



CDC Healthy Schools Stories of Achievement

Healthy Students, Ready to Learn

MISSOURI

Offering professional development, technical assistance, and training in a virtual format to *improve* implementation of *Healthy Schools* interventions

During the 2020–2021 school year, Missouri Healthy Schools (MHS) **provided technical assistance to nearly 3,000 people**. MHS also **provided professional development to 8,692 people** over the course of **nearly 300 hours of training**. As part of this effort, MHS created videos, webinars, and newsletters to address COVID-19 guidance in employee and student social and emotional wellbeing, food service operations, and physical education.



Missouri Healthy Schools

This support, professional development, and training were by the collaboration of many partners, including CDC Healthy Schools, [Education Plus](#) (a respected training provider), [MOSHAPe](#), [SHAPE America](#), [Society for Public Health Education](#), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). AAP provided a number of highly regarded pediatricians sitting on COVID-19 guidance boards who were able to consult with MHS and participate in the trainings. This assistance helped MHS during the COVID-19 pandemic when everything shifted to a virtual platform and the major focus became disseminating COVID-19 guidance in a timely manner. As a result of these efforts, districts and schools implemented a variety of activities aimed at increasing the health of both staff and students.

“We were noticing a common theme, and that was stress. When you talk to (teachers) about ‘How can I help you?’ a lot of them said, ‘I just need some time. Time to decompress.’”

– **Jim Wipke**,
Ladue School District
Superintendent

Social and Emotional Well-being

Missouri was one of at least six states that included “wellness days” in their school year to help students and staff decompress. For example, Ladue School District in the St. Louis area built in extra “wellness days” around the Thanksgiving holiday. Instead of just taking Thanksgiving Day and the day after off, the district closed for the entire week of Thanksgiving. This extra time allowed students and teachers extra time for themselves and their families. It also gave them extra time away from the stress of school.

On October 19, 2021, Dr. Chris Kilbride [announced](#) that Monday, November 1, would be a paid day off for every Ritenour



School District employee. The only expectation for the day was that “every staff member, no matter how you serve the students in our district, take the day for self-care—rest, refresh, and recharge.”

Food Service Operations and Nutrition Education

Providing nutritious food to people in need is a priority during trying times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ritenour School District opened the Husky Support Center, which is the home of the district’s bus depot and the [Ritenour Co-Care Food Pantry](#). The Ritenour Co-Care Food Pantry **provides free food to about 750 families** in the school district per month.

As another example, University City School District has launched a [student-led sustainability class](#). This interactive activity allows students to garden, learn bee-keeping skills, and raise chickens. The district also has **distributed 908,739 free meals to district children and families over the pandemic** via a Grab-n-Go and meal delivery program.

Physical Activity

One Missouri school district was determined to increase student physical activity at a time when sedentary behaviors are on the rise. They decided to host a [COLOR run](#). In this untimed, 5-kilometer event, Color Runners were “sprayed” from head to toe at each kilometer with a different colored powder. They started off wearing all white outfits, but finish covered in color. The fun continues in post-event activities. Not only does the run provide physical activity, but it also provides a fun activity that can contribute to the social and emotional well-being of students.

