

Healthy Students, Successful Students: Why School-Based Health Interventions and Academic Achievement Matter

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Abstract: The goal of this presentation is to provide support for implementation of school health programs by describing the relationship between student health and academic achievement. Aligning student health and wellness with the academic mission of schools is critical for engaging school administrators in school health initiatives. This will be among the first presentations of a recent report jointly commissioned by the State Board of Health, Washington State Department of Health and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction describing the relationship between academic achievement and health. Four key findings of the report include: (1) students with health risks are also at academic risk; (2) health risks are independently associated with achievement – every health risk makes a difference in achievement; (3) the academic achievement gap may be at least partially attributable to health disparities; (4) schools can effectively improve student health behaviors with combined environmental and individual interventions. Taken together our findings provide much-needed evidence that implementing pro-health policies, instruction and supportive services is a clear opportunity to both improve students' academic achievement and quality of life. This workshop will engage participants in a variety of activities designed to help them identify barriers to successful school/community partnerships, as well as how they can utilize key messages from the report in order to promote for school health initiatives.