Overview

In 2010, West Chester University, College of Health Sciences, made a commitment to provide support and an infrastructure for the Pennsylvania Center for Healthy Schools.

The Center for Healthy Schools Vision: A core connector that improves the health and academic achievement of children and adolescents is through the alignment of health-promoting school, community, and family environment.

The Center for Healthy Schools Mission: Supporting Pennsylvania schools’ children, families, and communities to get and stay healthy by aligning health and learning for the whole child.

The Center for Healthy Schools’ urgency:

- Health and learning are inextricably intertwined.
- Compelling case for the causal role that health plays in closing the education achievement gap.
- Healthy school communities provide a consistent message for student health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

The Center for Healthy Schools is focused on the Vision Planks of:

- Education
- Advocacy
- Sustainability
- Research
The Center for Healthy Schools provides an unprecedented opportunity to create K-12 healthy school communities where students receive consistent health messages and participate in health-promoting activities to support healthy choices and academic success for all Pennsylvania school students. At the close of the 2011–2012 academic school year the Center for Healthy Schools:

- Established an Advisory Board of Directors
- Established an Advisory Committee
- Conducted a state-wide needs assessment of school and community professionals, and middle and high-school aged youth (www.wcupa.edu/centerforhealthyschools)
- Developed a strategic plan
- Conducted the first School Health Leadership Institute
- Networked with local, state, and national education and health organizations
- Presented at local and state meetings the vision, mission, and goals of the Center for Healthy Schools
- Assisted 9 Pennsylvania school districts in creating healthy school communities
- Provided technical assistance for the sustainability of K-12 School Health Councils, needs assessment, and health improvement plans
- Conducted Fall and Spring meetings of the Center for Healthy Schools Advisory Board and Advisory Committee
- Created a Center for Healthy Schools website (www.wcupa.edu/centerforhealthyschools) and developed Facebook and Twitter pages
The following 2012 - 2013 annual report provides an overview of the Center for Healthy Schools’ initiative and highlights work accomplished during the academic school year.

**Introduction**

Health and learning are inextricably intertwined. Health problems and risk behaviors of: inadequate diet, physical inactivity, drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, intentional and unintentional injuries, and sexual behaviors which result in HIV/AIDS, STDs, and unintended pregnancy significantly compromise student health, learning, and overall academic achievement. Research in the fields of education and health present a compelling case for the causal role that health plays in closing the education achievement gap. The nation’s schools are committed to helping all children succeed. Yet, every school day children and adolescents
come to school with physical, mental, emotional, and social health issues, which prevent them from fully participating in and benefiting from the efforts of school administrators and teachers to help every child learn and achieve. Health promoting behaviors improve health, increase the likelihood of academic success, and support and promote healthy families and communities. Coordinated school health is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as a strategy for improving students’ health and learning in our nation’s schools. The healthy development of children and adolescents is influenced by many societal institutions. After the family, the school is the primary institution responsible for the development of young people in the United States.

- Schools have direct contact with more than 95 percent of our nation’s young people aged 5–17 years, for about 6 hours a day, and for up to 13 critical years of their social, psychological, physical, and intellectual development.
- Schools play an important role in improving students' health and social outcomes, as well as promoting academic success.

The health of young people is strongly linked to their academic success and the academic success of youth is strongly linked with their health. Thus, helping students stay healthy is a fundamental part of the mission of schools. After all, schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not healthy.

- Health-related factors, such as hunger, chronic illness, or physical and emotional abuse, can lead to poor school performance.
- Health-risk behaviors such as substance use, violence, and physical inactivity are consistently linked to academic failure and often affect students’ school attendance, grades, test scores, and ability to pay attention in class.
The good news is that school health programs and policies may be one of the most efficient means to prevent or reduce risk behaviors and prevent serious health problems among students. Effective school health policies and programs may also help close the educational achievement gap.

Goals of Coordinated School Health

Coordinated school health programs could be a critical means to improving both education performance and the well being of our young people and the adults they will become. School health programs typically have four overlapping, interdependent goals. These goals are most effectively and efficiently achieved when all the goals are addressed simultaneously through a coordinated approach that purposefully integrates the efforts and resources of education, health, and social service agencies.

The following is a summary of the key goals and strategies:

Increase health knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

- School health instruction helps young people improve their health knowledge. For example, students learn nutrition facts and how to read product labels so they can make healthy eating choices.
- School health instruction helps young people develop related life skills, including communication and interpersonal skills, decision-making and critical thinking skills, and coping and self-management skills. For example, students learn a variety of ways to refuse alcohol or tobacco and practice those skills.
- Improved communication and life skills can positively affect students’ health decisions and behaviors and promote effective citizenship.
Increase positive health behaviors and health outcomes.

- School health programs can be designed to help youth avoid specific risk behaviors, including those that contribute to the leading causes of injury, illness, social problems, and death in the United States; alcohol and other drug use; tobacco use; injury and violence; unhealthy eating; physical inactivity; and sexual risk behaviors. These behaviors, often established during childhood and early adolescence, are interrelated and can persist into adulthood.

- Specific school health interventions have proven effective in significantly reducing these risk behaviors, improving health-promoting behaviors, and improving health outcomes.

- School health programs can also create safer schools and positive social environments that contribute to improved health and learning.

Improve education outcomes.

- Students who are healthy are more likely to learn than those who are unhealthy. School health programs can appraise, protect, and improve the health of students, thus reducing tardiness and absenteeism and increasing academic achievement.

- Students who acquire more years of education ultimately become healthier adults and practice fewer of the health risk behaviors most likely to lead to premature illness and death.

Improve social outcomes.

- School health programs can provide opportunities to build positive social interactions and foster the development of students’ respect, tolerance, and self-
discipline. For example, conflict resolution and peer mediation programs help students learn how to listen and solve problems.

- School health programs can reduce delinquency, drug use, and teen pregnancy, increasing the likelihood that young people will become productive, well-adjusted members of their communities.

- School health programs can provide access to community programs and services that can help students contribute positively to their family, school, and community (www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth).

The Center for Healthy Schools recognizes and supports the link between student health, wellness, and learning. We are committed to working with school administrators, faculty, staff, community prevention partners, and policy makers to create a healthy school community for all Pennsylvania students and families.

**Steps to Creating K-12 Healthy School Communities in Pennsylvania**

A cornerstone of the Center for Healthy Schools is the Pennsylvania School Health Leadership Institute (SHLI). The SHLI is a professional development opportunity for school administrators, teachers, school nurses, school counselors, parents, school board members, food service providers, and community prevention partners to increase knowledge and about and skills needed to create healthy school communities.
The SHLI is a 3-day educational experience, which addresses:

- Research documenting the link between student health and learning
- Creating healthy school communities for the whole child
- Policies and practices to align health and learning
- Coordinated school health program model connecting health and learning
- Development and sustainability of K-12 school health councils and district-level wellness advisory committees
- Federal and state legislation and regulations, which guide healthy school communities
- Tools and strategies for needs assessment and data collection
- Steps to create a health improvement plan, including goal setting, outcomes, evaluation, strategies, and resources
- Advocacy for student health and learning
- Implementation, data collection, and evaluation of local wellness policies
- Models of best practice in school wellness
- Professional resources
- Networking and sharing of success and challenges
- Technical support

The 2012 – 2013 SHLI was designed for teams of 3-5 school and community members from the district’s school health council / wellness committee. The Institute is held at West Chester University Graduate Business Center with funding and support from WCU College of Health Science, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Chester County Health Department, and the United Way of Chester County.
Participants attended a 2-day session in the summer of 2012 and a booster session in the spring of 2013. Participants in the 2011 – 2012 NHLI included:

Chichester School District
Cumberland Valley School District
Downingtown Area School District
Governor Mifflin School District
Lancaster General Hospital
Oxford Area School District
Phoenixville Area School District
Pottstown School District
Springford Area School District
Upland Country Day School
Vida Charter School
School District City of York
Impact:

The (9) school districts we collected information from initiated several healthy goals and formed School Health Councils. All school districts initiated the following topics (Appendix 1, Table 1):

- Wellness policy
- School Health Council
- Nutrition
- Physical Activity

Additional goals addressed:

- Substance Use and Abuse Prevention
- Mental and Emotional Health
- Safety (Intentional and Unintentional Injuries)
- Advocacy and Communication

Table 2 in Appendix 1 summarizes each school district’s School Health Council and its impact on students and staff. The total number of students impacted is 63,599) and total staff impacted is 1511.

Comments from participants:

SHLI participants completed an evaluation, which provided feedback on the 2012 - 2013 SHLI and comments for planning the 2013 - 2014 SHLI. Participants were asked to describe the strengths of the School Health Leadership Institute.

Comments included:

- Interacting and networking with other schools
- Resources
• Interactive learning activities

• Team Building

• Useful content, activities, discussion, and speakers

• Great information for starting and sustaining a school health councils

• Presenters extremely knowledgeable and kept the presentations creating, interesting, and valuable

• Resources and steps to develop a health improvement plan

• Group activities assisted in supporting the ideas presented

• Understanding the importance on the whole child and incorporating wellness into school goals

• Flash drive with all power points and handouts/worksheets/templates

• Great best practices shared by school health councils

Participants were asked to describe areas in the School Health Leadership Institute for improvement. Comments included:

• Presentations from PDE and PDH

• Difficulty attending Booster Session in Spring during PSSA and Keystone Exams

• More discussion time

• Need more resources and funding opportunities

• Presentation by students and parents to help develop useful websites
Participants were asked to identify topics and content needed for upcoming Institutes.

Comments included:

- Mental Health concerns of school-aged youth
- Healthy after school initiatives for high school students
- Emotional and social health issues
- Grant writing and fund raising
- Sustainability of school health councils
- Community Outreach and collaboration to meet goals
- A blog would be very helpful

School Health Leadership Institute Success Stories

School Health Leadership Institute schools receive a Healthy School Zone banner for their schools, and a certificate of completion documenting their commitment to student health and learning. There were many reasons to celebrate the success stories from our 2012 - 2013 School Health Leadership Institute participants. The list of accomplishments included:
SUCCESES

- Completion of the CDC School Health Index
- Development of a school health council, mission statement, and health improvement plan, logo
- After school physical fitness club
- Staff fitness contest
- Health related bulletin boards and messages throughout school
- Student Wellness Day
- Review of current school district wellness policy
- Increase student participation on school health council
- Implementation of Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act
- Grant Submissions for Life Skills Training
- Improvements in Health Education Curriculum
- SAP teams in all buildings, trainings
- Improvement in Physical Education program
- Employee Wellness Day
- Community Service Learning (clothing drives, food drives, holiday gifts)
- Staff monthly wellness newsletter
- Partnerships with community (YMCA, Parks and Rec)
- Presentations to faculty, administrators,
- Classroom brain breaks
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation (HUSSC awards) and Chef’s Move to School, Fruit and Vegetable grants
Creating and sustaining a healthy school community and meeting the challenges to student health and academic success requires a commitment from school administrators, faculty, staff, school board, and community prevention partners. The Center for Healthy Schools is responsive to the challenges and barriers expressed by participants in the School Health Leadership Institute. These concerns include:

**CONCERNS**

- Lack of administrative support including school administrators and school board
- Competing priorities for PSSA testing/scores; Keystone exams, funding; limited resources time, and focus on test scores
- Perceived lack of concern from colleagues regarding the health issues of students
- Limited fidelity to school wellness policy and administrative guidelines/regulations
- Inconsistent messages during the school day which impact student health attitudes and behaviors
- Reduction in health and physical education class time and requirements for graduation.
- Reduction in teaching staff for health and physical education
- Need to engage parents and families in supporting school wellness initiatives
- Opportunity to meet with school administrators and school board to propose a school board wellness goal
- Need to align health and education in the school district strategic plan
- Time
- Funding
Center for Healthy Schools and Chester County In-service 2012

In the fall of 2012, the Center for Healthy Schools partnered with the Chester County Intermediate Unit to conduct the county-wide in-service- “Creating Safe and Supportive Schools for Student Health and Learning”. At total of 93 K-12 Health and Physical Education teachers and 137 School Nurses participated in sessions related to the creating a safe and supportive school for student health and learning. Presenters included West Chester University faculty, Pennsylvania Department of Education and community agencies. Workshop themes addressed: bullying prevention, violence prevention, diversity, mental and emotional health, mindfulness based stress management, LGTBQ youth, curriculum, resources, safety, school nurse policy, practices and procedures update, and substance abuse prevention.
Center for Healthy Schools Professional Initiatives to Promote Advocacy and Research:

During the 2012 – 2013 year, presentations at professional meetings to showcase the Center for Healthy Schools, Model of Best Practice (Downingtown Area School District), and strategies to align health and learning included:

- American School Health Association Conference
- Pennsylvania School Board Association Conference
- Pennsylvania Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- National School Board Association Conference
- International Health Education Service Learning Health Literacy – Little Bay Jamaica

Partnerships to support grant proposals included:

- Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board – Downingtown Area School District
- Pennsylvania Department of Education – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- PEP - School District of Lancaster
Committee and Partners for making the 2011 – 2012 year and success and helping us to meet
our vision for creating healthy school communities for all Pennsylvania students.

Center for Healthy School Advisory Board 2012 - 2013

- Beth Bahn
  - Acting Chief Division of School Health, Bureau of Community Health Systems
  - Department of Health
- Donald Barr
  - Retired Dean of College of Health Sciences
  - West Chester University of Pennsylvania
- Leslie A. Best
  - Director, Bureau of Health Promotion & Risk Reduction
  - Pennsylvania Department of Health
- Shirley Black
  - Division Chief, Bureau of Teaching and Learning, Division of Curriculum
  - Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Linda Bryant
  - Health and Physical Education Advisor
  - Pennsylvania Department of Education - Teaching and Learning
- Bethann Cinelli
  - Director of the Center for Healthy Schools
  - Professor of Health Education
  - Assistant Chair Person, Department of Health Sciences
  - West Chester University of Pennsylvania
- Vonda Cooke
  - Director of Child Nutrition
  - Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Jacqueline Fenn
  - Lionville Community YMCA Executive Director
  - Downingtown Area School District School Board President
- Diana Fox
  - Senior Director, Information and Quality of Life Services
  - American Cancer Society
- Linda Huber
  - Executive Director, PSAHPERD
- Tammy James
  - Professor of Health Education
  - West Chester University of Pennsylvania
- Duane Milne
  - Representative, PA House GOP
- Lawrence Mussoline
  - Superintendent of Downingtown Area School District
• Angelo Romaniello
  o Assistant Superintendent and Director of High School Education
  o Coatesville Area School District
• Mary Rose-Colley
  o Professor Emeritus, Department of Health Sciences
  o Lock Haven University
• James Scanlon
  o Superintendent
  o West Chester Area School District
• Frances Sheehan
  o President & CEO Brandywine Health Foundation
• NaDa Shoemaker
  o Program Manager - Strategic Health Partnerships
  o American Cancer Society
• Rina Vasallo
  o Director of Teaching and Learning
  o Chester County Intermediate Unit
• Le Roy G. Whitehead
  o Principal of Fugett Middle School
  o West Chester Area School District
• Melody Wilt
  o Assistant Superintendent
  o Great Valley School District
• Ray Zetts
  o Interim Dean
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania

**Center for Healthy Schools Advisory Committee 2012 - 2013**

• Debra Bill
  o Professor of Health Education
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Kim Bowman
  o Executive Director of the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services
• James Brenner
  o Professor of Health Education
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Bethann Cinelli
  o Director of the Center for Healthy Schools
  o Professor of Health Education
  o Assistant Chair Person, Department of Health Sciences
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Bettyann Creighton
  o Director of Health, Safety and Physical Education
  o Philadelphia Area School District
• Donna DeGiacomo
  o Content Area Specialist: Health, Safety and Physical Education
  o Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School
• Letitia Foster
  o Oxford Area School District
• Lisa Fraser
  o Planned Parenthood of Chester County
• Marion Gibson
  o Adjunct Faculty, Department of Health Sciences
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Marybeth Gilboy
  o Professor of Health Education
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Lynne Hamelton
  o Professor of Health Education
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Tammy James
  o Professor of Health Education
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Terry Kenworthy
  o Manager, Agency Relations
  o United Way of Chester County
• Gina Pazzaglia
  o Professor of Nutrition
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Margaret Rivello
  o Chester County Health Department, Director
• Cheryl Schlamb
  o Professor of Nutrition
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
• Caroline Smith
  o Chester County Deputy Administrator for Mental Health
• Pam Warfield
  o West Chester Communities That Care
• Christine Williams
  o Professor of Health Education
  o West Chester University of Pennsylvania
Center for Healthy Schools Partners (2012 – 2013)

- Brandywine Health Foundation
- Chester County Health Department
- Chester County Intermediate Unit
- Coatesville Area School District
- Downingtown Area School District
- Lock Haven University
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Pennsylvania Department of Health
- Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School
- Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance
- Pennsylvania State House of Representatives
- Planned Parenthood
- School District of Philadelphia
- United Way of Chester County
- Upper Main Line YMCA
- West Chester Area School District
- West Chester Communities That Care
- West Chester University

Special Notes:

The Center for Healthy Schools needs assessment executive summary and strategic plan is located on our website at www.wcupa.edu/centerforhealthyschools.
Table 2. School Health Council Makeup and Impact

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<th>School Building</th>
<th>Number Impacted</th>
<th>Number on Council</th>
<th>Titles of Council Members</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Admin.</td>
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<td>Lancaster General Hospital</td>
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<td>DASD - STEM</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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