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. 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. 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.

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. 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.

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

Colorado has a high participation in full-day kindergarten

76% of all kindergartners

Students of color make up 46% of all Colorado students

Hispanic and Asian populations are growing the fastest

Achievement gaps between Hispanic, Black, and American Indian student vs. Asian and White students exist in every subject and across all years

Colorado’s overall graduation rate was

73.3%

The average drop-out rate was 2.4%

4.7% for American Indian
3.9% Hispanic
3.7% Black

Colorado had 24,000 homeless students in 2016

a number likely underreported due to identification

24% of Colorado students (ages 12-17) reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row

44 Colorado teens between ages of 15 and 19 committed suicide in 2014

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM TITLE</th>
<th>PROGRAM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring School Communities</td>
<td>Social and emotional curriculum to promote prosocial values, increase academic motivation, and prevent substance use</td>
<td>Aurora, Colorado Elementary Schools <a href="https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/caring-school-community">https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/caring-school-community</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion's Quest Skills for Adolescence</td>
<td>Builds social and emotional skills to promote positive relationships, academic effort, prosocial behavior, and school safety</td>
<td>Illinois School District <a href="https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/caring-school-community">https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/caring-school-community</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project AWARE</td>
<td>Advances wellness and resilience in schools by connecting schools with local authorities for mental health promotion and prevention</td>
<td>CO Department of Education <a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/projectaware">https://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/projectaware</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Action</td>
<td>Educational program that promotes learning and cooperation to reduce behavioral issues and increase academic achievement</td>
<td>CO Department of Education Anti-Bullying Campaigns <a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/bullying/positiveaction">https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/bullying/positiveaction</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Based Health Centers</td>
<td>Health clinics located within schools that can improve access to care, reduce absenteeism, and improve learning environments</td>
<td>Department of Public Health and Environment <a href="https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/what-is-a-sbhc">https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/what-is-a-sbhc</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Strength</td>
<td>Peer leaders are trained to spread strength-based messaging to increase school connectedness and prevent suicidal behaviors in middle and high schools</td>
<td>Pilot program in seven Colorado schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Benefits of SBHCs include improving access to care, reducing absenteeism from school, reducing ER visits, and improving student immunization rates.**

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*QUALITY K-12 EDUCATION*