



School Health Centers Support Student Learning

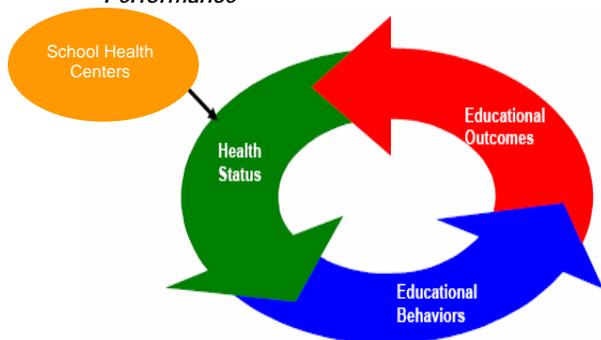
Many children come to school everyday suffering from conditions that seriously impact their ability to learn and to succeed. School health centers are providing a solution by offering quality services in a safe, familiar, accessible, and youth-focused environment.

Where do school health centers fit and how do they contribute to student academic performance?

It is well-accepted that healthier children make better students and research evidence supports a connection between health status and academic performance.

Students, teachers, and providers alike say that school health centers are making a difference in academic achievement because they put health care where the kids are. This means youth have daily access to a broad range of services that improve their health status. Services include: primary care doctor's appointments, mental health counseling, reproductive health care, dental care, health education, youth leadership development, fitness and nutrition programs, and other resources—and it's all right there, where kids spend so much of the day.

Relationship between Health Status and Academic Performance¹



With school health centers, kids do not need to miss school for doctor's appointments; fewer teens dropout as a result of violence, pregnancy, or other

reasons; youth become more connected to the school and ultimately have the opportunity to develop positive relationships with caring adults in a one-on-one context.

"I've had students who tell me that they were thinking of cutting school that day, but didn't because they wanted to come into the clinic for their appointment. They get to know us and to trust us."—Provider

Research shows a positive impact from school health centers on:²

- Absences
- Promotion to the next grade
- Withdrawal/drop out rates
- Disciplinary problems
- Failing grade
- Tardiness

Studies have also shown that school health centers can impact the following health status/risk behaviors which have been shown to influence academic achievement:

- Mental health
- Poor diet
- Intentional injuries
- Physical illness
- Low self esteem and resiliency
- Risky sexual behavior
- Health care utilization

The combination of anecdotal data and research tells us that school health centers contribute to student learning.

"I wish I had used the school health center all through high school, because it's really turned my senior year around. My grades are better because they connected me with an academic counselor and my teacher even asked what happened because I started doing so much better. I come here all the time, just to get away from the stress, to talk about what's going on in school and in my whole life."—Student

¹ Geierstanger SP, Amaral G. *School-Based Health Centers and Academic Performance: What is the Intersection?* April 2004 Meeting Proceedings. White Paper. Washington, DC: National Assembly on School-Based Health Care; 2005.

² Ibid. See page 7 for list of studies.