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Top Colorado Schools Honored as Healthy School Champions

Denver, Colorado — Colorado schools are creating supportive school environments by improving on student health and wellness programs. They're finding out that by teaching to the whole child their students' academic and social successes improve significantly.

Forty-six schools will take center stage to be celebrated as *2017 Healthy School Champions* at the *2017 Colorado Healthy Schools Summit: Putting the Pieces Together* at 8 a.m. Friday, March 3. The summit is presented by [The Colorado Education Initiative](#) (CEI), [Colorado Coalition for Healthy Schools](#), and the [Colorado Healthy Schools Collective Impact](#), and sponsored by [The Colorado Health Foundation](#) and will recognize schools for their successful health and wellness efforts. [See the entire list of 2017 Healthy School Champions.](#)

"No matter how good the teaching, how interesting the curriculum or how beautiful the school is, students will not achieve unless they are healthy, feel safe, and have the ability to navigate challenging issues in their lives," said CEI Director of School Health, Amy Dyett. "This annual event allows us to celebrate schools that have successfully demonstrated the critical link between student health and academic achievement."

The \$7,500 *Platinum Governor's Award for School Health and Wellness* goes to Manitou Springs School District 14 — a district with a philosophy to place health before test scores which leads to happy students, families and staff, and increased academic achievement. This is the top Healthy School Champions award and is given in partnership with the [Governor's Council for Active and Healthy Lifestyles.](#)

Manitou Springs has embedded health as a core component of their mission, vision, policies and instructional model that includes a comprehensive approach to all elements: health education, physical activity, nutrition and socio-emotional and mental health.

As explained by Superintendent Ed Longfield, "We empower our teachers to make a measurable cultural shift and impact the lives of their students and themselves by implementing health and wellness efforts. We know that if we let them innovate and create, great things happen."



“Nearly 50% of students choice-in from outside the district and I believe this is due to our intentionality behind Manitou Springs’ successful efforts to create well-rounded, productive and contributing citizens,” stated Laurie Wood, Manitou Springs’ Director of Secondary Learning Systems.

Schools are awarded based on their implementation of best practices in school health through an assessment tool called Colorado Healthy Schools [Smart Source](#), a narrative outlining their work, and letters of support from a parent, teacher, student, administrator and community member.

“For the winning schools, health and wellness is embedded into the culture and systems. It’s about having an intentional investment to meet the needs of their students and staff in order to achieve academically,” states Dyett. Commissioner of Education, Dr. Katy Anthes adds, “We know how important health and wellness is to academically successful schools. However, schools cannot do this alone and need partnerships with parents, community members and organizations to support healthy kids and communities.”

In Manitou Springs, it’s a collaborative effort between members from the schools, district and the community, including youth, the fire chief, the police chief, and even the mayor. These partnerships between city and school board to tackle health and learning barriers together has led to a variety of efforts, greater volume, and deeper impact to further improve the community.

The Healthy School Champions Recognition program has granted more than \$300,000 in awards over the past six years in the range of \$300 to \$7,500 per school.

About The Colorado Education Initiative

[The Colorado Education Initiative](#) is an independent nonprofit working in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education, educators, schools, districts, and other public education stakeholders to accelerate educational improvement and innovation across Colorado. CEI envisions that every student in Colorado is prepared and unafraid to succeed in school, work, and life, and ready to take on the challenges of today, tomorrow, and beyond.

About the Governor’s Council for Active and Healthy Lifestyles

The [Colorado Governor's Council for Active and Healthy Lifestyles](#) is to promote and support events and programs that encourage physical fitness, educate citizens on the lifelong benefits of an active, healthy lifestyle, and collaborate with government entities, schools, nonprofit associations, businesses, and healthcare and fitness organizations to advance our vision. The Council is a bipartisan physical activity promotion and advocacy group comprised of approximately 18 governor-appointed members and numerous affiliated volunteers representing a wide range of Coloradans.

About Colorado Coalition of Healthy Schools

[The Colorado Coalition for Healthy Schools](#) supports statewide infrastructure and systems to promote healthy schools through policy, surveillance and partnerships. The Coalition is managed through an interagency partnership between the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.



About Colorado's Healthy Schools Collective Impact

[Colorado's Healthy Schools Collective Impact](#) represents a diverse set of stakeholders who are passionate about students, health, and education in Colorado. Working together, we are partnering in new, better ways — thanks to a deliberate investment of time and money. Our vision is that all Colorado youth are healthy and reach their full potential. Our bold goal, is that by 2025, all Colorado K12 public schools provide an environment and culture that integrates health and wellness equitably for all students and staff.

About The Colorado Health Foundation

[The Colorado Health Foundation](#) works to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation by ensuring that all Colorado kids are fit and healthy and that all Coloradans achieve stable, affordable and adequate health coverage to improve their health with support from a network of primary health care and community services. To advance our mission, the Foundation engages the community through grant making, public policy and advocacy, private sector engagement, strategic communications, evaluation for learning and assessment and by operating primary care residency training programs.

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