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thrive report

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February Issue: School Health Services

Core Issue: Health
Services

Fresh from the Field

thrive by the numbers

37,785 Number of Rhode Island children under age 18 that have been diagnosed with asthma.

25 Percentage of RI children that missed one or more school days because of their asthma in 2005-2006.

50 Percentage decrease in gastrointestinal and other illness in the U.S. with handwashing four times a day.

248 Number of School Nurse Teachers in R.I.

632 Number of students

February's Focus: School Health Services

Welcome to the February edition of the *thrive report* that focuses on health services in schools. All schools are required by [Rhode Island General Laws](#) to have "a comprehensive school health program consisting of health education, health services and a healthful school environment." Further, "each, community, school district and appropriate non-public school authority shall be responsible for a comprehensive school health program and shall develop a manual of procedures governing health education, health services and a healthful school environment."

School districts are responsible for ensuring that children have specific health screening and exams to help ensure readiness for learning and immunizations necessary to protect public health. Schools are also responsible for providing general population based services to private schools in their district, such as the documentation of physical exam and immunization requirements, as well as providing health screenings, when appropriate.

Certified school nurse teachers carry out these responsibilities in schools throughout Rhode Island. School leaders rely on the clinical and education expertise of the certified school nurse teachers to assist in the development of the comprehensive school health program required by Rhode Island State Law. Certified school nurse teachers hold certification by the state [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) and are licensed as registered nurses by the Rhode Island Department of Health. Certified school nurse teachers provide a myriad of public health and education services for students, school staff and families.

This edition of the *thrive report* explores the role of the school nurse in supporting and connecting health with academic achievement. Also, the Fresh from the Field segment offers a glimpse into the role of the certified school nurse teacher.

The Core Issue: Health Services and

per nurse in RI.

Sources: [RI Department of Health](#), [Connecticut Department of Health](#), [RI Certified School Nurse Teachers, Inc.](#)

School Health Services Links

[Center for Health and Health Care in Schools](#)

[NEA Health Information Network](#)

[CDC - Student Health and Academic Achievement](#)

[National Association of School Nurses](#)

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The *thrive report* can be found at www.thriveri.org/report.html

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Academic Achievement - School Nurses are the Key!

Have you ever tried to read when you had a bad headache? Or tried rushing through a task when your stomach is rumbling for lunch? Or tried to concentrate on something important when you are sick? At its simplest level, this is the connection between health and academic achievement - healthy kids learn better! The school nurse is the point person for the services, coordination, referrals and interventions that keep kids healthy and able to participate fully in their education.

Children and youth come to school with many health issues and concerns, from chronic conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders) to acute conditions (e.g. a cold, stomach virus, pulled tendon, lice infestation) to medical emergencies or the need for first aid (e.g. cuts, scrapes, bee stings, life-threatening allergy attacks). There is even a growing body of evidence that shows that students often "wait until Monday" to address health concerns through the school nurse, especially if their parents work on weekends or the family has limited resources for health care, transportation to providers, or English-language challenges. The school nurse is the first line of defense for children in treating, monitoring and controlling these conditions to ensure optimum function during the course of the school day. And the school nurse is always there.

The nurse is also the key to recognizing potential health problems, especially those that effect learning, through the use of health screenings and record review. School nurses are responsible to ensure that all students have received vision, hearing, and speech screenings, whether through the school or through their own primary care provider. The school nurse reviews each student's record to ensure immunizations are up-to-date and that a physical exam has been performed at regular intervals.

Since Rhode Island is committed to improved academic outcomes for all kids, then we must all contribute to the support and resources needed to help each student achieve their optimum level of participation in the educational process. The Rhode Island Departments of Education and Health, the [Rhode Island Association of Certified School Nurse Teachers](#), and other organizations and agencies throughout the state work together to provide professional development opportunities, technical assistance, on-line resources, and other supports to assist school nurses in this critical role. School district policies and protocols, staffing and resource allocation, strategic plans and facilities need to align with this basic understanding that healthy kids learn better. Ever try to learn when you have a headache? Let's thank our school nurses for all that they do to help all kids succeed!

Fresh from the Field

We are very excited to have Jenks Junior High School, Pawtucket; Linda Mendonca, School Nurse Teacher; Principal Susan Pfeil; and students participate in the Fresh from the Field "live" on the thrive website!



Watch Jenks Junior High School - [thrive live!](#) - school nurse teacher interact with students and get a glimpse of a day in the life of a school nurse. Hear how helping students remain healthy is connected to academic success and see how that philosophy is embodied at Jenks Junior High School.

Jenks Junior High School thrives - so can your school!

To share your first-person success stories in "Fresh from the Field," please email Annemarie.Silvia@ride.ri.gov.

As always, we welcome and encourage your feedback about **thrive**, Rhode Island's Coordinated School Health model. Please email us at rosemary.reilly-chammat@health.ri.gov or midge.sabatini@ride.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

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