

# CATCH Global Foundation

## *Our Case for Support*

### **Background**

The health and wellness of a child is the foundation on which all learning and development occur. Cultivating school environments that prioritize health and wellness is crucial to the future success of all kids, particularly as research shows that a person's physical, mental, and emotional health are deeply [interconnected](#).

Currently, less than a quarter of children in the U.S. are meeting the recommended guidelines for daily [physical activity](#), more than half of youth in the U.S. have [poor quality diets](#), and nearly one-third of children experience [poor mental health](#).

Given that children spend roughly half of their waking hours at school and often rely on schools for a large portion of their activity and nutrition, it is essential that schools cultivate and maintain healthy cultures that support a student's overall wellbeing.

**When children are empowered to understand their health needs and be their healthiest selves, they are able to thrive academically and socially, contributing to better physical, mental and emotional health, economic, and relational outcomes throughout their lifetime.**

Since 1988, CATCH has been empowering school communities to cultivate Whole Child Wellness as a lever for student success and social equity. In 2014, CATCH Global Foundation was formed to significantly increase access to our community-driven approach for schools negatively impacted by social determinants of health.

Our unique evidence-based coordinated school health framework and platform of K-12 health education programs apply a Mind-Heart-Body approach to student learning. As a result, all students have the opportunity to learn, practice, and develop skills to protect and nourish their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing through foundational behaviors like staying active, eating well, avoiding substances, and expressing feelings constructively.

## What is a healthy school culture?

Having a healthy school culture means that health and wellness are recognized as vital components to learning and child development and are incorporated into the policies, places, instruction, and messaging that students encounter throughout the school day. Having a school culture in which health and wellness are an important part of “how we do things” goes hand-in-hand with having a healthy school climate where students and staff feel connected, engaged, and supported in a way that positively impacts their health and wellbeing.

CATCH contributes to a healthy school culture through engaging, evidence-based and evidence-informed programs that include instructional materials and a robust sequence of training and technical assistance, including:

- ***Comprehensive Health and Physical Education*** - Grounded in scientifically accurate and trauma-informed instruction, students learn about the importance of healthy and active living, develop necessary skills, and have opportunities to be physically active and make healthy choices during the school day.
- ***Social Emotional Learning*** - Students gain competence in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making while in a safe and supportive environment leading to a sense of belonging and connection to their school and peers.
- ***Substance Misuse Prevention*** - Substance misuse, particularly [vaping](#) nicotine, negatively impacts brain development, lung, and cardiovascular health, as well as [mental health](#) among youth, making it incompatible with a safe and supportive school climate.
- ***Whole Child Coordination*** - Health and wellness is integrated into a school’s policies and practices, such that students see, hear, and experience positive health messaging and have opportunities to engage in healthy behaviors throughout the school day and across learning environments. Parents are engaged and teachers lead by example, while students are incentivized and rewarded for making healthy choices that promote physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

## Why is a healthy school culture important?

[Research](#) shows that a healthy school culture and climate positively impacts the academic achievement gap between low- and high-income students, and that all schools, regardless of socioeconomic level, can improve their culture and climate.

According to the CDC, students who feel more [connected to school](#) are:

- Less likely to engage in risky behaviors
- More likely to engage in positive health behaviors like physical activity and healthy eating
- Less likely to have poor mental health, including emotional distress and thoughts of suicide
- More likely to have better grades and test scores, school attendance, and to graduate from high school

Students who are [physically active](#) and who eat a [healthy diet](#) are:

- More likely to have better grades, standardized test scores, and school attendance
- More likely to have better concentration, memory, and mood
- Less likely to have disciplinary problems or to drop out of school
- Less likely to have symptoms of [anxiety](#) or [depression](#) or to develop health conditions such as heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity, or oral health disease.

A positive school culture and climate also benefits [teachers](#), leading to higher job satisfaction, fewer symptoms of burnout, and an increased likelihood of remaining in their job.

## Our history & evidence-base

CATCH's [proven effectiveness](#) includes over 30 years of published research demonstrating CATCH's success in creating healthy school cultures that promote positive health behaviors and support academic success and mental well-being. For instance:

- A [randomized controlled trial](#) including 96 schools in four states and over 5,100 students from diverse backgrounds found CATCH improved children's physical activity and nutrition behaviors, and [maintained](#) these improvements three years later without further intervention.
- CATCH is effective for preventing childhood obesity, including among youth from low-income families. Studies in [El Paso, TX](#) and [Travis County, TX](#) each

found a reduction in risk for overweight and obesity with CATCH implementation compared to control schools. Another study found CATCH to be the [most cost-effective](#) program proven to prevent childhood obesity.

- The [PASS & CATCH](#) study found that increasing physical activity as part of the CATCH program improved math and reading achievement among elementary school students.
- The [CATCH My Breath](#) program prevents nicotine vaping with 46% fewer students going on to try e-cigarettes one year after completing the program, compared to control schools.
- Among a sample of students who participated in [CATCH SEL Journeys](#), over 90% agreed that the program helped them to build self-confidence, get motivated and set goals, show respect for others, feel more connected to their peers, and make safe and healthy choices.

### **[Learn more about CATCH Global Foundation](#)**

To learn more about CATCH Global Foundation's work, please visit [www.catch.org](http://www.catch.org) or email [info@catch.org](mailto:info@catch.org).