

2023-24

Annual Wellness Report

This report was produced by the Downingtown
Area School District Wellness

Advisory Committee:

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Downingtown Area School District Annual Report 2023 - 2024

SUMMARY

In 2005, the Downingtown Area School District made a commitment to student, faculty, and staff health and wellness. This commitment included a district level wellness advisory committee, K-12 wellness teams, the federally mandated local wellness policy and a school board wellness goal which formally aligns student health and learning. Today, the DASD continues to support and promote a healthy school community and an expanded wellness focus on the whole child. A district-wide wellness plan and individual K-12 action plans provide the framework for wellness goals, priorities and measurable outcomes to help all students make healthy choices and reach their full learning potential.

The DASD 19 year commitment to health and wellness provides an unprecedented opportunity to create K-12 healthy school communities where students receive consistent health messages and participate in health-promoting activities to support healthy choices and academic success.

During the 2023-2024 school year, **all 16 schools and the district wellness advisory committee** assembled wellness teams with documented outcomes, action plans, and strategies aligned with the district level wellness goals. DASD K-12 wellness committees celebrate a total of **173 fully implemented strategies** to promote and support the health of students and staff.

By the numbers

16

K-12 Building-level
wellness committee

17

K-12 Building-
level wellness
liaisons

4

Wellness
goals

82

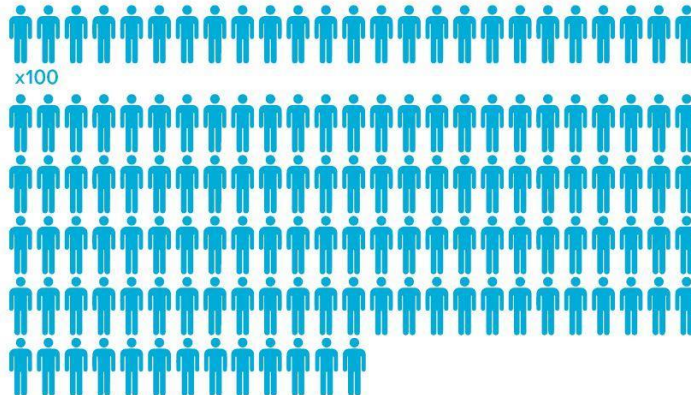
K-12 Wellness
committee
members

25

Wellness advisory
committee
members

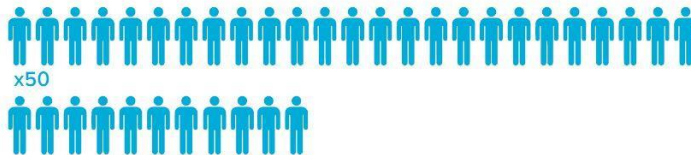
13,776

K-12 students
impacted



1,850

DASD staff
impacted



173

Fully implemented K-12 wellness strategies



The Downingtown Area School District focused on the following (4) Wellness Goals:

Goal 1

To increase protective factors and decrease risk factors associated with the use and abuse of harmful substances and behaviors and support mental and emotional well-being of students.



Goal 2

To sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.



Goal 3

To promote a healthy school environment to meet the health and wellness needs of DASD staff.



Goal 4

To support families in the DASD to meet the health and wellness needs of youth.



Introduction

Health and learning are inextricably intertwined. Health problems and risk behaviors of: inadequate diet, physical inactivity, drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, intentional and unintentional injuries, and sexual behaviors which result in HIV/AIDS, STDs, and unintended pregnancy significantly compromise student health, learning, and overall academic achievement.

Research in the fields of education and health present a compelling case for the causal role that health plays in closing the education achievement gap. The nation's schools are committed to helping all children succeed. Yet, every school day children and adolescents come to school with physical, mental, emotional, and social health issues which prevent them from fully participating in and benefiting from the efforts of school administrators and teachers to help every child learn and achieve. Health promoting behaviors improve health, increase the likelihood of academic success, and support and promote healthy families and communities. Coordinated school health is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as a strategy for improving students' health and learning in our nation's schools.

The healthy development of children and adolescents is influenced by many societal institutions. After the family, the school is the primary institution responsible for the development of young people in the United States.

The health of young people is strongly linked to their academic success and the academic success of youth is strongly linked with their health. Thus, helping students stay healthy is a fundamental part of the mission of schools. After all, schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not healthy.

- Health-related factors, such as hunger, chronic illness, or physical and emotional abuse, can lead to poor school performance.
- Health-risk behaviors such as substance use, violence, and physical inactivity are consistently linked to academic failure and often affect students' school attendance, grades, test scores, and ability to pay attention in class

The good news is that school health programs and policies may be one of the most efficient means to prevent or reduce risk behaviors and prevent serious health problems among students. Effective school health policies and programs may also help close the educational achievement gap.

The Downingtown Area School District recognizes and supports the link between student health/wellness, and learning. The DASD local wellness policy and school wellness goals establish the foundation for creating K-12 health school communities. The DASD District Wellness Advisory Committee and K-12 School Health Councils advocate for and raise awareness of the connection between student health and academic success.

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (ASCD & CDC, 2014)

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model “provides an important framework to address the collaborative relationship between learning and health.” The whole child approach ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged and sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success. The new model calls for greater alignment, integration, and collaboration between education and health to improve each child’s physical, social, and emotional development.

The new model includes the **(5) tenets of the Whole Child** including: **Health, Safe, Engaged, Supported** and **Challenged**. The new expanded model includes the home and school community: Health Education, Physical Education and Physical Activity, Nutrition Environment and Services, Health Services, Counseling and Psychological and Social Services, Social and Emotional Climate, Physical Environment, Employee Wellness and Family and Community Engagement.

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model focuses attention on the child, emphasizing a school-wide approach and acknowledging learning, health, and the school as being a part and reflection of the local community. The overarching message of the new model is “Coordinating Policy, Process, and Practice” and “Improving Learning and Improving Health”. Schools have contact with 95% of U.S. children ages 5-17, and schools represent the primary institution responsible for childhood development, after the family.

It is essential that schools have an effective and comprehensive school health model in place during these critical years of social, psychological, physical and intellectual development.

The Downtowntown Area School District wellness initiative has adopted and is in alignment with the “Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child collaborative approach to learning and health. The structure of the district level advisory committee and each of the K-12 school health councils applies the model to setting wellness goals, outcomes and action plans to support student health and learning. (www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth and www.ascd.org).

WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD
A collaborative approach to learning and health



K-6 Wellness Team Activities

REPORTING K-12 WELLNESS COMMITTEE SUCCESS - 118 strategies

Goal #1: To increase protective factors and decrease risk factors associated with mental health and substance use.

Outcome: Increase prevention of substance use and abuse through education and awareness for parents, students, and staff.

Outcome: Engage youth in advocacy initiatives to raise awareness and educate peers on effects of substance use and abuse.

Outcome: Increase mental health and suicide prevention education for parents, students, and staff.

- School-wide PBIS
- Class / Morning meetings
- K-6 Health Education Curriculum lessons on mental health and substance use prevention
- HYPE club (Marsh Creek 6th Grade Center)
- School Counseling Lessons
- Second Step SEL Curriculum
- Random Acts of Kindness Week
- Review 360 tracking system
- Little Aavidum "I Got Your Back"
- Spirit Days
- Wellness Week
- Motivation Monday
- Mindfulness Day Stations
- Brain Breaks
- Staff and Student Mentor Program
- Benergy Assembly (Autism)
- Habits of Mind
- Outdoor Classroom Day

- School Walking Path
- Bunny Run for Students
- Brain Breaks

Goal #2 To sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.

Outcome: Meet criteria and compliance with the Downingtown Area School District student wellness policy including, nutrition education, physical education, physical activity, nutrition standards for food service, and other school based activities.

- Physical Education
- Health Education - Nutrition Lessons
- Healthy Eating: Eat the Rainbow Week
- Girls on the Run
- Kids Heart Challenge
- Turkey Trot
- Field Day
- Salad Bar at Lunch Day
- Motivation Mondays
- Wellness Week
- Home and School Fun Run
- Intramurals Club
- Aidan's Heart Foundation
- Fitness Club
- Tower Garden/ Salad Tasting

Goal #3: To promote a healthy school environment to meet the health and wellness needs of staff.

Outcome: Increase knowledge and skills of DASD staff to support physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

- Mindful Morning Teacher Group
- Spirit Days
- Breakfast and Lunches
- Staff Shout Outs
- Leisurely Lunch
- Living Well at DASD
- DASD Walking Challenge
- Staff Volleyball
- Stress Reducers - Mindfulness Challenges
- Staff Walking Clubs
- Wellness Week
- Student and Staff Mentor Buddy Program
- Staff Necklace Challenge
- Staff lunch preparing a healthy lunch together
- Fit Club for staff
- Staff togethers outside of school: book clubs, axe throwing, restaurant gathering
- Valentine's Day Kisses (staff appreciation) month of February
- Wellness Wednesdays
- Fitness Club
- Staff steps challenge "Move More in March"
- Teacher Field Day
- School walking path
- Fitness Fridays' for Staff
- Salad Bar Day
- Yoga
- 1st Friday Treats each month for staff
- Staff holiday parties and happy hours
- Back to School Outing
- Maintain Don't Gain

- Wall Pilates
- Walking Club
- Biggest Loser
- Community Outreach (CMMD Run, Relay for Life)
- Staff Holiday Week
- Staff Mental Health
- Staff Walking Challenge

7-12 Wellness Team Activities

REPORTING K-12 WELLNESS COMMITTEE SUCCESS - 55 strategies

Goal #1: To increase protective factors and decrease risk factors associated with mental health and substance use.

Outcome: Increase prevention of substance use and abuse through education and awareness for parents, students, and staff.

Outcome: Engage youth in advocacy initiatives to raise awareness and educate peers on effects of substance use and abuse.

Outcome: Increase mental health and suicide prevention education for parents, students, and staff.

- Grades 7-12 Health Education Curriculum lesson on mental health and substance use prevention
- Signs of Suicide (SOS)
- Healthy Youth Positive Energy Clubs (Grades 7-12)
- Suicide Prevention Day
- Anti-Bullying Month
- Red Ribbon Week
- Kindness Week
- Community Outreach (Thanksgiving Food Drive, Blood Drive, Holiday Toy Donations, Philadelphia Eagles: Homelessness and Hunger, Autism Awareness, Importance of Community, Letters to Military,

Card to orphans in India)

- Winter Wellness Day
- DEI
- Spirit Day
- Puppies Visit Monthly (To Love a Canine)
- Zen Den
- Spring Wellness Day
- Miles for Mental Health Fun Run
- Aavidum Club
- “You’re Part of a Pack” pins for graduation seniors
- Friday music between classes
- Dimmed hallway lights on Friday
- No Name Calling Day

Goal #2: To sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.

Outcome: Meet criteria and compliance with the Downingtown Area School District student wellness policy including, nutrition education, physical education, physical activity, nutrition standards for food service, and other -school based activities.

- Physical Education Curriculum
- Health Education Curriculum (nutrition education unit
- Heart Health Month
- Basketball Tournament for students and staff

Goal #3: To promote a healthy school environment to meet the health and wellness needs of staff.

Outcome: Increase knowledge and skills of DASD staff to support physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

- Staff step Challenge
- Walking Challenge

- Chair Massages
- Suicide Prevention Day
- Community activities partnering students and staff (Food Drives, Blood Drive, Heart Health Month)
- Winter Wellness Day
- Spring Wellness Day
- Spirit Day
- Puppies Visit for students and staff
- Philadelphia Eagles Programs
- Weight Loss Challenge
- DASD Walking Challenge
- Basketball Tournament
- Secret Elf for Staff
- Tissues
- Staff Breakfast
- Friday Music between classes
- Dim hallway lights on Friday

Living Well @ DASD



Background

Living Well@DASD was created almost 20 years ago. Our initial goal at the time was to help our employees “shape” their own future with a healthier lifestyle in order to help them in turn “shape” the future of their students. As we grew into this initiative, it became apparent that we could influence other factors with our wellness program. We saw that we could have a positive impact on the budget by containing the ever-increasing health care costs and reducing absenteeism along with the costs related to absenteeism. In addition, the positive response from staff can have an effect on increasing morale and productivity. As the program has evolved and the need grew, we began to promote awareness about the importance of mental health and stress management.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, Living Well @ DASD has continued to maintain the following mission and supporting goals over the years. However, the program has used varying activities in order to achieve these goals.



Mission

To create a progressive and sustainable wellness program that increases knowledge and skills in order to enhance the mental, social, emotional, and physical well-being of staff.

Goal #1: To increase awareness of lifestyle choices, to encourage overall health and wellness, and to promote the resources available to employees to meet their wellness goals by creating an effective communication plan that reaches all employees through multiple vehicles.

Goal #2: Provide staff with resources that allow them to address their wellness needs and improve their health.

Goal #3: Contain costs and increase fiscal responsibility.

Goal #4: Develop a culture that promotes and enhances student growth by combining efforts of student and staff wellness to have a District Wide Coordinated program.

Goal #5: Increase participation in various staff wellness endeavors.



Overall Staff Wellness Program

During 2023-2024 Staff Wellness was included as a goal in the District's Health and Wellness Action Plan. Our strategy to support our goals included:

- Developing a district level staff wellness committee to identify, facilitate, and communicate programs and resources.
- Partnering with K-12 wellness liaisons to communicate staff wellness activities, programs, and resources.
- Creating professional development addressing physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being of DASD staff.
- Developing messaging, strategies, and programs to support staff wellness.



FLU SHOTS

This year, DASD offered an on-site Flu Shot Clinic through Rite Aide that allowed our employees to have their insurance billed directly. Our clinic was a success. Over a period of two days, we actually inoculated well over 200 staff members. They were also able to provide Covid, TDAP, Pneumonia, Shingles, RSV, and/or Hep A and B, if the person qualified.



WELLNESS ACTIVITIES SPONSORED BY THE DISTRICT WELLNESS COMMITTEE

The following are a listing of the activities that we used during the 2023-2024 school year...

- ✓ Distribute emails to all staff with wellness resources available and current wellness initiatives.
- ✓ Promote Health Advocate newsletters, webinars, and other resources regularly.
- ✓ Provide Wellness Tips and News in Monthly HReminders newsletter.
- ✓ Have rep from each building as a liaison to further promote wellness initiatives in buildings.
- ✓ Wellness Advisory Council meetings with School Health Councils to share information and ideas.
- ✓ Flu Shots
- ✓ Promote SwiftMD - made available to all staff
- ✓ Health Advocate – Employee Assistance and Advocacy Program - Promote initiatives/webinars
- ✓ Staff Wellness Discounts from Local Businesses
- ✓ Promote wellness opportunities available through our insurance products, i.e. gym reimbursements, 6 free nutritionist visits, etc.
- ✓ Healthy Lifestyle Matching Program.
- ✓ Access to gym equipment after school hours.
- ✓ Healthy snack machines.
- ✓ Each building also had individual staff wellness activities for staff, such as fitness classes, nutrition classes, healthy foods, etc.

WELLNESS ACTIVITIES SPONSORED PROMOTED BY INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS

- ✓ Mindful Morning Teacher Group
- ✓ Staff Volleyball
- ✓ Stress Reducers - challenges using mindfulness activities
- ✓ Staff Walking Club
- ✓ Wellness Week - school wide incentive program and awareness including information shared during morning announcements
- ✓ Bradford Buddies Mentor Program with staff member and place with a student who needs a mentor
- ✓ Staff Necklace Challenge
- ✓ Staff lunch preparing a healthy lunch together
- ✓ Fit Club for Teachers
- ✓ Spirit Days
- ✓ Wellness Week for staff and students together
- ✓ Staff Get-Togethers outside of school including: book club, axe throwing, restaurant gatherings
- ✓ Valentine's Day Kisses (let a staff member know you appreciate them - held during the month of February)
- ✓ Staff Breakfasts
- ✓ Staff and Student Wellness Calendar (with prizes for completion)
- ✓ Wellness Wednesdays
- ✓ Staff Steps Challenge - Move More In March
- ✓ Teacher Field Day
- ✓ School Walking Path
- ✓ Fitness Fridays for Staff
- ✓ Salad Bar Day
- ✓ Staff Yoga after school
- ✓ 1st Friday Treats each month for staff
- ✓ Staff Holiday Party and End of the Year Party
- ✓ Back to School Staff Outing
- ✓ Wellness Activities including: Maintain Don't Gain, Wall Pilates, Walking Club, Biggest Loser)
- ✓ Community Outreach (including CMMD Run, Relay for Life)
- ✓ Staff Holiday Week (each day during the week preceding winter break there was a fun treat / surprise for staff)
- ✓ Staff Mental Health (Counselors from A Haven met with staff to discuss mental health and grieving)
- ✓ Staff Walking Challenge (during the month of March, staff were placed on teams to compete)
- ✓ Secret Elf for Staff

- ✓ Weight Challenge
- ✓ Tissues for Staff
- ✓ Breakfasts during Parent Teacher Conferences
- ✓ Friday music between classes
- ✓ Half-lights out in Hallway on Fridays
- ✓ Suicide Prevention Day - activities for students and staff
- ✓ Community outreach including (Thanksgiving Food Drive, Blood Drive, Events with the Philadelphia Eagles for autism awareness, Importance of Community with the Philadelphia Eagles, Homelessness and Hunger)
- ✓ Winter Wellness Day (students and staff) yoga, meditation, puppies visit, basketball, weight room)
- ✓ Spirit Day
- ✓ Spring Wellness Day (morning announcements and poster, staff and students wore red)
- ✓ Heart Health Month
- ✓ Weight Loss Challenge
- ✓ Pickleball Tournament - students and staff
- ✓ Sleep Challenge with participation prizes
- ✓ Local chiropractor provided free neck/back massages



DASD Walking Challenge -May and April

This year, this District promoted the DASD Walking Challenge, which allowed employees to show their school pride, compete against other DASD schools, win weekly individual prize, and earn prizes for their school! Plus, burn calories, lose weight, improve heart health, and get fit! This competition was the perfect excuse to spend time with friends and family, enjoy the outdoors, and have some fun!

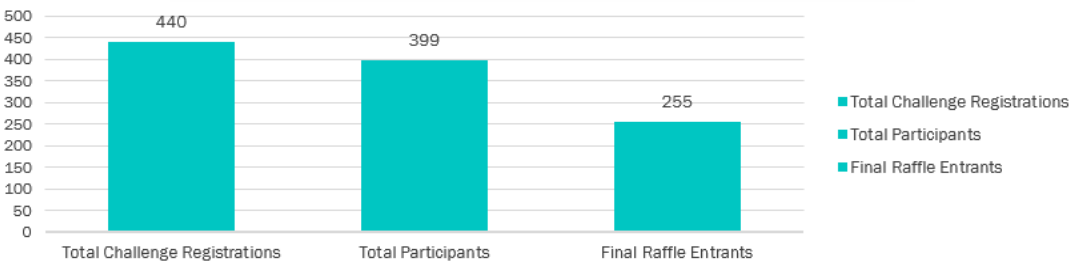
In April, this district wide wellness initiative was launched. This program included individual weekly challenges as well as team challenges. Participants were able to download an app that gave them real time results. This app was created by Wellworks, in association with Independence Blue Cross. The goals for each challenge grew increasingly harder as the weeks went on. Weekly communication and health tips were emailed to everyone. Even if someone chose not to participate, they would still receive valuable health information to apply to their own health journey.

We received many positive comments on the Walking Challenge including:

- ❖ It is wonderful to see staff walking on track for walking challenge
- ❖ I think it has made an impact. Yesterday, we were all out of the building walking.
- ❖ I feel a lot of people in my school were really excited about the walking challenge.
- ❖ I have enjoyed the walking challenge. It is motivating and the prizes are even more motivating.
- ❖ More walkers--motivation to get moving
- ❖ The challenges motivate me as I am competitive.
- ❖ I joined the step challenge, so it's keeping me moving.
- ❖ Team challenges are fun!

**DASD WALKING CHALLENGE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
2024**


CHALLENGE DATES: 04/01/2024 – 05/24/2024



This challenge was an overall huge success in terms of participation. This 8-week walking challenge began on April 1 and ended on May 24. All 16 schools plus Central Office competed. We had 440 participants from all of our buildings. The buildings were their “team” which made for great competition and community. The total amount of steps by all teams recorded was 193,338,041 which translates to 96,669 miles. The average steps per participant was 8,973. There were individual prizes given every week along with a team prize given halfway and at the finish. Throughout the 8 weeks participants developed a healthy habit, built a strong community and attained sense of accomplishment. Our overall winner was the STEM Academy.

The following were the outcomes that were expected of the Walking challenge:

- ✓ Encouraged coworkers to walk during lunch breaks, record their steps
- ✓ Build stronger relationships within the teams
- ✓ Helped with stress and mindset
- ✓ Outside walking allowed staff to get Vitamin D
- ✓ Staff members saw this “walking challenge” as non-threatening.
- ✓ Walking could be done at the convenience of the person.
- ✓ A unique piece of this structure was that other activities could be converted to steps.
- ✓ If a routine was already in place, it could be recorded and tracked.
- ✓ Got positive feedback from school principals -friendly competition
- ✓ Everyone could participate- very inclusive
- ✓ This helped establish a habit of walking at lunchtime that carried past the challenge



HealthAdvocate™



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Navigation**



**Nurse-Guided
Population Health**



**Life & Emotional
Health**



**Personalized
Well-Being**



**Empowering health and well-being
We're here to help**

Health Advocate

In 2013-2014, the District introduced Health Advocate. Health Advocate is the nation's leading independent healthcare advocacy and assistance company that provides several personalized services.

For employees, Health Advocate is a free, confidential program that offers EAP+Work/Life benefits to help employees address difficulties in their life by providing short term assistance with personal, family, and work issues that are having an impact on their life and ability to focus on work. There are 8 free sessions for counseling per issue, one free session for legal, and one for financial work per issue. In addition, it simplifies the navigation of the health care system by helping employees find the right doctors, resolving billing and insurance claim issues, explaining benefit coverages, helping parents or in-laws with the complexities of Medicare, and much more!

Some of the topics that Health Advocate focused on this year were Supporting Your Kids: Identifying and Addressing Signs of Stress, Procrastination: Getting & Staying Motivated, Living with Loss, at Home and Work, Mental Health and Me, Reducing Your Risk of Cancer, Sleep Better for a Healthier You, Staying Healthy As You Age, Relaxation for Better Balance, and Empathy in the Workplace.

This year, we experienced a 26.1% increase on Health Advocate utilization. Employees and their dependents are contacting Health Advocate mainly for emotional issues including relationships, anxiety, depressions, and stress. The advocacy service is also used for locating specialists, care coordination, and claims issues. We are proud to be able to offer this free and confidential resource to our employees.

Health Advocate has a mobile friendly design and app, which allows for easy access to help on the go, placing all of your Health Advocate EAP+Work/Life benefits right at your fingertips.



SwiftMD – Now also known as Revive Health

A benefit that was added in December 2016 and vigorously promoted was SwiftMD, a telemedicine company. In July of 2023, all employees became eligible to participate in the Telemedicine benefit with SwiftMD. The wellness effect of this benefit is to give employees as well as their dependents easier and quicker access to healthcare to treat minor illnesses with the hope of reducing absenteeism and increasing productivity from a healthy employee.

SwiftMD is available at no cost to the employee. With this benefit, employees can consult with U.S. board-certified doctors at any time over the phone or Internet, from home, office, or on the road. These physicians can diagnose, recommend treatment, and submit prescriptions to the pharmacy of choice.

The most common uses of our program are for sinusitis, upper respiratory infections, and conjunctivitis. The program provides the District cost savings when an employee uses this service as an alternative to a more costly venue such as a hospital or urgent care. In looking at the number of employees and dependents taking advantage of these resources, we find that our numbers continue to grow each month!



Wellness Mini-Grants

The purpose of the DASD Wellness Mini Grants is to provide K-12 wellness teams with resources necessary to support DASD Wellness Goal (s) and create healthy school communities for health and learning. The maximum grant per school is typically \$250. While this has been available in prior years, this year, we worked to make the funds more accessible to the school and to simplify the process. We updated the application and communicated with the buildings. Our hope is to eliminate some of the barriers to participation in wellness activities and to incentivize more participation with these funds.

Wellness Liaison Survey

In April of this year, the Wellness Advisory Committee distributed a survey of the Wellness Liaisons and their committees to help plan wellness activities for the new school year. We really wanted to see what people in the buildings wanted to get out of an employer wellness program in order for the District to cater to the needs and wants of our employee population.

Our findings show that employees appreciated the current community discounts, flu shots, the availability of Health Advocate, and the Walking Challenge. Knowing this information will allow us to offer many of the initiatives in the coming year.

Email is the preferred method for the District to communicate our wellness initiatives. The monthly newsletter was noted as being popular among staff and is delivered via email.

When asked what additional initiatives people wanted to see, they were looking for on-site fitness programs and physical activities. Stress management was also highly sought after. However, in another question, some of the deterrents to participation in these activities is lack of time, having their own routine, and lack of motivation. Many employees indicated that after school activities would be best closely followed by lunch time.

Some comments we received were that on the wellness program:

- ❖ Bring back the Wellness Fair.
- ❖ I think one of the biggest obstacles is funding. We have many great ideas and events we'd love to implement, but we don't have funding.
- ❖ Just want to say thank you to those involved. :)
- ❖ I would love to see the school run a wellness fair/activity day for staff
- ❖ I wish we had group exercise options available for faculty-- yoga, Pilates, etc., with solid showering

options for before school.

- ❖ Chair massage
- ❖ Healthy lunches available for purchase at school randomly. (Salads, smoothies...)
- ❖ Health Advocate was extremely helpful in finding a mental health professional quickly
- ❖ The Health newsletters are really valuable. I always read them.

This information will be referred to when proposing and planning upcoming wellness programming.



Outcomes

Through the years, we have looked at varying measurements to help shape our evolving wellness programs such as:

- ✓ The cost of health care.
- ✓ The cost of sick days.

- ✓ Participation in wellness related activities.
- ✓ Feedback provided by employees.
- ✓ Utilization and trends found in DASD's health claims.

Over the years, the wellness program has played a part in influencing costs, such as attendance costs and medical claims. However, similar to the last few years, we are unable to correlate the wellness program with the various costs. While healthcare costs are higher, utilization appears to be stabilizing as we get farther away from the COVID pandemic. The increases will continue due to the actual costs of healthcare services continuing to increase. Our Work Compensation costs are increasing as well. The costs to pay our substitute teachers due to absences have increased greatly as well. Unfortunately, our wellness measures cannot compete with the increases in the healthcare and attendance cost, but it can help to mitigate. Therefore, we will continue to strive to enhance our wellness opportunities.

Next Steps

With the help of the Wellness Advisory Committee, 2024-2025 is on its way to meeting the wellness needs we have identified. Our committee is open to taking on more team members to help meet our goals with new ideas. Our overall goals will remain the same, and in order to maintain a robust program, our methods to achieve those goals need to stay innovative and inclusive. Committing time, money, and resources continue to be essential to achieving our goals. We value our staff and know that their wellness will impact both their professional and personal lives. Making health and wellness a priority is beneficial for all.



Wellness Subcommittee: Goal (3) Sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.



DASD Food Service in Partnership with Aramark

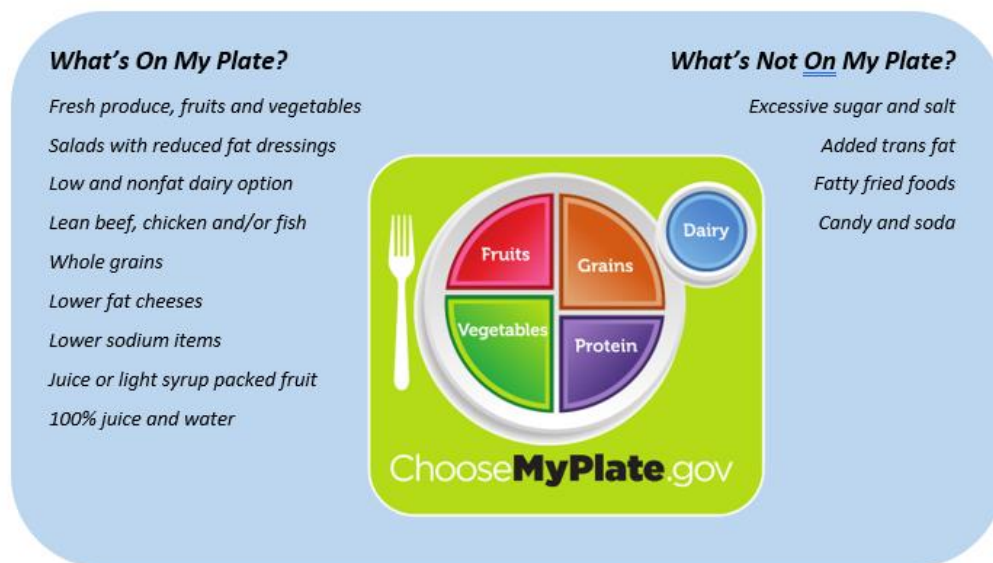
As Downingtown Area School District's Food Service Partner, our Aramark team is passionate about creating an excellent student dining experience to save families from losing time together to pack a lunch! We are always looking to improve our program to be more exciting, healthy, and fun for both our team and our students. We encourage lifelong, healthy behaviors through an approach that is student-centric, evidence-

based, comprehensive, integrated, and based on operating experience and excellence.

This year, our focus areas were: To Provide a Wide Variety of Nutritious Foods, including Expanding our Vegetarian Options in all Levels, Empower Healthy Consumers, and Source Sustainably

Provide a Wide Variety of Nutritious Foods

Choose My Plate: Offerings for the 23-24 school year continued to include foods that were nutrient rich, high quality, safe, wholesome, healthy (including snacks), environmentally responsible and local when available.



Elementary Program Menu: We offered a variety of healthy options in compliance with the USDA guidelines and were always able to provide a tasty and nutritious breakfast to each student who wanted one. And due to the USDA waiver for free breakfast meals, we saw more students than ever participating in our breakfast program – some Elementary schools saw hundreds of students lining up for breakfast each day!

For our Elementary lunch menu, we continued to invest in our pre-order technology, which presented a win for our parents, the Business Office, and our operation. Parents gained additional insight and influence over their students' menu selections, the Business Office will have an easier time of ensuring payment for meals (if/when

the paid lunch option returns in the future), and our operation was afforded additional flexibility due to this system. We were even able to offer school-specific menus to create unique offerings for each location!

To help with providing more variety and increase our vegetarian options, we went from providing three options a day to now providing five options a day. These additional two options helped us to include one hot vegetarian item daily and the other additional option was dedicated to always being a type of salad. Our Elementary lunch menu also saw many new fresh and healthy menu options! Students enjoyed the following new vegetarian/ healthier menu items that were well received:

- Three Cheese Hoagie
- Hummus Vegetable Pack
- Apple Pack
- Sweet Vegetable Nuggets
- Garbanzo Potato Bowl
- Egg Salad



Secondary Program Menu: Our Secondary schools likewise saw an amazing uptick in daily student diners for breakfast and lunch. Our focus was to serve every student efficiently while maintaining our healthy student favorite menu options.

During the past school year, we have made more vegetarian options available daily by taking specials and modifying them to be vegetarian. At least one of the features and or daily specials are vegetarian. We provide more varieties of pre-packaged salads, wraps and hummus packs at the middle school level. At the high School Level, we have provided the hummus packs and at least one vegetarian special daily besides the veggie burgers, veggie nuggets and grilled cheeses.

This year we featured the following new items/ options:

- Hummus Packs that change daily in terms of the different vegetables that were included. They also rotated in different flatbreads and hard-boiled eggs.
- In addition to the Meatball Hoagie and Chicken Parmesan Sandwiches that we provide at this level, we included an option for these items to be substitutes with a veggie burger or veggie nuggets.
- For our ever-popular walking tacos, we included black beans as an excellent meat alternative.
- In addition, we provided veggie nuggets as a meat substitute in entree specials such as General Tso, Orange Chicken, Teriyaki Chicken and Sweet & Sour Chicken. All of these entrees were served over rice.



Empower Healthy Consumers

At Aramark, we empower millions to make healthier choices every day. Through healthy and plant-forward menu innovation, consumer engagement and education, community outreach and food safety programs, we're deeply committed to a creating a culture of health and wellbeing.

Aramark's Safety Assurance in Food and Environments (SAFE™) policy and management system guides food service employees to follow specific standards and procedures and track important food safety information. We take a disciplined, multi-tiered approach to safely serving customers with food allergies. AllerTrain™, an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) – accredited food allergen training and certification is available to all employees and more than 10,800 employees have received certification in allergen management and event

response as of the end of fiscal year 2023.

Our health and wellness strategy is driven by the belief that cultivating an environment filled with an abundance of wholesome, fresh, nutritious foods that taste great is the single most important thing we can do to create a culture of health and well-being.

Our strategy brings an integrated approach focused on healthy food, nutrition education, consumer marketing, and wellness programs:

- We **ENABLE** a healthy food environment by providing a broad selection of great tasting, healthy food and beverages and by clearly communicating relevant nutritional information.
- We **EDUCATE** to support informed and empowered consumers by providing actionable, evidence-based nutrition, environmental, and wellness information.
- We **ENCOURAGE** to interest in and the appeal of healthy choices, through marketing programs.
- We **ENGAGE** to build active participation in our wellness programs and provide insights, ideas, and inspiration on digital and social media platforms.

Source Sustainably

Aramark has a deep, long-standing commitment to global procurement practices that aim to positively impact people, animals, and the environment. Our Responsible Sourcing program focuses on adopting environmentally sustainable, ethical, and inclusive sourcing practices throughout our supply chain. These practices benefit local and global economies, the communities we serve, and the planet.

Aramark's Sustainable Sourcing Policy addresses our priorities, including animal welfare, antibiotics stewardship, land conversion, no-deforestation and biodiversity, sustainable seafood, and embedding circularity.

For each priority, our actions are guided by a set of principles and targets that serve as the foundation for what we expect from our suppliers and the timeframe for achieving specific goals.

We engage priority suppliers regularly throughout the year, requiring reporting on their sustainability efforts.

Our pathway to achieving our science-based targets will include increased supplier engagement and a concentrated analysis of our purchases and supplier selection.

Looking Forward

As we start building toward the next school year, we have some exciting news to share that will benefit the entire DASD community. Aramark will be hiring for a Registered Dietitian to be a full-time member of the Management Team.

Our registered dietitians are experts in the federal and state child-feeding programs and regulations, dietary guidelines, and menu planning. They provide information, training, and support related to general nutrition, healthy food products, recipes and menus.

The new role will be a great support to the school nurses as they manage allergies and any other food level concerns. The Registered Dietitian will work directly with parents and students to help ensure that we meet any specific dietary concerns that either the parent or student will have. They will also help ensure that all menus and recipes follow the State and Federal guidelines. Lastly, this role will be a key intermediate between the Wellness Committee and Food Services.



Communities That Care of Greater Downingtown: Engaging parents in DASD Wellness

The Downingtown Area School District works in close partnership with the Communities That Care of Greater Downingtown. CTC plays a vital role in promoting and supporting healthy school communities to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors linked to substance use and abuse and mental and emotional health issues.

Strategies Completed:

Communities That Care of Greater Downingtown (CTC) and DASD Wellness:

In partnership CTC and DASD offered a virtual parent speaker series to increase education and awareness on mental health and ATOD topics and provide parents with resources and support during the school year. CTC also hosted several collective partners as featured speakers and attended K-12 joint home and school association meetings.

Parent to Parent Podcast

CTC's podcast, "Parent to Parent Real Life Tips to Raise Resilient Kids", released 12 new episodes in its third season this school year. The podcast reached a milestone of over 5,000 total downloads in April and had 2,234 downloads during the 23-24 school year. Episode topics included: the importance of parent communities, finding joy and calm in the chaos, red flags and when to act, and how much to share about your

own experiences with substance use from your youth. This season featured episodes that focused on the nuances in daily parenting and skills on how to cope and manage one's own emotions as well as role model healthy choices. The Podcast webpage had over 1,500 views this year.

Episodes (2023 - 2024 school year)

Episode 36: Creating Joy in the Chaos

Featuring Rosey Celommi

Episode 37: Chrissie's Tech Fails & Fixes from Family Tech

Featuring Sarah Kimmel from Family Tech

Episode 38: It's Too Early Until It Isn't - How Our Experiences Influence How We Parent

Featuring CTC Board President Dan Brady

Episode 39: Their Sport is Their Drug: Supporting Student Athlete Wellness

Featuring Tina George from [Caron Treatment Centers](#)

Episode 40: UPDATE on Chrissie's Tech Fails & Successes to Share

Episode 41: My Kid Hates School - How to Deal with Carol Rothera

Featuring Carol Rothera, LPC

Episode 42: The 4 Parenting Skills You Already Have with Dr. Don McCown

Featuring Don McCown, PhD, MSS, LSW from West Chester University

Episode 43: Stealth vaping, Snapchat & Other Drug Trends with Shannon DiCandilo

Featuring Shannon DiCandilo from Compass Mark

Episode 44: DASD Parents on the Importance of Parent Communities

Featuring 4 parent participants from the CTC Parent to Parent Peer Groups

Episode 45: Red Flags & When to Act with Carol Rothera

Featuring Carol Rothera, LPC

Episode 46: You did it right? How much do we tell our kids about our past alcohol and drug use?

Featuring Beth Bruton from Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems / Chimes

Parent Speaker Series

CTC has partnered with the Downingtown Area School District (DASD) to offer a Parent Speaker Series, including one in person event and two online webinars. Topics included:

- “PEAK Performance: Substance Use Prevention and Wellness for Student Athletes” featuring Tina George, MSW, CPS, from Caron Treatment Centers. This webinar helped parents understand why athletes today are at greater risk for substance use, how they use differently from their non-participating peers, and how parents can help them stay healthy and mentally prepared for their sport.
- Screenagers Film Screening and Panel: CTC supported this in-person film screening hosted by partner Be A Part of the Conversation. The film examined the impact of our digital age on teens' decision-making in relation to substance use, including vaping, alcohol and other drugs. The film screening was followed by a panel discussion with an adolescent treatment provider and educators.
- “Digital Parenting with Family Tech” featured speaker, Sarah Kimmel, founder of Family Tech and industry expert on providing parents/caregivers with real-world, tried and true, tips for understanding and managing the technology in their homes. This presentation included ways to manage tech in your home, current trends of tech use for all ages, and how to build life skills around tech use.

Over 220 parents attended and/or viewed a recording of the Parent Speaker Series this year.

Parent to Parent Blog

This year Chrissie Dziembowski continued writing the Parent to Parent Blog to share parenting thoughts and reflections. In 2023-24, 12 blog posts were published. The blog web page on CTC's website has garnered 933 pageviews.

Parent to Parent Peer Support Groups (K-12) funding provided through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)

This past year, Communities that Care of Greater Downingtown completed Year 2 of a \$148,336 from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's Substance Abuse Education and Demand Reduction (SAEDR) Funds to support the program, Parent to Parent: Peer Support Groups. In year 2 of the funding the groups were renamed: "Parent to Parent Building Connections".

Our Parent to Parent groups provide education and awareness of substance use prevention and mental health topics in a format that addresses the ages and stages of our K-12 students. Emphasis was placed on the importance of building connections - connections with our children, to our partner, to other parents and to school and community resources. We successfully hosted groups for elementary and secondary parents as well as a monthly group for secondary parents to help navigate their child's existing emotional health challenges. Along the way, attendees have shared and discovered techniques, tips and tricks to tackle today's common challenges.

Parent attendees have consistently communicated that the sessions have improved their parenting skills and have been "definitely" worth their time. These sessions have helped to strengthen families and increase youth protective factors. In 2024-2025, we will host one parent group each month to continue to provide support and opportunities to interact with other parents.

2023-2024 Topics:

Family Values & Culture

Making Transitions Successful

How to Have Uncomfortable Conversations

The Importance of Balancing the Busy

Friendships & Bullying

Grit & Resiliency

Sibling Relationships

Proactive Parenting & Staying One Step Ahead

By the numbers:

28 sessions covering 8 different topics with parents of K-12 students.

80% of parents participated in 2 or more sessions.

HYPE: Healthy Youth Positive Energy Clubs

7 HYPE Clubs:

Marsh Creek 6th Grade Center, Downingtown Middle School, Lionville Middle School, Downingtown High School West, Downingtown High School East, Downingtown STEM Academy and Hopewell United Methodist Church.

165 Student Participants and 44 Prevention and Advocacy Activities focused on mental health and substance use prevention!

“On our recent trip to the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg, I accompanied seven Downingtown High School West’s HYPE Club students and my co-advisor, Whitnie Weaver, to engage with our local legislators on critical public health issues. The students had the invaluable opportunity to meet with Representative Dan Williams from the 74th District in Chester County, who provided a comprehensive overview of how to effectively advocate for their causes. They also had in-depth discussions with the aides of Representative Danielle Friel Otten and a memorable interaction with Representative Christina Sappey of the 158th Legislative District, who invited them onto the House floor and had them recognized at the start of the session. The primary focus of our advocacy was the Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA) and its current exemptions that still leave many Pennsylvanians exposed to harmful secondhand smoke. The students passionately advocated for stricter regulations to close these loopholes and highlighted the urgent need for anti-youth vaping campaigns. They emphasized that vaping also produces harmful emissions, posing significant risks to public health. This experience was incredibly enriching for the students, giving them firsthand insight into the legislative process and the power of their voices in advocating for change. They left inspired and motivated to continue this critical work, with a strong desire to return next year to further their advocacy efforts. Everyone involved found the day to be highly rewarding and educational.”

Susan Tancredi

HYPE Advisor at West on her experience bringing 7 students to Day at the Capitol sponsored by TRU on 5/7/24.





Mental Health Promotion:

- Wellness Walks on the Narwhal Trail
- Suicide Awareness Day (September)
- Bullying Prevention Awareness Day (October)
- Winter Wellness Day

- Visiting local associated living community at the holidays
- Valentine's Day cookie Decorating event/ messaging for mental health
- Unity Day (March) "Bee Drug -Free , Grow Into A Healthy Mindset"
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Supported Miles for Mental Health fun run and walk (DEHS)
- "Be Kind to Your Mind, Live Drug Free" as part of Kindness Week activities
- World Kindness Day - time and space in school library to relax and recharge
- Kindness Week - including small notes with messages, and Kind bars with messages

Red Ribbon Week and Drug and Alcohol Prevention Strategies:

- Students decorated their school with red ribbons and gave out bracelets that had a "live drug free" message.
- Wear Red to School Day including red ribbons and stickers
- Student Created school wide messaging posters
- Student Created banners and signatures for a drug free lifestyle
- Pre- Prom - "Be Safe at Prom" video
- CTC sponsored drug and alcohol prevention video contest
- 2024 Take Down Tobacco Meme Contest
- School wide bulletin board focused on the dangers of vaping
- School wide posters focused on driving under the influence
- "I Will Not Do Drugs" board for pledge and student signatures
- Holiday cards for staff with a Drug Free Pin
- At STEM, the students dressed up and pledged against using drugs to raise awareness during the week. They also handed out stickers that promoted drug and alcohol prevention to students who pledged to live drug free.
- Students at the 6th Grade Center also celebrated Red Ribbon week with stickers and encouraged youth to sign a banner to pledge to live a drug free life.

Club Fairs

- Students hosted a table to talk with their fellow students to increase participation and awareness of the HYPE Club. The students share what HYPE is all about – a platform for students to promote alternative healthy social activities and events for youth by utilizing peer to peer messaging, including how to reduce alcohol use and drugs as well as promoting positive mental health.

Projects with Community Partners

- The Crime Victims Center of Chester County presented: Respectful Relationships” to the HYPE club at DWHS
- Holcomb Behavioral Health partnered with HYPE clubs for the community -wide Project Sticker Shock”. DWHS partnered with DMS and DEHS met (2) local restaurants to place stickers on pizza boxes raising awareness (for adults) about the consequences of providing alcohol to minors.
- DWHS HYPE club students participated in the Downingtown community Holiday Parade.
- (7) DWHS HYPE students participated with Holcomb Behavioral Health in the 2024 Day at the Capitol in Harrisburg PA to meet and engage with legislators, learn about the legislative process, become informed of issues and solutions to clean indoor air, develop advocacy skills and strategies to share locally with peers.

Our Wellness Advisory Committee Members

- Dr. Bob O'Donnell
- Dr. Lou Chance
- Dr. Rob Reed
- Sarah Brooks
- Dr. Nick Argonish
- Dr. Bethann Cinelli
- Dr. Ann Berios
- Pia DiSanto
- Kim Gardner
- Corey Sigle
- Kristin DelGrippe
- Mary Wallin
- Alicia Krebs
- Patrick O'Conner
- Jarvon William
- Cierra Martinez
- Madhu Gurthy
- Mindy Ross
- Eric McComsey
- Cynthia Randall
- Jennifer Shealy
- Greta Neff
- Kristin Welk
- Karen Cichewicz
- Allison Gangl

Our K-12 School Wellness Liaisons

Annemarie Kirk	<i>Beaver Creek Elementary School</i>
Amy Tompkin	<i>Bradford Heights Elementary School</i>
Mark Young	<i>Brandywine Wallace Elementary School</i>
Meghan Pealer	<i>East Ward Elementary School</i>
Kelly McQuire	<i>Lionville Elementary School</i>
Ashley Procopio	<i>Pickering Valley Elementary School</i>
Ashley Garrison	<i>Shamona Creek Elementary School</i>
Ariel Grecco	<i>Springton Manor Elementary School</i>
Michele Powell	<i>Uwchlan Hills Elementary School</i>
Nicole Stabilito and Megan Kay	<i>West Bradford Elementary School</i>
Becky Leister	<i>Marsh Creek 6th Grade Center</i>
Todd Shirley	<i>Downingtown Middle School</i>

Jamie Blankley	<i>Lionville Middle School</i>
Kim Sapper	<i>Downingtown High School West</i>
Jynelle Sass	<i>Downingtown High School East</i>
Lorena Sevi	<i>STEM Academy</i>

Our School K-12 Wellness Committee Members

Meghan Pealer	Jon Zelznck
Dr. Nick Argonish	Kelli McIntosh
Rachel Yacovett	Maria O’Keefe
Brudget Atkins	Erin Connolly
Laura Sirico	Ariel Grecco
Dr. Jasmine Kessler	Robyn Spear
Meghan Ellis	Stuart Greenberg
Amy Tompkins	Loretta Kennedy
Alyssa Hiser	Leanne Harper
Kara Sherlock	Tara Peterson
Kim Doerr	Natalie Whitley
Michelle Powell	Vanessa Lathrop
Robert Geuring	Mark Young
Kelly Hale	Dr. Shawn Wright
Kelly McGuire	Rhonda Treadway
Katelyn Anthony	Ashley Garrison
Kris Mills	Brian Hook
Jillian Speer	Melanie Susi
Elizabeth Hoffmna	Evan Breisblatt,
Sarah DiCecco	Kevin Crail,
Julia Woulfe	Ryan Cronomiz
Caitlin Pozza	Justin Daberkoe

Julie Dimino	Charyse DiLuollo
Abigail Johnson	Heather Gallo
Nicole Stabilito	Dr. Jill Whalen
Megan Kay	Eric McCormick
Teri Blackburn	Brandon Prieto
Caroline Piergiovanni	Lorena Sevi
Danielle Koch	Kautar Sahli
Kathy Bender	Susan Carrier
Becky Strachan	Kim Sapper
Casie Gery	Susan Yeager
Rebecca Leister	Susan Hefferman
Sue Brower	Jackie Paugh
Karen Sabatini	Chris Ker
Courtney Mackel	Todd Shirley
Barb Mainello	Stacey
Michelle Lozito	Tuckloff-Vansant
Laura Roth	Stephen Jenkins
Janine Weiss	Jaimie Blankley
Jen Bergman	Samanthga-Kelly
Jynelle Sass	