



ASHA Position Statement: School Administrators Enhance Student Achievement by Supporting the Whole Child.

School administrators are in the primary position to change schools into places where students learn healthy lifestyle habits that support their success in school and are essential for lifetime well-being. Research clearly shows that healthier students are better learners. The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model, provides a philosophy and organizing framework for schools to use to promote health and educational success. School administrators are in a position to allocate resources, both fiscal and human, to support healthy schools; schools in which students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Therefore, it is essential that school administrators actively support the Whole Child model to enhance student achievement.

BACKGROUND:

Schools play a critical role in addressing the physical, emotional, social and environmental factors related to health that affect learning. School administrators, at both the building and district level, are responsible for creating a school climate of trust and respect, essential for “connection to school”, a protective factor, as well as critical for high impact family engagement for both students and staff. School administrators may include superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, and/or other mid-level administrators, including designated health coordinators, directors of departments/division/component areas, depending on the size and governance structure of the school system.

Structural Approaches to Support School Health

School administrators are encouraged to use the following framework and structures to promote a successful school health approach that supports student success:

1. **Vision/mission:** The school's vision/mission includes a statement concerning the health and well-being of students and staff as a foundation for school improvement and academic success.
2. **Integration:** Administrators and the school board work collaboratively with school personnel, families and community partners to establish, communicate, and support health promotion policies and plans that align with the district's vision/mission; implement evidence-based curriculum; and monitor progress toward achievement of health-related goals and objectives.

3. **Leadership:** The district has officially appointed at least one staff person with dedicated time and authority as a designated coordinator to oversee and manage the WSCC approach. (<http://www.ashaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ASHA-Position-Paper-Role-of-School-Health-Coordinator-FINAL.pdf>)
4. **Governance for School Health:** The district establishes a school health advisory council that meets regularly and works with the administrator/s, school board, and coordinator to determine health priorities; support the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs, and services that comply with federal and/or state legislation and foster community partnerships that promote health as a foundation for school success.
5. **Staffing:** Administrators consider attitudes and behavior that promote physical, intellectual, emotional, social and environmental health when making hiring and management decisions.

The Whole Child Philosophy and Approach – What Administrators Can Do

The “Whole Child” is an education concept that resonates with school leaders and decision makers. ASCD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the ten component Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model (<http://www.ashaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ASHA-Position-Paper-Coordinated-School-Health-FINAL.pdf>) to support greater collaboration, integration and alignment between the health and education sectors. The WSCC model calls for synergistic and integrated policies and practices that support both health and learning. The school administrator understands, models, and can articulate the inextricable link between academic achievement and the health and well-being of students and school personnel. They can send clear messages and actively promote a coordinated approach to embracing academic and health outcomes among school personnel, students, families and the wider community.

School administrators are the **advocates** for WSCC. As an administrator, they have the authority vested by role and responsibility to allocate resources and support for key decisions that affect staff, students and families. They create the positive climate within the school or school district through effective communication which reflects the interests of the constituents.

School administrators demonstrate **leadership** implementing the WSCC approach. A shift in thinking of students as the “whole child” and embracing initiatives such as serving breakfast, and implementing physical activity before testing, guiding students to develop personal health plans, and supporting mental health services by providing space close to administrative offices are example of leadership by administrators utilizing the components of the WSCC model.

School administrators promote **change** by creating a climate of respect and trust in which students, staff and parents can thrive. Administrators are the personal role models of health and achievement. They can share stories of overcoming barriers and improving personal habits to encourage and support others. This provides insight to the administrator to identify other school health champions who can take an active role in the school health team.

The school administrator uses health and wellness data to drive decisions in four major areas, i.e. assessment, planning, accountability, and staff performance.

- **Assessment:** Administrators promote and enforce policies and practices based on the documented health needs of students and school personnel, using local health and education data and current knowledge regarding school climate and evidence-based approaches.
- **Planning:** Administrators promote and participate in multi-disciplinary planning to develop health-related goals and objectives, with measurable outcomes (e.g., changes in students' attendance and behaviors), that are included in the district's strategic and school improvement plan(s). Administrators recognize that effective programming requires a minimum of a three to five year commitment in order to identify and document positive outcomes and make adjustments as necessary to ensure successful outcomes.
- **Accountability:** Administrators implement an established system for reporting progress publicly and/or to the school board, at least annually, on achieving health-related goals and objectives, monitoring and revising strategies when needed, and collecting data that demonstrates the links between academic achievement and health and well-being.
- **Staff performance:** Administrators include progress toward achievement of school and district-wide WSCC related goals and objectives in performance evaluation criteria of school personnel, as appropriate.

Administrators allocate both fiscal and human resources essential for the success of the WSCC Model at the school or school district level. Specifically, the administrator can demonstrate support by doing the following:

- **Dedicated budget:** The district's budget includes dedicated line item support for at least a portion of cost of the designated coordinator(s), rather than relying solely on grant or other temporary funding sources.

- **Coordination support:** Administrators allocate sufficient fiscal and human resources to support the designated coordinator(s) of school health in facilitating measurable academic and health outcomes, with attention to:
 - data collection and analysis
 - technological support
 - communication systems
 - collaborative planning time
 - physical space
 - materials and supplies, and
 - professional development
- **Creative partnerships:** Administrators set the tone for the development of family, school, and community partnerships that affect student health and educational outcomes. The administrator advocates with the school board for innovation. The school board supports administration and encourages innovation and collaboration internally and with families and community partners that include a willingness to blend funding and share district resources to achieve mutual goals.

CONCLUSION

The support of school administrators is key to successful school health programs and services. The WSCC model puts the student at the center focus. Effective administrators use all the resources in the most suitable way to improve the health and educational outcomes of the students. The school administrator, along with the school health coordinator and school health team, uses current data to assess the needs of the student, set measurable goals and objectives, and uses best practice strategies to reach the identified goals. Such administrators demonstrate a passion for the well-being of students and staff, and use their skills to make their schools better.

ABOUT ASHA

The American School Health Association's (ASHA) mission is to transform all schools into places where every student learns and thrives. [Click here](#) for more information.

References:

- ASCD. *Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC). Whole School, Whole Community, Whole child: A Collaborative Approach to Learning and Health.* ASCD: Alexandria, VA: 2014. Available at: <http://www.ascd.org/programs/learning-and-health/wsc-model.aspx>. Accessed February 25, 2016

- Birch, D. Videto, D. Promoting Health and Academic Success *The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Approach*. Human Kinetics, 2015, pp. 85-89, 151-153
- Rooney, L., Videto, D., Birch, D. Using the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole child Model: Implications for Practice. *Journal of School Health*, 2015 85(11):820.
- ASHA. *What School Administrators Can Do to Enhance Student Learning by Supporting a Coordinated Approach to Health*. October, 2010