

HEALTH IN MIND

Improving Education Through Wellness



Executive Summary

Educators know that healthy students are better prepared to learn and succeed in school. Yet current health and education policy misses several simple, vital opportunities to boost academic success through health promotion and school wellness. The nation's children are struggling academically and could become the first generation to live shorter and less healthy lives than their parents. At the same time, our nation faces a growing achievement gap that research increasingly connects to health disparities.

It is for this reason that Healthy Schools Campaign and Trust for America's Health present Health in Mind: Improving Education Through Wellness. This effort focuses on policy recommendations for immediate, practical changes at the federal level to help close the achievement gap and create a healthy future for all children.

The Challenge

The link between health and learning is clear. Healthy, active and well-nourished children are more likely to attend school, be engaged, and be ready to learn. Often, however, the school setting does not support health. In today's school environments, all too many students spend their days in buildings with unhealthy air, do not have the opportunity to be active, and do not have access to fresh water, nutritious food or a school nurse. Many students come to school with one or more health problems that compromise their ability to learn. The prevalence of chronic diseases—including asthma, obesity and diabetes—has doubled among children over the past several decades. This has implications not only for children's long-term health but also for their opportunities to learn and succeed at school.

This challenge is especially critical in light of the vast health disparities that exist in our nation. Low-income minority students are at increased risk of health problems that hinder learning. These same students are more likely to attend schools that do

not provide health-promoting environments; for example, they often attend school in buildings with unhealthy indoor air and lack opportunities such as recess to be physically active during the day. Research continues to link health disparities to the minority achievement gap and suggest that unless we address these health disparities, efforts to close the education achievement gap will be compromised.

The Obama administration has made addressing the achievement gap a top priority. In the two past years, the federal government has also demonstrated a strong commitment to disease prevention and health promotion with initiatives including the First Lady's Let's Move campaign and the release of the National Prevention Strategy.

The purpose of Health in Mind is to delineate strategies that federal agencies can deploy to create the conditions for health and learning in our nation's schools. These immediate, practical strategies can serve as a starting point for broader change in the health and education sectors.

Creating the Conditions for Health and Learning

To truly support learning, schools must create the conditions for health. Given the strong connection between health and learning, this is central to schools' core mission of student learning.

What does it mean for schools to support student health? A healthier school environment is one which supports students' well-being and in which student health builds a foundation for learning. In this environment, good nutrition, physical activity, basic safety, clean air and water, access to care, and education about how to make healthy choices allow students to thrive. In a healthy school, students learn—through lessons and through example—to value their own health and wellness.

These recommendations reflect a new approach to making health and wellness part of the school experience. This means

that wellness is not relegated to an occasional health lesson or physical education class—it is part of math, science, lunch and everything in between. It means providing teachers with professional development related to children’s physical and emotional development, and integrating health into every subject, reward system and classroom management strategy.

Achieving this ultimate vision will require leadership and commitment at many levels, from classrooms to Washington, D.C. The goal and challenge of Health in Mind is to make concrete recommendations that fall within the federal government’s role and can have a significant and sustainable impact on two national priorities: reducing the achievement gap and transforming our health care system.

Recommendations to U.S. Department of Education

The Department of Education can play a critical role by providing leadership to states and schools districts on the importance of integrating health into school policy and practice. This can be done by:

1. Expanding the mandate of the Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) and appointing a Deputy Assistant Secretary to the office. This will better prepare the Department of Education to address emergency situations (e.g., H1N1), build the capacity of other offices within the Department of Education, and provide important guidance to universities, states and school districts.
2. Encouraging innovation by including health and wellness as a competitive priority for grant programs for teacher and principal training (through the Office of Innovation and Improvement), parent engagement strategies (through Parent Information Resource Center and Promise Neighborhoods), and state longitudinal data systems (through the Institute for Education Sciences).
3. Demonstrating the importance of health by incorporating health measures into the Blue Ribbon program.
4. Developing and disseminating best practices for colleges and universities to support teachers’ and school leaders’

abilities to address student health needs, and developing and disseminating best practices for states on professional development standards relating to health, and integrating health into data tracking and school accountability.

These simple actions by the Department of Education can be a catalyst for broad and far-reaching change.

Recommendations to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services also has an important role to play. These recommendations urge the Department of Health and Human Services to re-think the role schools can play in our nation’s prevention efforts and the ways that the Department can support schools in creating the conditions for health. Before this new vision for prevention-based school health can be realized, the Department of Health and Human Services must address the barriers that schools currently face in funding for the traditional health services they provide.

The Department of Health and Human Services can play a critical role by:

Reducing current barriers to school health services. Currently, the reimbursement school districts receive for school health services is severely restricted by various regulations that have no basis in federal Medicaid law and in fact, have been ruled by the Department of Health and Human Services’ own Department Appeals Board as unenforceable. Making it possible for schools to receive reimbursements for health services from Medicaid will allow schools to deliver disease prevention and management and health promotion services. With this type of financial support, schools can emerge as key partners in addressing some of the nation’s most serious health problems and reaching children who often lack access to ongoing medical care.

Supporting schools in creating the conditions for health and playing a key role in our nation’s prevention efforts. The National Prevention Strategy released in 2011 focuses on weaving prevention into the fabric of everyday life, clearly recognizing that the strongest predictors of health and well-being exist outside of

the health care setting in our homes, schools and communities. This strategy creates new opportunities for the Department of Health and Human Services to consider the key role that schools can play in prevention and the ways that the Department can support schools in creating the conditions for health. Specifically, the recommendations urge that:

- School health and wellness be recognized as an eligible community benefit, leveraging health sector resources to support schools in promoting health and wellness.
- The National Prevention Council or its advisory committee explore the full potential that schools can play as key centers for supporting children's health and wellness.

Through these changes, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human services can work together to ensure a brighter and healthier future for this nation's students.

Who We Are

HEALTHY SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

Healthy Schools Campaign is a leading authority on healthy school environments and a voice for people who care about our environment, our children, and education. HSC advocates for policies and practices that allow all students, teachers and staff to learn and work in a healthy school environment. For the past 10 years, HSC has focused much of its work in Chicago, working to improve the food and fitness environment in Chicago public schools. HSC's programs focus on identifying and supporting agents of change—including parents, teachers, students, principals and school nurses—and helping them make changes both at their individual school and at all levels of decision-making that shape the school's health and wellness environment.

healthyschoolscampaign.org

TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH

Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.

healthyamericans.org

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families, and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society.

wkkf.org

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

Health in Mind is based on a vision statement for healthy students and healthy schools. More than 70 organizations representing the nation's education and health stakeholders have signed on to this vision. The vision and list of supporters is available here today. To learn more, see the list of supporters or sign on as an organization, please visit healthyschoolscampaign.org/healthinmind.

FORUM PARTICIPANTS

Health in Mind strategies were developed with broad input from national stakeholders in education and children's health. Healthy Schools Campaign and Trust for America's Health hosted three day-long forums at the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the American Federation of Teachers to discuss tangible, cost-effective methods for integrating health and wellness in schools. More than 75 organizations took part in these forums; many additionally participated in follow-up discussions about the issues that emerged at the forums. The Health in Mind recommendations were developed with consideration for the broad range of diverse opinions shared through this process. Healthy Schools Campaign and Trust for America's Health gratefully recognize the input shared during this valuable process.

Full Report: Health in Mind

The full report, Health in Mind: Improving Education Through Wellness, will be released shortly and will be provided to all event participants.

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Overview of Health in Mind Policy Recommendations

In the past three years, the federal government has demonstrated a strong commitment to disease prevention and health promotion with initiatives including the First Lady's *Let's Move!* campaign and the release of the Surgeon General's National Prevention Strategy. At the same time, evidence continues to show the powerful connection between health and academic achievement, with a recent report by Dr. Charles Basch linking health disparities to the minority achievement gap. Given this confluence of policy and research, the time is right for the Department of Education to further support the critical connection between health and learning, and build this priority into the Department's infrastructure and leadership.

The following recommendations are within the Department's current regulatory and budget framework and, if adopted, can be a catalyst for broader change in the education sector and set the stage for more comprehensive education reform. The recommendations for the Department of Education are as follows:

1. Increase the Department of Education's capacity to support student health and wellness.
2. Support the development of pre-service and professional development programs for teachers and principals that prepare them to support student health.
3. Support the development of resources for schools to effectively engage parents around school health and wellness issues.
4. Support the development of educational data systems and school accountability programs that incorporate student health.
5. Incorporate health and wellness into the Department of Education's recognition programs.

Health in Mind also includes recommendations for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that are aimed at reducing barriers that schools face in providing health and prevention services and supporting schools in creating the conditions for health as part of our nation's prevention efforts.

Recommendations to the U.S. Department of Education

1. Increase the Department of Education's capacity to support student health and wellness.

For schools to support students, health and wellness should be integrated into all aspects of a school's operation including classroom management, health services, curriculum, facilities, maintenance and operations, and food service operations. The Department of Education has the opportunity to provide strong leadership in transforming schools by incorporating health and wellness into its own policies and programs. The following recommendations will ensure that the Department of Education has the infrastructure to support this role:

- a. Expand the mandate of the Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) to:
 - i. Provide strategic leadership to fully integrate health and wellness into the Department's policy and practice.
 - ii. Issue voluntary guidance and best practice protocols to school stakeholders to support the integration of health and wellness into policy and practice.
- b. Ensure appropriate leadership is in place in the Department.
 - i. Appoint a Deputy Assistant Secretary to OSHS to provide strategic leadership to the Department on integrating health and wellness into education policy and practice.
 - ii. Appoint a School Nurse Consultant to disseminate knowledge and critical information to state school nurse consultants and to promote school health services and school nursing.

2. Support the development of pre-service and professional development programs for teachers and principals that prepare them to support student health.

Teachers and principals can significantly impact students'

health, yet too many are not prepared to provide students with knowledge and skills to adopt health promoting behaviors, manage student health problems, implement health promoting behaviors in the classroom and school, and create a healthy school environment. To better prepare teachers and principals, the Department of Education should do the following:

Support Innovative Programs

The Office of Innovation and Improvement should:

- a. Encourage the development of innovative professional development programs by including health and wellness as a competitive priority in grant programs.
- b. Provide technical assistance to grantees on best practices for promoting student and school health, including through Communities of Practice, to help grantees incorporate best practices for promoting student health and wellness.

Create Guidance and Best Practices Guides

- c. Issue voluntary guidance and best practice protocols, through a stakeholder engagement process, to colleges and universities to support teachers' and school leaders' ability to address student health needs, including coursework in health education, student health and wellness, child growth and development, and developmental psychology.
 - d. Issue voluntary guidance and best practice protocols, through a stakeholder engagement process, to states to support teachers' and school leaders' ability to address student health needs, including professional development standards for teachers and principals on health and wellness issues.
- 3. Support the development of resources for schools to effectively engage parents around school health and wellness issues.**
- Parent engagement in schools is integral to the success of a school and should include engaging parents around health and wellness. The Department of Education should encourage schools to engage parents around health and wellness issues

based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's best practices, and:

Support Innovative Programs

- a. Encourage the development of innovative parent engagement strategies by including health and wellness as a competitive priority in grant programs, including the Parent Information Resource Center and Promise Neighborhoods.

Create Guidance and Best Practice Documents

- b. Provide technical assistance to grantees, including Parent Information Resource Center and Promise Neighborhood grantees, to support the integration of health and wellness into programs.
- c. Issue voluntary guidance and best practice protocols, through a stakeholder engagement process, on high-quality parent engagement programs that integrate a focus on health and wellness.

4. Support the development of educational data systems and school accountability programs that incorporate student health.

Incorporating metrics for health and wellness into data tracking systems and school accountability will provide educators, policymakers and the public with a more refined understanding of how to achieve learning and academic outcomes. This deeper understanding of the multiple influences on student learning can inform resource management at the highest level and teaching practices in the classroom. Incorporating metrics for health and wellness into state data tracking systems and school accountability programs, and supporting this integration through the Department of Education's research agenda, can help ensure that student health and wellness is tracked over time and that school stakeholders understand the connection between health and learning. Recommendations for the Department of Education are as follows:

Support Innovation

The Institute for Education Sciences should encourage the

development of State Longitudinal Data Systems that integrate health and wellness data.

Create Guidance and Best Practice Protocols

Issue voluntary guidance and best practice protocols for states, through a stakeholder engagement process, on how to integrate health and wellness into state data tracking systems and school accountability programs.

5. Incorporate health and wellness into the Department of Education's recognition programs.

Incorporating metrics for health and wellness into school recognition programs can also motivate school leaders to consider health and wellness a high priority for student success. Recommendations for the Department of Education are as follows:

Recognize Health Promoting Practices

The Office of Communications and Outreach should update the Blue Ribbon Schools program to integrate health and wellness measures.

Recommendations to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The National Prevention Strategy released in 2011 focuses on weaving prevention into the fabric of everyday life, clearly recognizing that the strongest predictors of health and well-being exist outside of the health care setting in our homes, schools and communities. This strategy creates new opportunities for the Department of Health and Human Services to consider the key role that schools can play in our nation's prevention efforts and the ways that the Department can support schools in creating the conditions for health.

Before this new vision for prevention-based school health can be realized, the Department of Health and Human Services must address the barriers that schools currently face in funding for the traditional health services they provide. Despite the effectiveness of school health programs, lack of funding continues to negatively impact the quality and quantity of health services schools are

able to provide to students. School health services are generally managed and funded through education departments, primarily on a local level. Ensuring that schools are able to receive funding from the health sector will allow schools to deliver disease prevention and management and health promotion services and emerge as key partners in addressing some of the nation's most serious health problems.

Reduce Barriers to School Health Services

In order to support school districts in offering a full complement of health promotion and disease management and prevention services to students, especially Medicaid/CHIP eligible students, the Department of Health and Human Services should:

1. Issue guidance to the states, in the form of either a State Medicaid Director Letter or revisions to the 2003 Medicaid School and Administrative Claiming Guide, to clarify that school districts may receive Medicaid reimbursement for health services provided by a school nurse to Medicaid-enrolled students.

The guidance should, at a minimum, include:

- a. Declaration that health services provided in schools are exempted from the free care rule in accordance with the 2005 HHS Departmental Appeals Board Ruling.
- b. Clarification that school districts are not required to establish procedures or to bill third party payers for health services provided to non-Medicaid enrolled students in order to bill Medicaid for health services for Medicaid enrolled students.
- c. Clarification that the requirement to bill third party payers only applies to Medicaid enrolled students who also have a third party insurer.
- d. Clarification that the free care rule or third party billing rule cannot, in any circumstance, prevent a school district from billing for the provision of Early, Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment services to a Medicaid enrolled student.

- e. Clarification that school districts can bill Medicaid for health services provided to Medicaid enrolled students even if such services are not provided under Title V or as a result of an IEP or IFSP under IDEA.
- f. Clarification on the process for billing under Medicaid for the provision of health and behavioral health services provided by school nurses, to a Medicaid enrolled student.

2. Establish a Community Engagement process, through opportunities such as Regional Listening Sessions and Requests for Information, to solicit stakeholder involvement in the development of practice guides to states, school districts, and schools to encourage financing of health and prevention services provided by school nurses to Medicaid enrolled students through Medicaid and to eliminate any known barriers to billing Medicaid for these services.

The guidelines should include best practice examples for states and school districts addressing state plan requirements and allowable services and guidance on the development of policies that require districts to use reimbursement dollars received for school health and prevention services for health and prevention related activities.

Support Schools in Creating the Conditions for Health

In order to support schools in creating conditions that support health for all students, the Department of Health and Human Services should:

3. Work with the IRS to recognize school health and wellness as an eligible community benefit.

The community benefits provision within the Affordable Care Act requires hospitals to support health in the communities they serve. These policies can encourage partnerships between school districts and local hospitals that support conditions for health.

4. Urge the National Prevention Council or its advisory committee to explore the full potential that schools can play as key centers for supporting children's health and wellness.

The National Prevention Council has a unique opportunity to bring together the health and education sectors, as well as others, to achieve our nation's goal of weaving health and wellness into every aspect of our communities.