

Lessons Learned



Improving Academic Achievement Through a Quality School Health Program

Teachers and parents want to see all students succeed and become knowledgeable, responsible, caring and healthy adults. The challenge is organizing our educational system to provide the opportunities linked with these outcomes. While there is still much debate about the value and effectiveness of various programs, more and more information that provides answers on how the learning environment in schools needs to be structured is becoming available from both health and educational scientists.



Health Services

Some schools providing comprehensive health services in conjunction with other important services have reduced absenteeism,¹ reduced drop-out rates¹⁻³ and reduced behavioral problems,⁴ raised students' grade point average^{1,2,4} and graduation rates.¹⁻³

Nutrition Services

Students' cognitive, behavioral and physical performance is impaired by poor nutrition.⁵⁻⁷ Access to nutritious meals at school facilitates learning. Students that are provided school breakfast perform better on standardized tests,⁷ have less hyperactivity⁷ and experience less absenteeism.⁷⁻¹⁰



Physical Education

Those schools that provide quality and intensive physical education programs for their students note a positive relationship on academic achievement even though time on academic task is reduced because students are enrolled in a physical education program.¹¹ Increased concentration, improved mathematic, reading and writing scores have been noted along with a reduction in disruptive behaviors.¹¹⁻¹³

Health Instruction

One study found that students receiving instruction in personal and social skills in their health education classes have improved school achievement and reduced drop-out rates, as well as a reduction in risk behaviors associated with pregnancy, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse.¹⁴⁻¹⁵



Counseling Services

Counseling and psychological services provided by schools have improved educational outcomes by addressing behavioral and emotional issues that are barriers to learning. It has been noted that students who have received these mental health services have reduced course failures and disciplinary actions and improved grade point averages.¹⁶⁻¹⁷

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Healthy Environment

A healthy school environment that promotes nurturing and caring makes students feel more connected to the school and protects them from emotional distress.¹⁸ Teachers who use better classroom management and instructional practices strengthen students' bonds of attachment and connectedness to school.¹⁵

Family and Community Involvement

Schools that seek active parent involvement have reported improved classroom behavior; increased PTA membership; improved family functioning;¹⁹ improved academic performance,²⁰⁻²¹ attendance²⁰ and prospects for future work.²⁰ A number of studies have demonstrated that including families in health education increases the likelihood that their children will adopt health-enhancing behaviors. School systems that work with social service providers in the community have noted improved scholastic performance. "The combined academic, health and social programs began to show positive achievement gains by the third year of the project," noted Mitchell.¹⁹



Worksite Wellness

Worksite health promotion programs are a way to support teachers and improve staff morale, reduce absenteeism and improve the quality of instruction, along with improving perceived percepts of general well-being.²²

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