



CDC Healthy Schools Stories of Achievement

Healthy Students, Ready to Learn

WASHINGTON

Improving the health of **85,370 K-12 students** by supporting school districts' use of CDC assessment tools to review and *enhance wellness policies*

In Washington, 82.5% of 10th grade students do not eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables per day and only 57.9% reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes on most days (Healthy Youth Survey, 2018). As a result, the Healthy Schools Washington (HSW) Program took action.

The HSW Program works to improve student health and academic achievement by improving opportunities for healthy eating, physical activity, and chronic disease management. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Washington's priority school districts had planned to complete the [School Health Index](#) (SHI) and [WellSAT 3.0](#) to assess school environment and policies that affect student health, such as those pertaining to fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity. However, in-person meetings and trainings transitioned into virtual formats.

In May and June 2020, the HSW Program developed a four-step process to complete the assessments virtually to address the issues identified in the Healthy Youth Survey:

1. Identified and assembled a team of content experts to be responsible for completing the SHI.
2. Used a skilled group facilitator to navigate each SHI team through SHI modules to enable schools to identify strengths and weaknesses of health and safety policies and programs.
3. Convened a 2-hour professional development (PD) session to review SHI results.
4. Completed the WellSAT 3.0 in another 2-hour PD session.



Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic limited the ability of the HSW Program and Washington's priority school districts to take measurable actions based on these assessments. However, the school districts that participated in the four-step process trainings submitted health improvement action plans describing the policies and procedures they intended to address once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.

Among other actions, districts intend to:



Incorporate physical activity breaks in the classroom and provide teachers with resources to take this action.



Improve marketing of school meals and grab-and-go bags.



Provide and promote locally grown foods to students.



Provide enough time for all students to eat breakfast and lunch.



Provide recommendations to all schools, parents, and the community on foods offered to students for parties and rewards, in school stores, and a la carte items.



Hire a nurse's aide for the elementary school to manage injuries, health concerns, and chronic health conditions.



Improve the social and emotional climate by creating a professional development plan for staff that addresses the following:

How discussions with students during discipline can lead to healthier student behavior.

How to engage students to ensure they feel heard and valued.

How to teach coping skills during interactions and conversations with students.

How to use student surveys to understand student social and emotional needs.

