic diseases and several types of cancer. Research also shows that children who are physically active tend to have better grades, school attendance, and classroom behaviors, and have reduced feelings of anxiety, stress, and depression—all leading to healthier bodies and minds!¹⁰⁻¹¹

This year,
453
Let's Go! sites
provided opportunities
for physical activity
daily.



“More teachers are buying into activity during the school day. Students are spending lots of time being active while learning.”

ROBIN O'CONNOR
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH
TEACHER, MAST LANDING SCHOOL

did you know?
More than half of Maine students are not getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.⁹



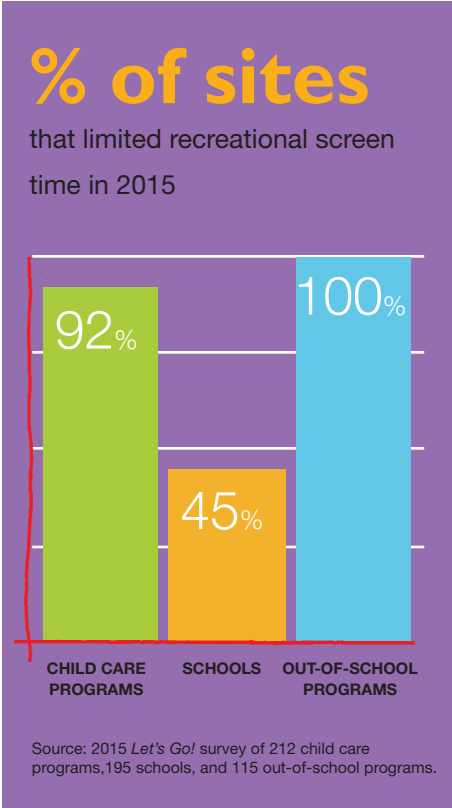
how it comes to life Teachers are making time during class for 5-minute brain breaks—children get to move around and get their “wiggles” out, and teachers find kids to be more focused and ready to learn as a result. Additional 5-minute breaks throughout the day add up and help kids reach the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

STRATEGY 5: Limit recreational screen time.

why it's important Multiple studies have shown that excessive screen time is associated with overweight and obesity in children. In addition to displacing physical activity, when screen time includes TV viewing, children are exposed to commercials for unhealthy foods. Excess screen time has cognitive effects as well, putting kids at risk for lower reading scores, attention problems, and problems learning.¹²⁻¹⁴

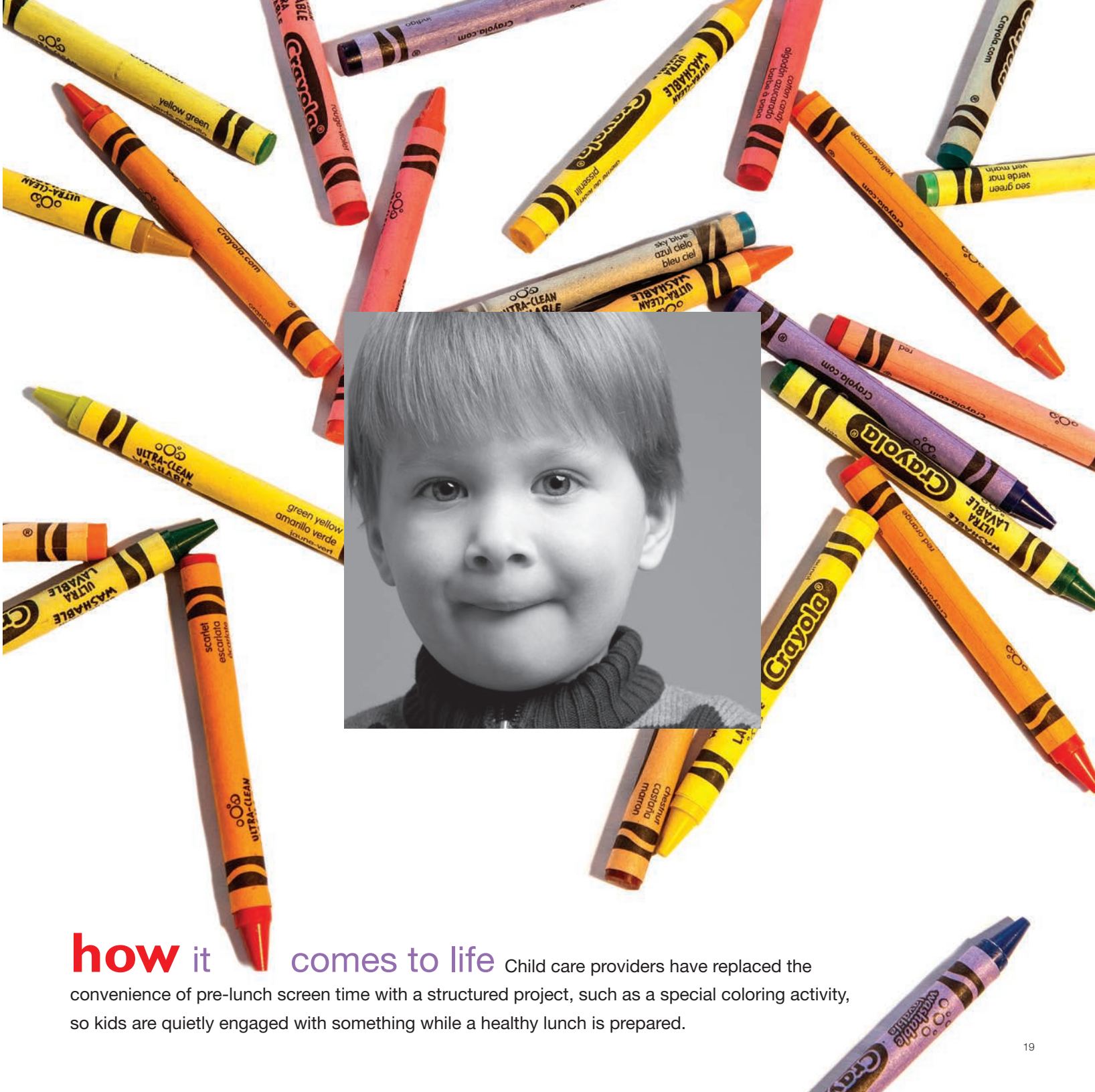
This year,
398
Let's Go! sites
limited recreational
screen time.

did you know?
New screen technologies—
such as smartphones and
tablets—have not replaced
television time; they have
actually added to the amount
of time kids spend with
screens.¹⁵



“ I strongly believe in the message of 5-2-1-0 *Let's Go!* and can see that others are joining the movement. Change takes time and needs to be cultivated. The culture of our school is changing one step at a time! ”

BARBARA WELCH
TEACHER, MILL STREAM
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



how it comes to life Child care providers have replaced the convenience of pre-lunch screen time with a structured project, such as a special coloring activity, so kids are quietly engaged with something while a healthy lunch is prepared.

A close-up photograph of a child's hands holding two large, fresh orange carrots with green tops. The child is wearing a blue plaid shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

grow!

STRATEGY 6:

Participate in local, state, and national initiatives that support healthy eating and active living.

Programs and schools are participating in: • Farm to School • National Nutrition Month • WinterKids • Walk or Bike to School • National Screen-Free Week • Fuel Up to Play 60 • Cooking Matters for Child Care Professionals • Physical Education Program (PEP) • Farm to Pre-school • Let's Move Child Care • Alliance for a Healthier Generation • Healthy Kids Out of School

STRATEGY 7:

Engage community partners to help support healthy eating and active living.

Programs and schools are engaging: • SNAP-Ed nutrition educators • Cooperative Extension • College student volunteers • Healthy Maine Partnership staff • Local businesses • Librarians • Farmers

STRATEGY 8:

Partner with and educate families in adopting and maintaining a lifestyle that supports healthy eating and active living.

Sites are providing families with brochures, tip sheets, and in-person educational sessions on healthy behaviors.

STRATEGY 9:

Implement a staff wellness program that includes healthy eating and active living.

Sites are providing staff with alternatives to sweetened beverages and encouraging employees to role model by eating healthy foods in front of children and taking plenty of stretch breaks.

STRATEGY 10:

Collaborate with food and nutrition programs to offer healthy food and beverage options.

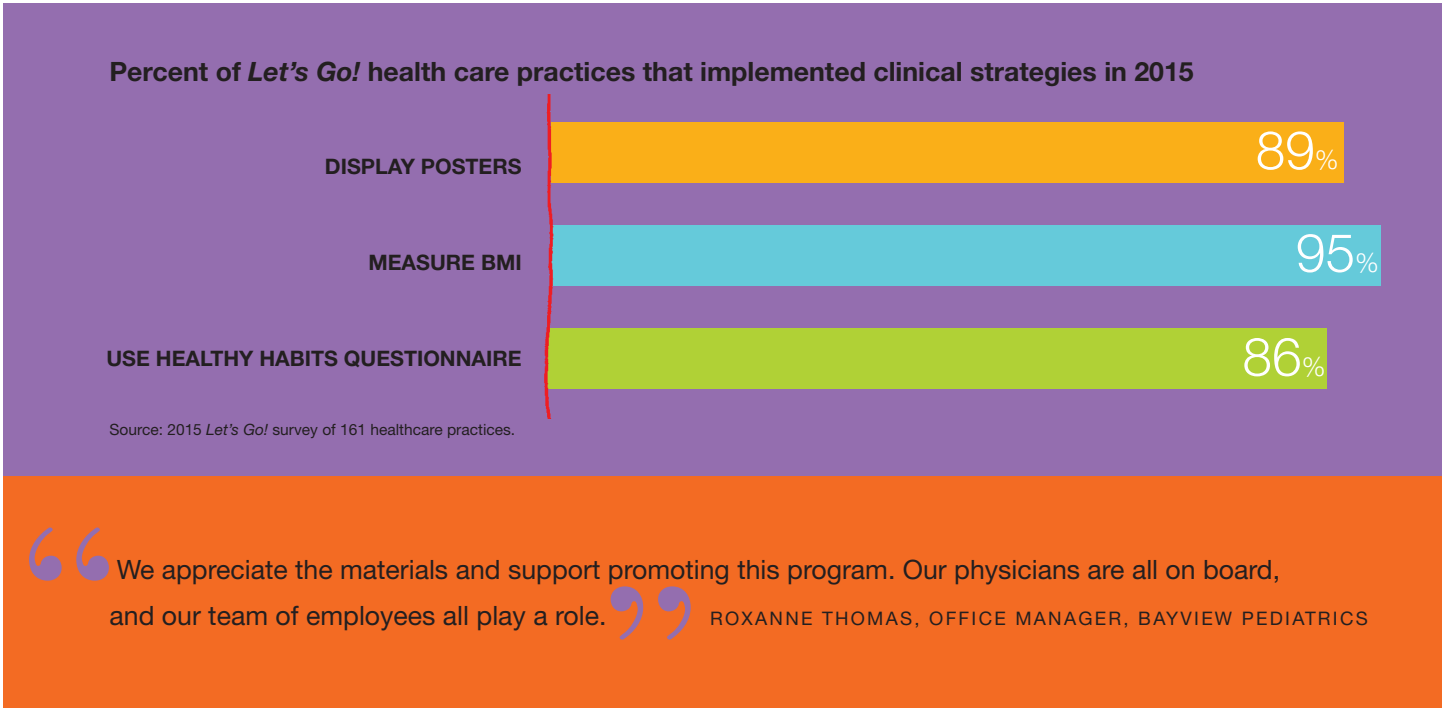
Programs are following a federal reimbursable nutrition program, the MyPlate model, or the Harvard School of Public Health Healthy Eating Plate to offer healthy options. Classrooms are partnering with their school cafeteria to hold taste tests so students can choose their favorite new vegetables.

clinical strategies for **health care practices**

While children are making healthy choices at school and in out-of-school and child care programs, the importance of 5-2-1-0 is being reinforced when they visit their doctor. *Let's Go!* health care practices follow three clinical strategies to support environmental and policy change in their communities:

- 1 Display 5-2-1-0 posters in the waiting area and all exam rooms.
- 2 Measure BMI for patients aged 2 and older, to ensure that children in their care are growing at a healthy weight.
- 3 Use the 5-2-1-0 Healthy Habits Questionnaire at each well-child visit to start a respectful conversation around weight.

With these three strategies, providers fulfill a crucial role in *Let's Go!*'s multi-setting approach.



This year,
Let's Go! worked with
173
health care practices,
reaching over
800
clinicians and
350,000
pediatric patients.

As a result of the *Let's Go!* Smarter Lunchrooms training,

45 Maine School Nutrition Directors

were trained to help over **90,000**

students select and consume healthy

options in **249** school cafeterias.

strategies for **school nutrition**

Let's Go! partners with School Nutrition Directors by organizing and facilitating regional workgroups. School nutrition professionals share ideas and brainstorm solutions for how to improve the nutritional quality of meals and increase the selection of healthier foods at their schools. With the ongoing support of local *Let's Go!* Coordinators, workgroups put ideas into action.

This year, *Let's Go!* trained school nutrition workgroup members on Smarter Lunchrooms techniques, a movement started in 2009 by the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Program. Smarter Lunchrooms use evidence-based, simple, and no- or low-cost changes to naturally guide students toward healthier selections, simultaneously improving participation and profits while decreasing waste.

Some Smarter Lunchrooms strategies currently being implemented in Maine schools include:

- Highlighting fruit in at least two locations—*this can increase sales of fruit by up to 102%*;
- Placing white milk first in all beverage coolers—*this can increase selection of white milk by up to 46%*;
- Providing fun, descriptive names for fruits and vegetables, like calling carrots “X-ray Vision” carrots—*this can increase vegetable selection between 40% and 70%.¹⁶*

For the first time this year, we recognized schools implementing these techniques. Using a scorecard created by Cornell, *Let's Go!* surveyed all public schools in Maine. Results showed that, on average, schools were adopting 61 of the 100 best practices advocated by Cornell. A *Let's Go!* Smarter Lunchrooms recognition poster was sent to schools that adopted 30 or more best practices, a small gesture that made a big impact.

“We truly work hard to break the cafeteria stereotype that so many make fun of. We make it fun to eat in the cafe, instead of making fun of the cafe! The kiddos, who are our customers, are the winners here! Thank you for the acknowledgment of this award! I will display that poster with PRIDE!!!”

VICKI DILL
KITCHEN MANAGER,
HELEN THOMPSON SCHOOL

it's about **making a difference**

Let's Go! uses a comprehensive evaluation plan to guide the collection, analysis, and reporting of program data. In 2015, we surveyed 733 *Let's Go!* registered school, out-of-school, child care, and health care sites to track implementation of our evidence-based strategies for increasing healthy eating and active living.

The survey response rate across these four settings this year was **93%** (up from 85% last year).

Let's Go! also surveyed all 575 public schools in Maine, even those not registered with the program, to evaluate school cafeterias on Smarter Lunchrooms techniques and received a 35% response. The Smarter Lunchrooms scorecard was intended to be a valuable tool for kitchen staff, even if they chose not to respond.

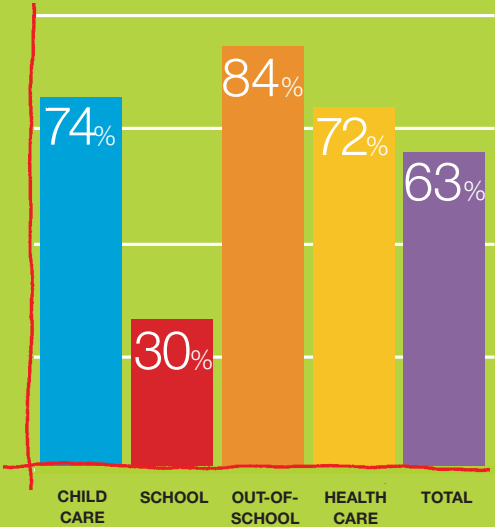


it's about **recognition**

Changing the prevailing culture is hard, and it takes time. That's why, when a site changes their environment by implementing our priority strategies, we designate them a *Let's Go!* Recognized Site.

Schools and out-of-school and child care programs earn recognition when all five priority strategies have been implemented. Health care practices earn recognition for fulfilling the three clinical strategies.

Percent of *Let's Go!* sites recognized for implementing all priority strategies in 2015



Note: *Let's Go!* registered sites in 2015 included 230 child care programs, 207 schools, 123 out-of-school programs, and 173 health care practices.

460 sites were recognized—a 43% increase over last year!

201 school cafeterias received *Let's Go!* recognition for adopting a variety of Smarter Lunchrooms techniques.

top 5 takeaways of 2015

Let's Go! sites see the value in our programs and are committed to working with us to make change happen.

Locally based **Let's Go! Coordinators** continue to play a critical role in supporting sites.

Let's Go! toolkits and trainings are instrumental in helping sites implement *Let's Go!* strategies.

Senior leadership at Let's Go! sites plays a key role in creating change around healthy eating and active living.

Maine schools are leading the nation on improving school lunch with the help of *Let's Go!*.



In the coming year, **Let's Go!** will continue to use the best available evidence to guide the trainings and support we provide to our partners and the communities they work in. We remain dedicated to increasing opportunities for healthy eating and active living through sustainable environmental and policy change, and will work to incorporate new audiences, such as parents in the home environment, and children with disabilities.

Our Founding Partners



Notes

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