



## COLORADO HEALTHY SCHOOLS SMART SOURCE

Through generous funding and support from Kaiser Permanente, the Colorado Healthy Schools Smart Source will create the infrastructure to measure, track, and better understand the health of Colorado students. Specifically, this system aims to collect, organize and synthesize school health policy and practice data into a consistent, statewide system by the end of the 2016-2017 school year. Building the system will be a partnership among the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and the Colorado Coalition for Healthy School (CCHS).



### **NEED FOR A COORDINATED SYSTEM**

Research consistently shows that healthy students are better learners. However, the education system has historically separated cognitive, academic performance from health and wellness. This separation has become more distinct in recent years under the current accountability system that has placed a disproportionate emphasis on academic gains. Not surprisingly, educators and school leaders focus their attention and energies on what is measured – primarily test scores and gains in achievement – at the expense of the very factors that can have the most significant impact on those scores. As a result, physical activity, health education, student supports, and social and emotional wellness are not emphasized.

Additionally, Colorado school districts are inundated with requests to complete health surveys from a variety

of external parties whose numerous instruments are designed to collect school health policy and practice indicators. These repetitive surveys take away from valuable class time. Moreover, much of the data collected are not readily accessible to the school districts and schools, researchers, partners, or parents because the collectors are dispersed across various federal, state, local, and community agencies.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR A STATEWIDE SYSTEM**

Multiple factors, including new partnerships and funding as well as supportive legislation and national and state attention on the value of school health efforts, aim to increase the number of schools and/or districts in Colorado participating in data collection. Through the School Health Policy and Practice Data Collection System, Colorado now has a unique opportunity to collaborate with multiple education stakeholders and bridge the

separation between academic outcomes and health and wellness outcomes as well as minimize the burden on schools to collect these data.

Additionally, information obtained through the project will provide numerous stakeholders with school level health and wellness data that can be used to inform decisions at the local, district, and state levels about activities that promote health and academic success. Further, a statewide system with common school health and wellness indicators can lead to trend data as well as the ability to show the connection between the health of Colorado students and academic achievement.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

The development and roll-out of this data system will occur over a five-year period from 2013-2017.

### Year 1 – Planning & Building

During the first year, an Advisory Council and Workgroup with multiple stakeholders will be convened to identify common and agreed upon indicators. Additionally, a national and international research scan will be conducted to determine the best format for collecting school level health and wellness indicators and a draft of the data collection tool will be developed.

### Years 2 & 3 – Testing & Utilization

The second and third years of this project will be marked by the testing of the data collection system in which modifications to the system will be made based on feedback from schools and districts that participate in the pilot. Additionally, this period will allow for analyses on preliminary data to be conducted in order to understand the results as well as identify any significant trends or outcomes.

### Years 4 & 5 – Implementation and Expansion

The fourth and fifth years of this project will focus on large-scale implementation of the system to enable all districts and schools throughout Colorado to collect school health policy and practice indicators and to use the results to promote and sustain healthy school programming.

## OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

Provide institutionalized, specific, and consistent school health policy data available in a central location for all education stakeholders – including school districts and schools, state agencies, local organizations, funders, legislators and parents – to access.

Reduce burden and duplication of data collection regarding school health policy and practice indicators in Colorado.

Increase the number of school districts and schools finding value in and using the data as part of accountability systems related to academic achievement and to promote healthy school efforts.

Provide resources, technical assistance, and online data reports to schools throughout Colorado to help them with data collection and using the

information to inform school improvement planning.

Highlight and recognize exemplar schools and districts in order to identify and bring to scale promising and best practices.

Help policymakers and education stakeholders understand any impact state and federal policies have had in “moving the needle” on key school environment and policy features related to health and wellness.

**“This streamlined system outlining common school health and wellness indicators will help schools to analyze trends as well as provide opportunities to correlate the connection between health and wellness and academic achievement.”**

— Commissioner of Education, Robert Hammond

