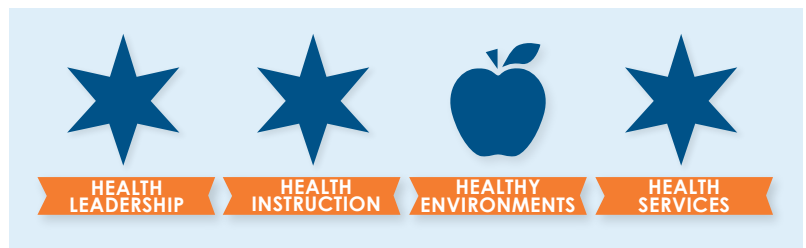


Student Engagement & School Health and Wellness: Lessons Learned from CPS Students

How did CPS students define Health?

To get students' perspectives on Healthy CPS (see figure at right) and their schools' role in supporting students' health and wellness, six discussion groups were conducted with 8th grade students in Network 5. Students defined health as holistic, encompassing healthy eating, exercising, personal hygiene, good mental

health, functioning immune systems, and positive social relationships. Many definitions of health were in the context of taking actions to stay healthy and promote health. Students also provided recommendations for: 1) improving specific programs and initiatives; 2) being more involved in decision-making; and 3) creating additional ways to support students' health and well-being. More on each of these topics is provided below.



“FOR ME... [HEALTH AND WELLNESS] MEANS...THIS THING WHERE YOUR BODY IS PHYSICALLY...
 OR A SOCIAL, SPIRITUAL, OR EMOTIONAL CONNECTION...” — CPS STUDENT

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS SUPPORTING STUDENTS' HEALTH

Mental Health Supports

- ★ Give students breaks with opportunities to socialize and/or nap/rest
- ★ Offer yoga or meditation classes
- ★ Make counselors accessible and/or provide a room where students can go to talk to someone
- ★ Allow students to communicate with their support systems when stressed or anxious

Physical Activity & Physical Education (PE)

- ★ Utilize outdoor space for physical activity
- ★ Offer more sports (e.g., basketball, football, track, soccer, rugby, cheer and dance teams)

“...[I RECOMMEND] PROBABLY LIKE YOGA, MEDITATING CLASS OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. CAUSE LIKE MENTAL HEALTH IS ALSO LIKE A BIG THING AND I'M WORKING ON MY MENTAL HEALTH RIGHT NOW” — CPS STUDENT

- ★ Teach students how to play different sports
- ★ Increase frequency, duration, and variety of activities offered during PE
- ★ Upgrade dated gym equipment and improve gym rooms (e.g., by adding treadmills and weights)

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS INVOLVING STUDENTS IN DECISION MAKING

Strategies for Gathering & Responding to Feedback

- ★ Conduct surveys and polls
- ★ Provide students face-to-face opportunities with teachers and staff to express their feedback
- ★ Encourage students to send feedback and recommendations via email
- ★ Follow up with students about their feedback (regardless of if the change was made or not)

Opportunities for Student Involvement

- ★ Involve students on wellness teams
- ★ Have a student president or advocate focused on health & wellness

- ★ Provide opportunities for students to influence decisions made about their health by allowing them to vote on things such as school meals, PE activities, health curriculum, etc.

“... IT IS GOOD TO HAVE A SURVEY [TO PROVIDE OUR FEEDBACK AND IDEAS], BUT I FEEL LIKE WE SHOULD [ALSO] TALK TO THE TEACHERS AND THE LUNCH LADIES FACE-TO-FACE SO THEY CAN UNDERSTAND WHERE WE ARE COMING FROM...”

— CPS STUDENT

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

School Services & Programs

- ★ Raise awareness about the services that are available for students and their families
- ★ Allow students to have more bathroom breaks
- ★ Establish an LGBTQ+ club
- ★ Involve students in community by going to local parks or libraries or with more field trips

“...AND MAKE THE FOOD MORE INCLUSIVE. CAUSE SOME PEOPLE ARE LACTOSE INTOLERANT. SOME PEOPLE HAVE ALLERGIES AND SOME PEOPLE ARE VEGETARIAN..”

— CPS STUDENT

Where did this information come from?

Virtual discussion groups with six student groups were conducted in Spring of 2022 by researchers at the Policy, Practice, and Prevention Research Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago who are partnering with CPS' Office of Student Health and Wellness to support implementation of Healthy CPS strategies. A total of 46 students participated. Additionally, these strategies were reviewed and informed by a group of community-based stakeholders.

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