

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2023

Contacts: Mark O'Neill, Health – ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov
Taj Magruder, Education – tmagruder@pa.gov

Pennsylvania Department of Health Receives \$2 Million Federal Grant to Improve Student Health and Academic Achievement

Shapiro Administration is working to provide all Pennsylvania students opportunities to reach their academic potential.

Harrisburg, PA – Students across the Commonwealth will benefit from a \$2 million federal grant to implement the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) (WSCC) model. Funding will be awarded to the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Erie's Public Schools through 2028 to create a template that other schools can adopt.

Establishing healthy behaviors during childhood is easier and more effective than trying to change unhealthy behaviors during adulthood. Schools play a critical role in promoting the health and safety of young people and helping them establish lifelong healthy behaviors. The WSCC model focuses on ten components that schools can emphasize as they see fit:

- Physical education and physical activity
- Nutrition environment and services
- Health education
- Social and emotional climate
- Physical environment
- Health services
- Counseling, psychological and social services
- Employee wellness
- Community involvement
- Family engagement

"The WSCC model is student-centered and emphasizes the role of the community in supporting the school, the connections between health and academic achievement, and the importance of evidence-based school policies and practices," said Acting Secretary of Health **Dr. Debra Bogen**. "Using the WSCC model in schools provides all students equitable opportunity to attain the knowledge, skills, and services needed to achieve the highest level of health and academic success."

In collaboration with several partners, the Department of Health will offer statewide training, convene a statewide school health coalition, and support the implementation of WSCC in Erie's Public Schools from 2023-2028. Erie was selected based on its size, demographics, and readiness to implement the program. Other districts will be able to take advantage of the free trainings and professional development opportunities that the grant will help develop and support.

"A healthy student is a student ready to learn, and that is why this investment in our children's health and wellness is so important," said Secretary of Education **Dr. Khalid Mumin**. "The WSCC model recognizes that the education and health sectors serve the same child, and it takes a collaborative approach to improving student development while engaging students themselves. I am so excited to see this investment coming to Pennsylvania, which will strengthen [the historic \\$1 billion increase in education funding included in Governor Shapiro's commonsense, bipartisan budget](#). This is an important step to ensuring every child has the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed."

Erie's Public Schools will begin implementing the WSCC model in the 2023-2024 school year with the hiring of the district's first wellness coordinator. Over the course of the next five school years, the district will revive its district wellness council, strengthen community partnerships, and annually assess and improve health policies, programs, practices, and curriculum in the areas of physical activity, school nutrition, school health services, and emotional well-being.

"We are incredibly proud to be working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Pennsylvania Department of Health on one of the most critical issues we face every day: the health and wellness of our students," said **Brian J. Polito**, CPA, Superintendent of Erie's Public Schools. "If we are truly serious about helping our students reach their full academic potential, we must give them, their families, and our teachers and staff the resources and tools they need to support students' health and wellness. This grant allows us to do just that. With the help of this funding, Erie's Public Schools will become a model for districts across the state that recognize the importance of investing in the health and wellness of their students and, by extension, the health and wellness of their community as a whole."

The Pennsylvania Department of Health will collaborate with Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Division of Food and Nutrition Programs and Division of Instructional Quality; Slippery Rock University, School Wellness Education Program; Pennsylvania Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE PA); Pennsylvania Intermediate Units (IU); University of Pittsburgh, Office of Child Development; Erie City School District; and, Deanna Philpott, School Wellness Consultant from PA School Wellness to implement the required grant strategies.