

# Spotlight on Success

## Milwaukee Public Schools

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**M**ilwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is a large urban school district in Wisconsin with an estimated 76,856 students enrolled in 160 traditional neighborhood, specialty, and charter schools. MPS has a diverse student population. Approximately 88% of students are of color, with the majority of students representing African American (52%) and Hispanic (27%) racial/ethnic populations. A total of 80% of students qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch, and 20% have special needs.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2014, MPS increasingly has coordinated policies, processes, and practices to align with a Whole Child approach and the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model (a model developed jointly by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and ASCD). Efforts in the eight areas of coordinated school health that

began more than a decade ago provided insight into the transition to the WSCC model. As of the 2016-17 academic year, all schools in the district (excluding 25 charter schools) are required to engage in the following:

- MPS schools use the ASCD School Improvement Tool (SiTool) that aligns with ASCD's Whole Child approach and the WSCC model.<sup>2,3</sup>
- Each school develops an action plan that is informed by ASCD SiTool results and includes at least three goals for improvement — at least one goal each for school nutrition, physical activity, and another area of health based on the school's needs — that aim to reduce barriers to learning. Schools submit action plans to the MPS central office team and are responsible for making progress towards these goals over the school year. One example during the 2017-18 academic year is a school that identified three goals, one of which pertains to the social and emotional climate component of the WSCC model. The school plans to increase implementation of mindfulness through daily schoolwide meditations and regular use of "mindful minutes" in classrooms and staff meetings.

Education leadership to advance a Whole Child approach, spearheaded by the Superintendent, the Milwaukee Board of School Directors, and other district leaders, serves as a catalyst for the implementation of the WSCC model at the school level. In 2014, MPS initiated the development of a comprehensive plan to improve student outcomes. Three overarching goals and eight strategic objectives — known as the Eight Big Ideas —

## **Eight Big Ideas: Educate the Whole Child**

**MPS provides a nurturing, consistent and validating experience for every child so that both educational and social-emotional needs are met.**

guide all district efforts, including prioritizations through the district's budget process, programs, and services for students. One of the objectives within the Eight Big Ideas, aligned with the overarching goal of academic achievement, is "Educating the Whole Child." Further, "Re-envision Partnerships" and "Strengthen Communications Systems & Outreach Strategies" are two objectives in improving student, family, and community engagement.<sup>4</sup> The Eight Big Ideas helps to bridge the importance of the WSCC model to student learning and to position community involvement and family engagement as central driving components. Improving the capacity of quality community support activities also is a charge of a regional development effort under the MPS comprehensive plan.

As part of the effort, MPS capitalizes on numerous community partnerships to more effectively implement the WSCC model. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (Children's Hospital) is one key partner that has had a longstanding commitment to MPS. Children's Hospital leads a strategic, coordinated initiative to strengthen community health outcomes by partnering with five Milwaukee neighborhoods with significant health challenges. As an arm of this neighborhood initiative, the hospital directs resources to the school setting, striving to better meet children's needs for healthcare and the social

and physical determinants of health (e.g., education, housing, public safety). Children's Hospital operates within 10 MPS schools, using the WSCC model as a guiding framework for the delivery of programs and services.

The school nurse program is a cornerstone of the Children's Hospital initiative with schools,<sup>5</sup> and school nurses play an important role in integrating the health services component of the WSCC model. Children's Hospital employs a full-time school nurse at each of 10 MPS schools involved in the neighborhood initiative. School nurses conduct health screenings and care for students' various needs with chronic disease management (e.g., asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders, sickle cell anemia), mental health, obesity prevention, and more. School nurses are able to update students' electronic health records if they receive care from Children's Hospital or affiliated clinics, which improves care coordination and communication with the hospital's network of providers. Additional examples of community health strategies led by

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Children's Hospital in partnership with MPS include:

- Facilitating school, community, and clinical linkages including connecting students and families to Children's Hospital community health navigators for increased access to health insurance, primary care, dental health supports, and other community resources to help meet daily basic needs.
- Providing training on the WSCC model for MPS staff to embrace implementation and contribute to a culture that supports health and wellness.
- Assisting schools with the identification of a WSCC coordinator and WSCC team members to strengthen health-related policies and practices and enhance the use of the WSCC model.

While Children's Hospital focuses on 10 MPS schools, some strategies leverage support from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Wisconsin DPI) to extend reach to more MPS schools as well as other schools across the state. For example, Children's

Hospital provides health education resources, including e-learning courses for delivery to students by classroom teachers and school counselors, in collaboration with Wisconsin DPI to develop program content according to Wisconsin Standards in Health Education and the National Health Education Standards. MPS acknowledges the professional development and technical assistance provided by Wisconsin DPI as instrumental in building MPS's capacity to address components of the WSCC model, especially those tied to physical education, physical activity, and nutrition.

Moving forward, MPS will continue to strengthen a Whole Child approach that leverages the synergistic systems, processes, and partnerships already in place at the district- and school-levels. MPS plans to build upon the success of the Children's Hospital initiative and identify ways to further support for these schools and others through use of the WSCC model and with attention to action plans.

For more information on the WSCC model:

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wsc/index.htm>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Milwaukee Public Schools At a Glance 2017-18. Available at:

<http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/MPS-Shared/Documents/MPS-District-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> ASCD Whole Child approach. Available at:

<http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> ASCD School Improvement Tool. Available at:

<http://sitool.ascd.org/Default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fSchools%2fSurveyManagement.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Milwaukee Public Schools Eight Big Ideas. Available at:

<http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/District/Initiatives/8-big-Ideas.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Children's Hospital of Wisconsin School Nurse Program. Available at:

<https://www.chw.org/medical-care/primary-care/primary-care-access/school-nurse-program>

## Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model

A Collaborative Approach to Learning and Health

