



8 Steps to Building a HEALTHY Student



A healthy student is a productive student, ready to take on whatever challenges the classroom offers. Building a healthy student is not a simple task; it requires a partnership between family, school, and community to make it happen.

Health and learning go hand-in-hand. By using a coordinated approach to school health, many elements can be brought together to help young people grow into healthy and productive adults. The lessons that children learn now will last them a lifetime, and influence the next generation of healthy children.

www.healthyschoolsms.org



1 HEALTH EDUCATION SERVICES

A school's health curriculum is designed to motivate and assist students in maintaining and improving their health, prevent disease, and reduce risky behaviors that impair their health.



With qualified instructors teaching health education and supported by the entire school staff, children build health-related knowledge and skills starting in kindergarten and continuing through 12th grade.

2 HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT SERVICES

To learn effectively children must be in a school environment in which they feel comfortable and supported; a safe, orderly and disciplined environment where teachers can teach and students can learn.

There are physical factors that affect the health of students such as having clean, well-maintained buildings with proper temperature, noise, and lighting. There are also psychological factors that impact the health of children, such as the physical, emotional, and social conditions within the school. By providing clean, safe schools that are both mentally and physically healthy, distractions can be minimized and the student's learning potential maximized.



3 NUTRITION SERVICES

The foods that children eat give them the energy and nutrients that their growing bodies need. Since many students eat one or two meals per day at school, it gives cafeterias an opportunity to offer them nutritious, healthy meals. Schools can also develop educational activities that encourage students to make healthy eating and good nutrition a priority for life.

School nutrition services offer students positive reinforcement to the nutrition and health education information they receive in the classroom. Selecting the right foods now can help children grow into healthy adults and reduce their risk of chronic diseases later in life.

There are a number of ways to improve the nutrition of children in the schools; parents, students, and school staff can partner together to select healthy menus. Vending machines can offer well-balanced foods; and healthy snack policies can be adopted for school celebrations.



4 HEALTH SERVICES

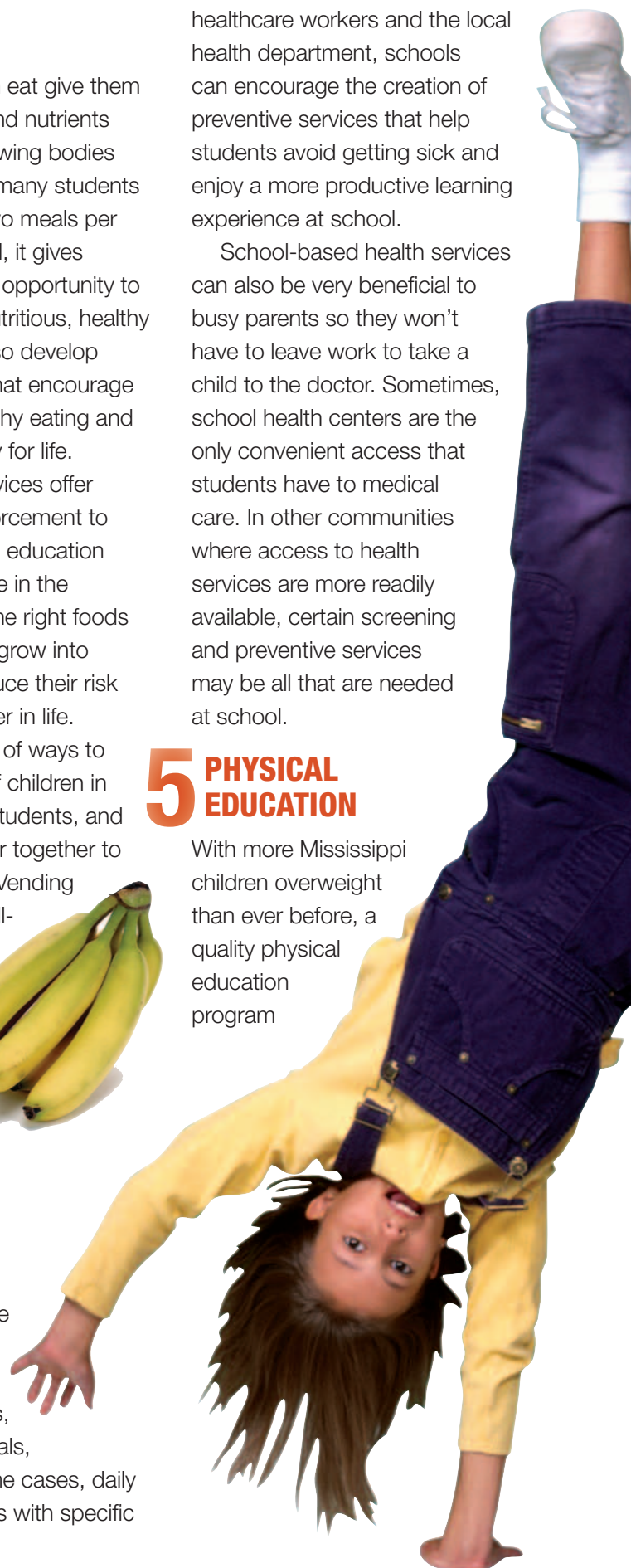
Just like a car, growing children need regular maintenance to operate at peak performance. Such maintenance includes immunizations, dental services, physicals, eye exams, and in some cases, daily medication for students with specific medical problems.

With the help of community healthcare workers and the local health department, schools can encourage the creation of preventive services that help students avoid getting sick and enjoy a more productive learning experience at school.

School-based health services can also be very beneficial to busy parents so they won't have to leave work to take a child to the doctor. Sometimes, school health centers are the only convenient access that students have to medical care. In other communities where access to health services are more readily available, certain screening and preventive services may be all that are needed at school.

5 PHYSICAL EDUCATION

With more Mississippi children overweight than ever before, a quality physical education program



is a crucial part of every student's education. A planned curriculum of physical education for kindergarten through 12th grade will promote life long physical activity and help children to develop basic movement and sports skills.

Schools can and should encourage students to be physically active, and a strong, coordinated effort can have a big impact on the sedentary lifestyles common among children today. Sports activities in the schools can also help to build self-esteem, leadership skills, and reduce stress and depression in students.

6 COUNSELING, PSYCHOLOGICAL & SOCIAL SERVICES

Today, many children have to deal with the stress caused by problems such as parental divorce, alcoholism, abuse, and drug addiction. A

student's mental health is just as important as their physical health, and by offering counseling and other mental

health services, as well as referrals to community health professionals, schools can help parents to impact their children's mental health in a positive way, and improve their ability to learn.

There are over 1,100 elementary, middle, and high school counselors in Mississippi, and they all have the same goal: to promote and enhance student achievement. These counselors are qualified to address the mental health, academic, and career needs of students in the school setting.

Counseling can improve student's mental, emotional, and social health by helping them make decisions and change unhealthy behavior. School counselors work with all students, school staff, families, and the community as an important part of the education program.

7 FAMILY & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

School health programs do not exist in a vacuum; our learning institutions are part of the community, and by reaching out to parents, businesses, local health officials, and other community groups, powerful coalitions can be built to address the health needs of students.

Schools actively solicit parental involvement and engage community resources and services to more effectively meet the health-related needs of students. There are a number of ways to reach out to the community at large: parents should be encouraged to participate in school planning, schools can be opened after hours for community activities such as fitness programs, health seminars, and recreational functions. School facilities can also be used as satellite clinics and social service offices during non-school hours.

8 STAFF WELLNESS & DEVELOPMENT

It is hypocritical to teach the importance of healthy living to students if the school staff doesn't practice what they preach. Teachers and other school personnel are important role models for students.



Successful schools have a healthy, highly motivated staff that pass on a commitment to healthy living to their students.

School districts should create their own wellness programs designed to meet the needs of their particular communities. Schools can consider enacting a number of activities to make sure that teachers and staff feel their best and perform at peak levels. Such efforts can include health seminars on topics such as stress reduction, quitting smoking, physical fitness, and more. Schools can also offer health screenings so that staff can identify potential concerns before they become serious health care problems.

Encouraging staff wellness has a number of positive benefits for the schools: they improve productivity, decrease absenteeism, and reduce health insurance costs.



A CALL TO ACTION

Building healthy children is a complex task requiring a team effort to be successful. No one person can do it by himself or herself. A coordinated school health program requires a variety of people, such as parents, students, faculty/staff, community members, clergy, and many others.

Every day in Mississippi coordinated school health programs have the opportunity to reach 494,038 public school students and over 68,745 adult teachers, school building staff, or school district staff. A commitment to healthy schools between teachers, staff, and the community will have a positive impact on the health of Mississippi's schoolchildren today, and build a system that will positively impact the health of the state's children for years to come.



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