



Overview

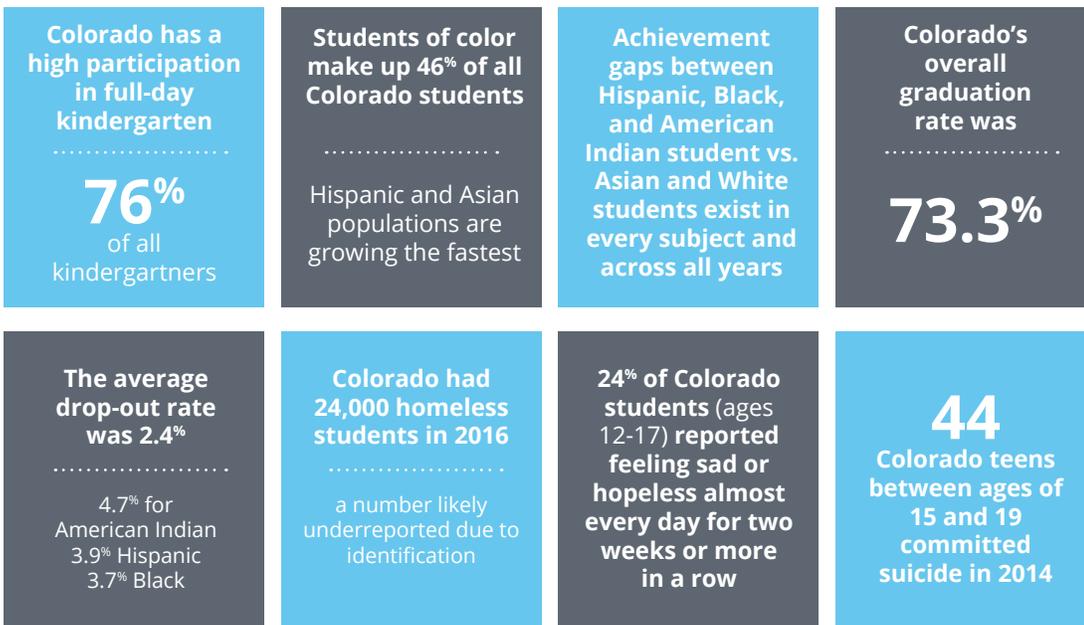
It has long been known that education has a significant positive impact on health and wellbeing. Better educated individuals have more positive health outcomes, even when controlling for other factors such as income or family background.¹ People with higher levels of education are less likely to smoke, more likely to exercise, have more opportunities to access health education, and less likely to adopt unhealthy coping behaviors.² School environment also plays an important role, because students in supportive and caring school environments are less likely to engage in substance abuse, violence, or other problem behaviors, while also having more positive attitudes about themselves and others.³

Similarly, health can have a direct impact on education, with students with poor health having higher probabilities of failing school, being held back grades, and dropping out compared to students with good health. Obese and overweight children have poorer academic performances, such as on standardized math and reading tests, compared to students with normal weights; and obesity can be a predictor of low grade-point averages, placement in special education or remedial classes, and having fewer years of education.^{4,5} Additionally, students who are physically active tend to have better grades, school attendance records, classroom behavior, and cognitive performances compared to their less active peers.⁶

There is a two-way link between health and education: good health can improve education performance, and education can improve health. This fact means that there are good reasons to try to improve education at all levels. Efforts to improve the quality of education in and out of the classroom can help to improve the health of students and address things that affect the most at risk students, including hunger, poverty, homelessness, and experience of violence or trauma.

The State of K-12 Education in Colorado

Source: 2016 Kids Count Colorado Report



Over a four-year period, one school in Illinois saw “office referrals and suspensions decrease, test scores climb, and the achievement gap in math shrink to almost nothing.”⁷

¹ David M. Cutler and Adriana Lleras-Muney, “National Policy Center, Brief #9,” 2007, http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/policy_briefs/brief9/policy_brief9.pdf

² Emily Zimmerman and Steven Woolf, “Understanding the Relationship Between Education and Health,” Institute of Medicine Roundtable on Population Health Improvement, June 5, 2014, <https://nam.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/BPH-UnderstandingTheRelationship1.pdf>

³ Eric Schaps, “The Role of Supportive School Environments in Promoting Academic Success,” Center for the Collaborative Classroom. Accessed May 15, 2017. <https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/research-articles-and-papers-the-role-of-supportive-school-environments-in-promoting-academic-success>.

⁴ K. J. Tobin, “Fast-food consumption and educational test scores in the USA.” Child: Care, Health and Development 39(2011): 118-24. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2214.2011.01349.x.

⁵ Ashlesha Datar, Roland Sturm, and Jennifer L. Magnabosco. “Childhood Overweight and Academic Performance: National Study of Kindergartners and First-Graders.” Obesity Research 12, no. 1 (2004): 58-68. doi:10.1038/oby.2004.9.

⁶ “Healthy Kids Learn Better” Alliance for a Healthier Generation, accessed May 15, 2017. https://www.healthiergeneration.org/about_childhood_obesity/wellness_stories/healthy_kids_learn_better/.

⁷ The Wellbeing Effect of Education, Evidence Briefing, Economic and Social Research Council, July 2014, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/the-wellbeing-effect-of-education/>

⁸ Measuring the Impact of School-Based Health Centers on Student Health and Academic Achievement. Report. Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care. Denver, CO, 2011.



Strategies to Improve K-12 Education

A wide variety of strategies can be and are being implemented in schools, school districts, and statewide that can help to increase the quality of K-12 education and positively affect students' physical and mental health, both while they are in school and later in their lives. These strategies, which are outlined below, often have common features that can be used at all age-levels to help create supportive and safe school environments to help students stay in school. They focus on building students' social and emotional capacity and their ability to cope with behavioral health issues that affect not only student's ability to learn but also their fellow students and teachers.

Benefits of SBHCs include improving access to care, reducing absenteeism from school, reducing ER visits, and improving student immunization rates.⁸

PROGRAM TITLE	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Live Well Colorado Healthy Schools	Focuses on serving freshly prepared meals, along with educational component around healthy eating habits and life-skills	Academy 360, Denver Public Charter School http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Colorado-Framework_VCS7small.pdf
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)	Framework to connect families, schools, and communities to affect academic achievement, behavioral issues, and school environment	Kansas School District MTSS Program http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Colorado-Framework_VCS7small.pdf
Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS)	Framework focused on helping students achieve social and learning goals to improve academic achievement and reduce behavioral issues	Greenwood Elementary, Cheery Creek School District; Pueblo City School District http://greenwood.cheerycreekschools.org/pages/pbis.aspx http://www.pueblocityschools.us/administration/departments/exceptional-student-services/pbis http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin535.shtml
Caring School Communities	Social and emotional curriculum to promote prosocial values, increase academic motivation, and prevent substance use	Aurora, Colorado Elementary Schools https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/caring-school-community
Lion's Quest Skills for Adolescence	Builds social and emotional skills to promote positive relationships, academic effort, prosocial behavior, and school safety	Illinois School District https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/caring-school-community
Mindfulness-based Interventions	Teaches students to be aware of thoughts, emotions, and environment to reduce behavioral issues and anxiety and increase cognitive performances	Denver Public Schools http://www.denverpost.com/2016/11/28/denver-public-schools-mindfulness-class-teaches-gratitude-appreciation-surroundings/
Low-to-No-Cost Prevention Strategies	Low cost, but powerful prevention strategies to improve academic achievement and decrease behavioral issues	Written Praises, Peer Tutoring, Team Competitions http://www.lcjp.org/what-we-do/restorative-practices-in-schools.html
Restorative Practices	Helps students resolve conflicts outside of school or community punishments to improve school and community engagement and improve school environment	Longmont Community Justice Partnership; Leadville Lake Country High School http://www.lcjp.org/what-we-do/restorative-practices-in-schools.html
Project AWARE	Advances wellness and resilience in schools by connecting schools with local authorities for mental health promotion and prevention	CO Department of Education https://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/projectaware
Positive Action	Educational program that promotes learning and cooperation to reduce behavioral issues and increase academic achievement	CO Department of Education Anti-Bullying Campaigns https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/bullying/positiveaction https://www.positiveaction.net/research-outcomes
School-Based Health Centers	Health clinics located within schools that can improve access to care, reduce absenteeism, and improve learning environments	Department of Public Health and Environment https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/what-is-a-sbhc http://www.casbhc.org/Publications/Policy%20Briefs/Colorado's%20Investment%20in%20SBHCs.pdf
Sources of Strength	Peer leaders are trained to spread strength-based messaging to increase school connectedness and prevent suicidal behaviors in middle and high schools	Pilot program in seven Colorado schools