2009 Health Wellness Best Practices Guide

FOR COLORADO SCHOOL DISTRICTS







About the Colorado Legacy Foundation

The Colorado Legacy Foundation invests in promising strategies to improve public education. The privately funded nonprofit evaluates results, convenes education stakeholders and provides recommendations to schools and policymakers for continuous improvement. Its unique partnership with the Colorado Department of Education allows the foundation to advance innovation in public schools throughout the state. Visit our Web site at www.colegacy.org.

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Schools are ideal settings for developing healthy habits that last well into adulthood. After all, that's where children spend almost half of their waking hours.

We know that healthy students and academic achievement go hand in hand. Research shows that obese students are more likely to have lower grade point averages than their more fit peers.

This publication highlights school district level best practices for healthy schools, students and staff. It is a shorter companion

piece to the complete edition of the 2009 Health and Wellness Best Practices Guide at www.colegacy.org. The more comprehensive online version offers in-depth data, action steps, school and district profiles, resources and much more.

Don't underestimate your role as an administrator, school board member, parent and community member! You can make a significant difference.

This guide is the second in a series of annual best practices published by the Colorado Legacy Foundation. We thank our funders below for their support.



Helayne Jones
Executive Director
Colorado Legacy Foundation



Dwight D. Jones

Commissioner

Colorado Department of Education







DATA SNAPSHOT: COLORADO SCHOOLCHILDREN

Colorado has a reputation as an active, fit state. We boast the lowest adult obesity rates in the country. Yet the data tell a different story for our children.

- Approximately one out of 10 Colorado high school students is overweight.
 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Approximately 1.5 out of 10 Colorado high school students had not participated in any vigorous or moderate physical activity during the past seven days. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Twenty-nine percent of young people face an increased risk of chronic disease due to obesity. (Action for Healthy Kids)
- Colorado is one of only four states that do not require schools to teach physical education. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Colorado does not require health education in its schools, but is developing health education standards that can be used voluntarily if the district chooses to teach health education. (Colorado Department of Education)
- Twenty-six percent of children and adolescents in Colorado have no health insurance. (Colorado Health Foundation)

See the complete edition of the 2009 Health and Wellness

Best Practices Guide at www.colegacy.org. The online version
offers more in-depth data, action steps and resources.

SCHOOL DISTRICT BEST PRACTICES FOR HEALTH & WELLNESS

These five best practices are a roadmap to improving student and staff health, nutrition and wellness in every district across Colorado. Healthy schools provide nutritious meals, snacks and beverages, and require that students are physically active every day. They teach students what it means to be healthy, offer access to health care services and have effective workplace wellness programs. These best practices can help districts develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to healthy schools.

- **Policies.** School board members adopt policies that foster healthy schools and that are consistent with best practices identified by state and federal agencies as well as professional education and health organizations.
- **Staff qualifications.** District leaders ensure that all staff members who are focused on nutrition, school health services, health education and physical education are properly credentialed and well-qualified.
- Assessment. The district provides tools for schools to inventory their policies, activities and programs such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's School Health Index or a similar self-assessment tool.
- **District leadership.** District leaders provide strategic direction and opportunities for enhanced nutrition, physical activity, health education, school health services and workplace wellness.
- **Getting it done.** The district promotes parent, community and student engagement, advocacy and partnerships in its schools (including district wellness committees) to achieve high-quality nutrition, physical activity, health education, school health services and workplace wellness.

Interested in finding tools to help you put these best practices into everyday use? Visit www.colegacy.org for more.



HEALTH EDUCATION

A comprehensive approach to health education includes nutrition education, physical activity, high-risk behavior prevention and reproductive education. Unfortunately, health education tends to drop off at the middle school level, and access is even more limited at the high school level – at a time when students need quality health education the most.

How does your district measure up?

- ✓ Our health curriculum is planned, sequential, and age- and developmentally appropriate. It addresses critical health topics and social and emotional learning.
- ✓ Our sequential health education curriculum is consistent with national or state standards (to come in December 2009).
- ✓ Schools in our district teach health education in all grades for the recommended minimum of 50 hours annually.
- ✓ All health curriculum topic units or modules are researchbased or consistent with recognized best practices criteria.
- ✓ Our health education staff is well-trained and receives ongoing, current professional development.



imagine ...
... every student in Colorado public schools receives comprehensive health education at every grade level to make better-informed decisions about healthy eating as well as the benefits of getting plenty of physical activity and avoiding high-risk behavior.

Our health education staff is well-trained and receives ongoing, current professional development.

Administrators

- Review the district's current health education program. What areas of the program are strong? Deficient?
- Develop a plan for updating and strengthening the health education program districtwide. Be sure to reach out to the community for input.

School board members

- Engage the community to gain deeper insights into its priorities regarding health education.
- Develop a board policy to provide a comprehensive learning environment districtwide that teaches and practices lifelong wellness behaviors for the entire school community – students, teachers and administrators.

Parents

- Advocate for a minimum of 50 hours of health instruction annually.
- Support student involvement in health-related activities.

Community members

- Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about health education. Help identify community issues, priorities and values.
- Develop partnerships with districts to provide additional resources, programs and events focused on health education.



Healthy kids and healthy schools go hand in hand. Here's a tip to promote health education and healthy environments in your district:

• Take a field trip to the local farmers market and have students develop a shopping list that focuses on balanced, healthy meals using organic, local produce.





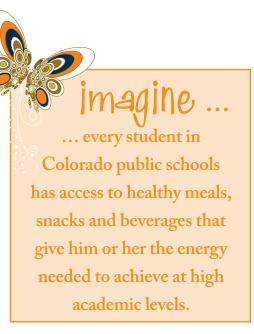
Poor diet is one of the leading causes of obesity; inadequate physical activity is the other. Obese children are at higher risk for medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes. They tend to have higher rates of depression and low self-esteem. All of these factors make it harder to pay attention in class and succeed in school.

How does your district measure up?

- ✓ Our schools districtwide use at least three of the following strategies to promote healthy eating:
 - Price nutritious food and beverages at lower costs and increase prices for less nutritious foods and drinks.
 Eliminate a la carte food offerings in the school cafeteria.
 - · Limit the amount of processed foods offered to students.
 - Collect and use suggestions from students, families and school staff on nutritious food preferences and strategies to promote healthy eating.
 - Provide information on nutrition and caloric content of foods available.
 - Conduct taste tests to determine food preferences for nutritious items.
 - Provide opportunities for students to visit the cafeteria to learn about food safety, food preparation or other nutrition-related topics.
- ✓ All schools in our district meet the HealthierUS School Challenge criteria for cafeteria meals, food vending machine items, school store snacks and school celebrations.
- ✓ Beverages offered at schools in our district meet or exceed Colorado Healthy Beverages Policy standards.



- ✓ We offer nutrition education in at least half of the grade levels in every school in our district. Our approach to nutrition education is interactive and integrated into the curriculum.
- ✓ Our nutrition staff is well-trained and is current on best practices in their field.



Administrators

- Establish a wellness and nutrition committee of parents, community members and staff to assist with policies and practices.
- Ensure vending machines, a la carte lines, fundraisers and stores in every school only provide healthy options.

School board members

- Develop a board policy that directs the district to provide healthy and nutritious food in school cafeterias and nutrition education for students.
- Build awareness among constituents about why nutrition is relevant to student achievement.

Parents

- Partner with community organizations to provide programming in schools that teaches good nutrition and healthy eating.
- Make an effort to include healthy snacks at school meetings and events.

Community members

- Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about how to increase access to well-balanced meals for students.
- Help identify community issues, priorities and values.



Healthy kids and healthy schools go hand in hand. Here's a tip to promote good nutrition and healthy environments in your district:

• Think zero-waste cafeterias! Swap out Styrofoam containers for sandwiches, salads and desserts with more environmentally friendly biodegradable containers.



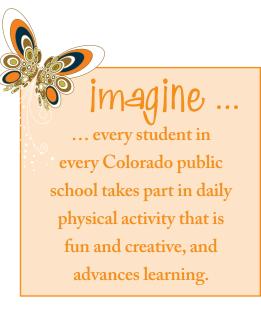
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

More than one in 10 Colorado children are obese. Lack of physical activity is a leading cause of obesity; a poor diet is another. Obese children are at a higher risk for asthma and diabetes as well as depression and low self-esteem. Lack of energy, poor self-image and health complications make it a lot harder to concentrate in school.

How does your district measure up?

- ✓ We offer 150 minutes of physical education weekly or 30 minutes a day at the elementary school level, and 225 minutes weekly or 45 minutes a day at the middle and high school levels.
- ✓ Our physical education curriculum is sequential and consistent with national or state standards.
- ✓ We avoid substitutions for physical education such as marching band or ROTC.
- ✓ Our physical education teachers are licensed and have received professional development in their field during the past two years.
- ✓ We offer our elementary students recess before lunch.
- \checkmark We partner with organizations that offer after-school programs promoting physical activity.





Administrators

- Create a comprehensive school physical activity program that integrates physical activity throughout every school day – from creative classroom approaches for getting students moving during reading and math to an annual districtwide bike- or walk-to-school day event.
- Encourage physical education teachers to work with other teachers to integrate the core curriculum into their classes. For example, physical education teachers can ask students to use math skills by measuring their heart rates and graphing the data.

School board members

- Engage the community to gain deeper insights into its values about the relationship between physical activity and student learning.
- Develop a board policy to provide more opportunities for students to engage in physical activities that further enhance student learning and wellness.

Parents

- Serve as role models to children by living active, healthy lives.
 Engage in physical activities with your child at least three times a week.
- Advocate at school board meetings for increasing physical activity in school curriculum. Underscore the link to student achievement.

Community members

 Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about how to increase access to physical activity. Help identify community issues, priorities and values.

 Develop partnerships with your district to provide additional resources, programs and events focused on physical activities. Promote after-school activities such as sports or exercise classes.

More than one in 10 Colorado children are obese.



Healthy kids and healthy schools go hand in hand.
Here's a tip to promote physical activity and healthy environments in your district:

 Encourage kids to walk and bike to school. Not only is it good exercise but it's good for the planet and helps reduce bus and car emissions.



SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

School health services – whether led by a nurse or approached as a school-based health center – help students assess their health, manage chronic illness, administer medication and provide health counseling. The payoff can be huge in terms of academic achievement. Better management of chronic illness, for example, increases attendance. And improved attendance increases the chances of academic success.

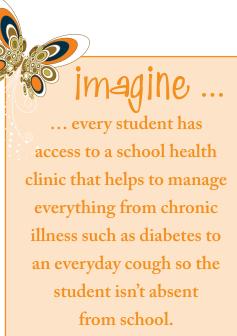
How does your district measure up?

- ✓ Every school in our district provides health services by a licensed school nurse or a trained health services employee who is supervised by a school nurse. We maintain a school nurse-to-student ratio of one nurse per 750 students.
- ✓ Our students are routinely screened and referrals are made for medical needs including vision, hearing, weight and dental problems as well as lack of health insurance.
- ✓ The health status of students with chronic illness (such as diabetes, asthma, allergies and seizures) is monitored routinely and health care/emergency plans for these students are written by the school nurse.
- ✓ Student attendance records are monitored routinely to identify absences related to health concerns.



✓ Our schools have adequate health facilities including a sink with hot running water, a handicapped accessible restroom, a cot, a computer, a locked file cabinet and a secure medication cabinet.

Every school in our district provides health services....)



Administrators

- Ensure schools have a designated faculty member or administrative personnel responsible for coordinating school health and safety programs and activities.
- Collect confidential student and school health indicator data at least once every two years. Consider that data carefully when determining strategic plan objectives and activities.

School board members

- Develop a board policy that underscores the importance of providing students with access to quality school health services.
- Build awareness among constituents about why quality school health services are relevant to student achievement.

Parents

- · Advocate for school-based clinics and access to nurses in all schools.
- Teach your child how to stay healthy and the importance of simple, but effective measures like washing hands.

Community members

- Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about how to provide better school health services to students.
 Help identify community issues, priorities and values.
- Partner with districts and schools to identify and secure access to additional health services in the community.





go green!

Healthy kids and healthy schools go hand in hand. Here's a tip to promote school health services and healthy environments in your district:

• Make sure interior materials, like carpet and paint, have low chemical emission levels. Ask custodial staff to use "green" cleaning products and cleaning equipment with high-efficiency filters. Studies show that decreasing the use of chemicals in schools results in fewer asthma problems for students and staff.

WORKPLACE WELLNESS

More than 93,000 people are employed by school districts in Colorado. This sizable work force has a huge influence on the health and learning of students. Healthy employees are more productive employees. They have lower absentee rates and lower health care costs. They also serve as healthy role models for students and even help school districts project a more positive image in the community. Developing an effective employee wellness plan is a great place to start.

How does your district measure up?

- ✓ Our district has a wellness leader or a committee devoted to employee wellness issues.
- ✓ We have a districtwide employee wellness program that was informed by an employee wellness needs assessment and is integrated into coordinated school health programs.
- ✓ Our employee wellness program is supported across the district community.
- ✓ Our district provides ample opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity.
- ✓ Our employees model healthy behaviors for our students and take a strong interest in the health and well-being of our students.



Healthy employees are more productive employees. They have lower absentee rates and lower health care costs.

Administrators

- · Conduct an employee wellness needs assessment.
- Create a districtwide action plan that includes opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity and provides incentives for employees to participate.

School board members

- Develop a board policy that encourages 100 percent participation by all district employees in workplace wellness programs.
- Promote in the community the connection between employees who practice healthy living, good nutrition and physical activity with quality teaching and better support for students.

Parents

- Support staff by bringing healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables and whole grain items to school events and meetings.
- Invite staff to PTA or PTO meetings to talk about the employee wellness program and challenge parents to follow suit.

Community members

- Help spread the word in your community about the positive impact healthy and fit employees have on student learning.
- Partner with districts and schools to provide resources to support employee health and wellness.



go green!

Healthy employees and healthy schools go hand in hand. Here's a tip to promote workplace wellness and healthy environments in your district:

• Urge all district employees to model healthy habits for students by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. An added bonus: Employees will help cut down on plastic and paper wrappings associated with highly processed snacks.





Creating a healthy school that serves nutritious meals, teaches children about healthy eating, provides lots of opportunities for physical activity and offers access to health care services doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and dedication, but the long-term investment is huge. When kids are healthy, they excel in school. When employees participate in wellness programs, they are often more productive and take fewer days off.

Taking a coordinated approach to creating a healthy school simply makes good sense. But some may question efforts or priorities. Among the most common issues that arise:

- Lack of funding. School district budgets are stretched thin, especially during challenging economic times. Fortunately, many of the action steps in this guide are inexpensive and provide a huge return on investment that focuses on a school district's main mission: student achievement.
- Competing demands. School districts are under more pressure than ever to get results, and with good reason. The focus on improving academics competes for time and money, leaving health and nutrition issues behind. A coordinated approach to healthy schools should not compete with academics; instead it should be viewed as one of the key levers to advance student performance.
- Low on the priority list. Some may not view nutrition and health as part of the school district's mission. The reality, however, is that it's hard for students to concentrate on their studies if they haven't eaten a nutritious meal, can't see the chalkboard or aren't coming to school because they don't know how to manage a chronic disease like asthma or diabetes.



- Inadequate space. Some school and district leaders say they struggle with where to place students let alone room for a nurse's office, a gym or a kitchen. Yet schools from Grand Junction to Broomfield are using creative approaches and partnering with local parks to build gymnasiums that are large enough to meet everyone's needs. Some high schools are now offering high-quality, standards-based online courses in physical education.
- "Kids won't eat it!" Some may worry that if they swap out popular but less healthy snacks and sugary drinks for fruits, vegetables, trail mix and bottled water, they'll lose revenue. Healthy snacks and sugar-free drinks give students the energy they need for school, sports and after-school activities. And students and staff buy them especially when those are the only options!
- "I don't matter." It's easy to put ourselves second when our first priority is the students we serve. But research shows that employee wellness programs result in positive outcomes for adults and, ultimately, students. Healthy school employees are absent from work less often, more productive and likely to have lower health care costs. They also are positive role models for their students.

When kids are healthy, they excel in school.





Developing a coordinated approach to healthy schools may seem daunting at first, but there's a wealth of resources available to help you. Here is just a sampling of relevant materials for administrators, school board members, parents and community members. We have grouped them by topic for ease of reading. Some topics such as nutrition and physical activity overlap.

And this is just the beginning. You can find a more comprehensive list of resources with active Web links at www.colegacy.org.

Broad Focus: Coordinated School Health

American School Health Association

http://tinyurl.com/nbqjcq

Take a closer look at the leadership indicators for a coordinated approach to policies, practices and activities that impact student health and academic success.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development – Healthy School Communities

http://tinyurl.com/ltt4x2

Discover a wealth of resources for building a healthy school, engaging your community, and assessing your school's strengths and weaknesses.

Colorado Action for Healthy Kids – Parents are the Power! tool kit

http://tinyurl.com/lx7oej

Tap strategies in this tool kit designed especially for parents to create healthier school environments for their children.

Health Education

Colorado Connections for Healthy Schools - Eight Components

http://tinyurl.com/m74dcr

Discover the eight key components of comprehensive school health education.

Nutrition

Action for Healthy Kids – Colorado Profile

http://tinyurl.com/lry606

Visit this Web site for data about obesity and physical education, and to learn how Colorado compares to other states when it comes to state policy affecting student health and nutrition.

You can find a more comprehensive list of resources with active Web links at www.colegacy.org.

American Association of School Administrators

http://tinyurl.com/odd9kw

Discover a wealth of resources for district administrators focused on childhood obesity and healthy school environments, including a checklist for wellness and informative newsletters featuring school districts that are making positive program and policy changes in healthy eating and active living.

National Association of State Boards of Education - Preventing Childhood Obesity

http://tinyurl.com/nddza8

Use the information in this easy-to-read guide to develop integrated policies in nutrition, physical activity and health education.

Physical Activity

Alliance for a Healthier Generation – Healthy Schools

www.healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx

Garner information and resources to increase opportunities for students to exercise and eat healthier foods as well as resources for teachers and staff to become healthy role models.

Coordinated Approach To Child Health

www.catchinfo.org

View information about an evidence-based coordinated school health program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices – plus resources, tips and training.

School Health Services

Colorado Association for School-based Health Care

www.casbhc.org

Learn how school-based health clinics work, and check out the resources page for more local and national links.

National Association of School Nurses

www.nasn.org

Visit this Web site's policy and advocacy section for information about why school nurses are so critical to healthy schools.

Workplace Wellness

School Employee Wellness

http://tinyurl.com/nozxjy

Visit this Web site to download *School Employee Wellness: A Guide for Protecting the Assets of Our Nation's Schools.* This comprehensive guide provides information, practical tools and resources for the development of school employee wellness programs.

Wellness Council of America

www.welcoa.org

Find out how to build and sustain results-oriented workplace wellness programs.



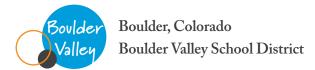
2009 Commissioner's Choice Award Winners Short Profiles of Select Award-winning Districts





Keeping Kids in School by Keeping Them Healthy

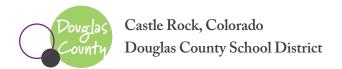
With childhood obesity and chronic disease rates soaring in the United States, school districts are focusing more on health and wellness. Colorado's first school-based health center was built in Commerce City in 1978. Adams County School District 14 partnered with Community Health Services to provide health care for students. Today, they have expanded to five clinics across the district, many of which are housed in schools. The need for health care is greater than ever. About 80 percent of the district's students come from low-income families with little access to health care. District leaders know keeping kids healthy means keeping them in school. "I truly believe school-based health clinics have improved our attendance rate," says Adams 14 School Board Member Jeannette Lewis. "It's critical that all school districts support school-based clinics. They improve the quality of both students' lives and their education."



Offering Kids a New (Healthy) Menu

Boulder Valley School District is reinventing the school lunch. Highly processed foods have been eliminated as have artery-clogging transfats and bad-for-you fructose corn syrup. Refined sugar and flour are used minimally. Walk into any school cafeteria in the district and you'll see healthy, wholesome food. Locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables are served daily. Roasted chicken has replaced highly processed chicken nuggets. Studies show that good food is good for students. "There is a lot of research that supports the link between good cognition and good nutrition," says Superintendent Chris King, Ph.D. "Clearly when you eat well, your brain and body perform better."

Find out more about the work of these districts at www.colegacy.org.



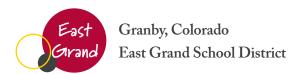
Taking Workplace Wellness to New Heights

Douglas County School District is striving to become the healthiest school district in the United States by 2015. District leaders have crafted a five-year strategy that launches an employee-approved comprehensive wellness plan and a new health benefits plan. "Healthy employees have fewer absences and are more productive," says interim Superintendent Steve Herzog, Ph.D. "We wanted to look at ways to both lower health care costs in a responsible manner and create healthier environments. For us, wellness was the key difference." In a five-month period, the district has already saved \$1.1 million thanks to the new benefits and wellness plan. The savings has allowed the district to keep benefits strong for employees and even add an employee assistance program.



Coordinating a Comprehensive Approach to Healthier Schools

The Durango School District has one of the most comprehensive and coordinated health and wellness policies in the state of Colorado. Work began in 2004 with the help of a planning grant from the Colorado Department of Education. The district used the funding to assess its strengths and weaknesses, and then developed a districtwide plan that covers wellness, nutrition and physical activity. "When we started to look at what was being done in our schools, we knew we could do better," says Jaynee Fontecchio-Spradling, the district's health coordinator. Now, each of the district's 11 schools follows a coordinated school health model. Teams at each school oversee and evaluate the progress of school-based health and wellness plans.



Engaging Students in Physical Activity

East Grand School District in Granby, Colorado, is taking steps to make sure its students are fit and healthy. Students in kindergarten through grade 8 participate in physical education every day. "For us, it comes down to students' health and well-being," says Superintendent Nancy Karas. "We know the disturbing statistics about childhood obesity, and we want to give our kids the tools they need to make good decisions about their health." Movement isn't limited to the school gym. It extends to the classroom. Many of the district's teachers have participated in courses and workshops that show them how to incorporate more physical activity in the school day.



2009 Commissioner's Choice Award Winners Best Practices in Health and Wellness

Adams County School District 14

Superintendent Susan Chandler, Ph.D. School-based health

Boulder Valley School District

Superintendent Chris King, Ph.D. Nutrition

Denver Public Schools

Superintendent Tom Boasberg Nutrition, physical education and school-based health

Douglas County School District

Interim Superintendent Steve Herzog, Ph.D. Workplace wellness

Durango School District

Superintendent Keith Owen, Ph.D. Nutrition, physical education, health education and school-based health

East Grand School District

Superintendent Nancy Karas Nutrition, physical education, health education and school-based health

Garfield School District

Superintendent David Smucker Nutrition

Gunnison High School

Principal Andy Hanks
Physical education

Las Animas School District

Superintendent Scott Cuckow Nutrition

Montrose County School District

Superintendent George Voorhis, Ed.D. School-based health

Poudre School District

Superintendent Jerry Wilson, Ph.D. Physical education

Pueblo School District 60

Superintendent Kathy West Nutrition

The Academy at High Point

Executive Director Terry Croy Lewis, Ph.D. Nutrition, physical education, health education and workplace wellness





Colorado Legacy Foundation 201 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 515 Denver, CO 80203-1799

> Phone: 303-866-6193 Fax: 303-830-0793 www.colegacy.org