



New Haven
Public Schools



CARE: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement
A strong New Haven is a healthy New Haven

Health Is Academic!

**Creating and Mobilizing Community Partnerships
to Improve Health, Learning and Our New Haven Neighborhoods**

Healthy students are more likely to be successful in school.

The strong link between health, learning and school success has been well documented. Health issues such as poor diet, physical inactivity, chronic diseases, obesity, tobacco/drug use, exposure to violence, and emotional or behavioral problems have all been shown to significantly and directly affect a child's ability to learn, long-term school performance, and overall academic success. Poor overall health has been linked to increased absences, low self esteem, decreased attention and lower grades.

Indicators of school performance affected by health include:

Attendance, achievement/grades, school connectedness, self-esteem, suspension, and graduation rates. Distracted, depressed or hungry students simply cannot focus their energy on learning. Recent data indicate a strong link between obesity and school performance, and increased "screen time" and inactivity have been directly correlated with poorer grades. http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/index.htm#5

Therefore, strategic investment in effective and comprehensive school-based health and wellness promotion has the potential to improve academic performance, class climate and ultimately, long-term school success and the health of our students and our community.

Integrating Health and School Reform: Combining Resources for Shared Goals

- **To be recognized as the best urban district in the US:** we must have healthy children who are ready, willing, and able to learn
- **Collective Investment:** Schools can't do it alone! Mobilizing students, families, teachers, staff and the New Haven community to address and support priorities that support student success
- **"Wrap around" services:** Community partnerships/programs that support student achievement and promote and protect health in schools, after school, in the community and at home
- **Sound and Effective Infrastructure:** data systems, curriculum and data teams, school evaluation, physical infrastructure, and tradition of collaboration
- **Goals:** eliminate the achievement gap, health inequities, and provide all students with the opportunities and necessary support to succeed. Raise student achievement for all students to make New Haven the country's most successful educational city.

CARE/NHPS Student Health Assessments 2009

CARE and NHPS are among several citywide partners that are part of a larger international initiative called *Community Interventions for Health* (CIH) that aims to prevent chronic disease in children and adults. Chronic diseases affect 7 of 10 Americans and account for 75% of our \$2.5 trillion health care expenditures. New Haven is the first US city to participate in CIH. As the first phase of this initiative that addresses child health, CARE and NHPS conducted a brief health survey and physical measurements (e.g., height, weight, blood pressure) of 1175 5th and 6th grade students, representing 88% of students from 12 randomly selected schools this fall.

Why we did it: CIH and Improving Student Success

To identify factors that affect health and learning outcomes and which can be modified. These findings will guide both school and community-based interventions aimed to improve health behaviors, neighborhoods, and provide more health promoting activities and support in safer environments.

Key Findings (Preliminary)

Preliminary results demonstrate that many students engage in health-promoting behaviors and many do not. As such, some are at high risk for adverse health outcomes. Creating school and community-linked infrastructure that draws from District resources and is responsive to community needs and priorities will be essential to promote health equity and improve academic performance.

- 35% rate their health as “excellent” and 30% “very good”
- 24% report asthma, and 3.5% report diabetes
- 40% report eating fruits and 26% vegetables daily; however, many also report eating unhealthy foods, high fat/salty (25%), sugary (30%), and soda (40%)
- 39% report daily family meals; 26% report eating in fast food restaurants 3 or more days/week; and 12% report skipping meals/going hungry because there is not enough food in the home
- 56% report exercising >30 minutes 5-7 days/week; however, they also report neighborhood barriers to exercise (e.g., traffic, lack of sidewalks, fears of safety) and lots of “screen time” (41% report ≥ 3 hours of screen time per school day)
- 18% went to emergency room since beginning of school because sick or hurt
- 28% are obese, 19% are overweight, and up to 15% are at risk of hypertension

INFORMATION TO ACTION

- These data will be reported back to the Board of Education and schools from which they were collected, to inform teachers and administrators of the health of their students, and to develop initiatives aimed at improving students’ health behaviors.
- CARE will also link student demographic and school behavior, attendance and achievement data to these health data, to determine whether health status and dietary and exercise behaviors influence vital academic outcomes of import to BOE.
- CIH partners will collaboratively share data, resources and efforts to achieve the shared goals to improve health and communities in New Haven.
- We will use data from schools and neighborhoods to develop, implement and evaluate programs and policies that can improve health in our community.
- We seek to obtain resources and to strengthen partnerships to improve individual and community health, identifying community health assets, problems, and solutions.
- ***Together, we can create a healthier New Haven***