

**Swati Iyer, Class 2025**

Campus: Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, TX

Research Area: Examining Urban-Rural Differences in School Districts' Local Wellness Policies and Policy Implementation Environments

Mentor: Dr. Jacob Szeszulski, Ph.D. and Dr. Rebecca Seguin-Fowler, Ph.D.

Swati Iyer is a medical student at Texas A&M School of Medicine conducting research under the mentorship of both [Dr. Jacob Szeszulski](#) an Assistant Professor and [Rebecca Seguin-Fowler](#), an Associate Professor in Texas A&M AgriLife Research, respectively. Their MSE research project is investigating how school health policy environments can contribute to nutrition, physical activity and positive health outcomes in the youth. Because there is a disproportionately higher rate of obesity for children living in rural communities, compared to children living in urban communities, improving health behaviors may likely help to decrease the amount of rural youth developing chronic diseases as adults. As children spend a large amount of their time at schools, the development of effective Local School Wellness Policies (LWPs) will likely prove beneficial to improving children's health behaviors and environments. Furthermore, it is important to note that the quality and implementation of such LWPs are related to district-level resources and are linked to social determinants of health (SDOH). Through this research project, our team will analyze if there are differences in rural school health policy environments when compared to urban school health environments, as well as differences in the implementation of these LWPs. Identified differences may be a predictor for the higher obesity rates seen in children living in rural communities.