



Findings from the Colorado School Health Profiles Survey

A survey of middle and high school principals & lead health education teachers



September, 2009

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About Colorado's School Health Profiles

The School Health Profiles survey, conducted biennially since 1996 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is designed to measure school health policies and practices in secondary schools throughout the United States. The Colorado results are based on survey responses collected from 218 principals and 195 lead health education teachers in middle and high schools. This response to the 2008 School Health Profiles survey from Colorado educators was sufficiently high to allow the results to be generalized across all Colorado schools.

The School Health Profiles survey includes questions related to asthma, health education, HIV, nutrition, physical education/activity and tobacco. Topics covered include:

- Curriculum Content and Education Requirements
- School Health Policies
- Professional Development for Health Educators
- Parent and Family Involvement

Findings from the Profiles help state and local agencies to monitor trends in school health across the country. For the state of Colorado, the Profiles results provide an overview of school health policies and practices, highlighting areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement.

Executive Summary

Colorado schools, along with those throughout the United States, participated in the School Health Profiles survey in 2008. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducts this survey every other year to monitor trends related to school health policies, education and practices. The survey addresses topics related to health education, nutrition, physical education, tobacco, HIV and asthma as well as family and community involvement in school health. Within this report, we compare survey results for Colorado schools to other parts of the U.S. and identify areas of strength as well as opportunities for further work.

Findings from the School Health Profiles shows that school health policies and practices in Colorado are strong in the following areas:

Strengths

- **Coordinated school health:** **85%** of schools have a staff member designated to coordinate school health activities.
- **Physical Education:** **85%** of schools require that 6-12th grade students take a physical education course.
- **Nutrition:** Nutrition education is provided to 6th through 12th grade students in **79%** of Colorado schools.
- **Tobacco:** **96%** of schools report having a tobacco policy and **93%** post signs marking a tobacco-free school zone.
- **Health Education:** **69%** of Colorado schools require 6-12th grade students to take a health education class.
- **Asthma:** **57%** of Colorado schools have asthma action plans.
- **Family and Community Involvement:** **62%** of Colorado schools engage parents in selected health topics.

Executive Summary, continued

Findings from the School Health Profiles shows that school health policies and practices in Colorado could improve in the following areas:

Weaknesses

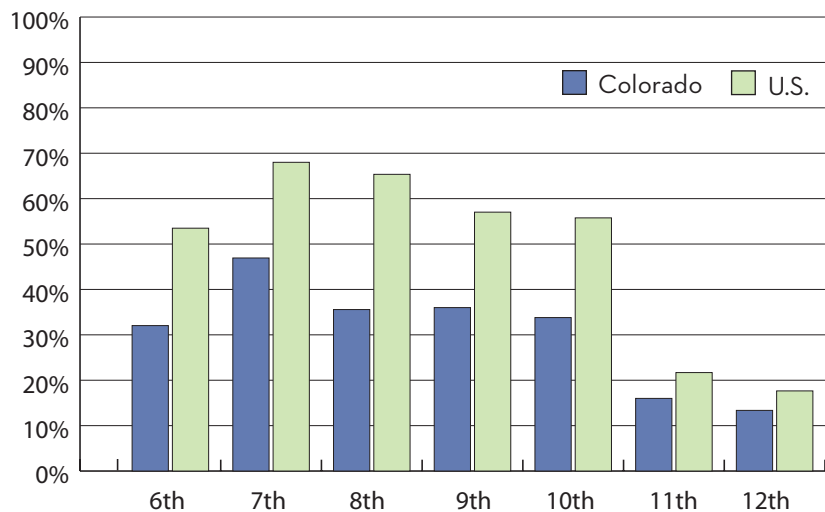
- **Coordinated school health:** All Colorado schools should have a copy of their District's wellness policy, an increase from 75% to **100%**.
- **Physical Education:** Requirements for physical education should become more **universal**.
- **Nutrition:** Nutrition education to 6-12th grade students should be **broadened** to cover more nutrition topics. Foods available in vending machines should be monitored for nutritional value.
- **Tobacco:** Tobacco policies can be strengthened to cover all in all locations and should be **enforced** more systematically.
- **Health Education:** Requirements for health education can be **strengthened** so that more students in more grades have access to health education topics.
- **Asthma:** The staffing of school nurses in Colorado schools should be **increased**.
- **Family and Community Involvement:** **Enhanced** efforts should be made to involve families and community members in school health issues.

Findings Related to Health Education

While most schools throughout the United States (or 91%) require students in grades 6 through 12 to take a health education class, only two thirds of Colorado schools (or 69%) have a similar requirement. A comparison of health education by grade is provided below. Health education requirements in other parts of the country are particularly prevalent in grades 7, 8, 9 and 10.



Comparison of Health Education Requirements by Grade in Colorado and the U.S.



What Can Colorado Do?

- Require all teachers who teach health education to be certified.
- Require students to take two or more health education courses.
- Address all eight national standards in health education curriculum (if present).
- Provide parents with health information.

Colorado is less likely than other states to require all teachers who teach health education to be certified (CO = 54.4%, U.S. = 85.3%). Our state is also in the lowest quartile of states in terms of:

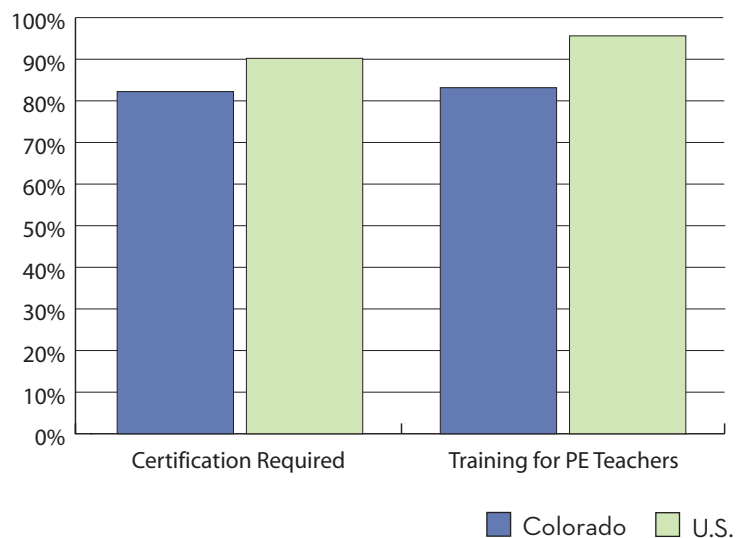
- Schools that required students to take two or more health education courses. (CO = 29.6%, U.S. = 50.6%)
- Schools with a health education curriculum that addresses all eight national standards. (CO = 43.9%, U.S. = 66.1%)
- Schools that provided parents with health information to increase knowledge. (CO = 17.5%, U.S. = 25.7%)

Findings Related to Physical Education & Physical Activity

Compared to most other states, schools in Colorado are less likely to require that students in any grades 6 through 12 receive physical education. Eight-five percent of Colorado schools have this requirement, compared with 97 percent of schools throughout the U.S.. Most Colorado schools (or 81%) require that physical education instructors be certified to teach and ensure that professional development in physical education is provided to these teachers.

By contrast, 90 percent of all U.S. schools require a physical education certification for their teachers and 96 percent support professional development for their physical education instructors.

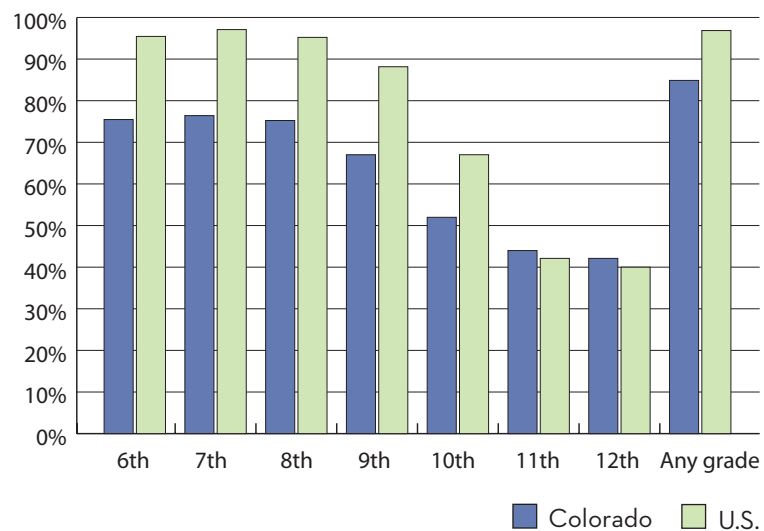
Comparison of Physical Education Requirements & Teacher Certification in Colorado Schools and the U.S.



Findings Related to Physical Education & Physical Activity

As demonstrated below, requirements for physical education are more common in the middle school grades and become less frequent as students enter high school.

Comparison of Requirements for Physical Education by
Grade in Colorado Schools and the U.S.



Results from the Profiles survey suggest other areas where Colorado schools could improve:

- Providing teachers with written physical education curriculum. (CO = 72.6%, U.S. = 86%)
- Teaching about developing an individualized physical activity plan in a required course. (CO = 64.2%, U.S. = 75.4%)
- Providing parents and families with health information to increase their knowledge of PA. (CO = 36.4%, U.S. = 42.4%)

What Can Colorado Do?

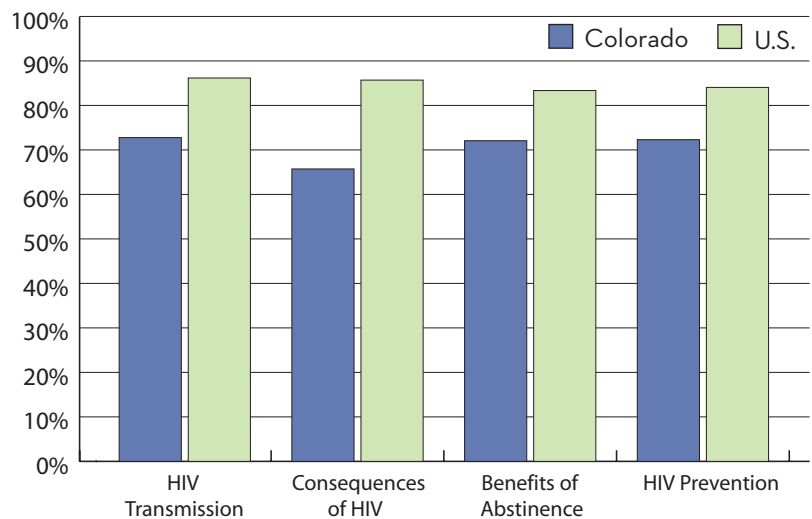
- Provide teachers with written physical education curricula.
- Teach about developing an individualized PA plan in a required course.
- Provide parents and families with health information.

Findings Related to HIV

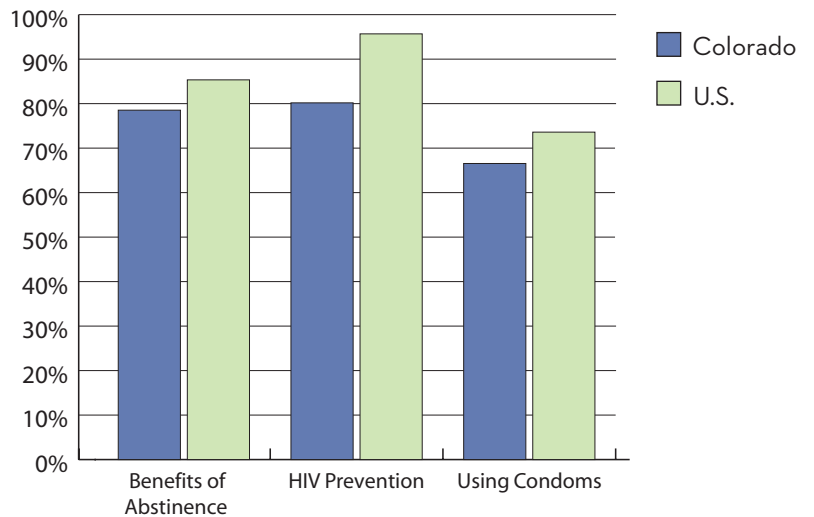


Most Colorado students receive some instruction related to the prevention of HIV, sexually transmitted disease and teen pregnancy, but not to the same degree as in other parts of the U.S.. The two charts below compare the extent to which schools in Colorado teach specific topics related to sexual risk prevention in middle and high schools.

Comparison of Sexual Risk Prevention Topics Taught in Middle Schools in Colorado and the U.S.



Comparison of Sexual Risk Prevention Topics Taught in High Schools in Colorado and the U.S.



Findings Related to HIV

What Can Colorado Do?

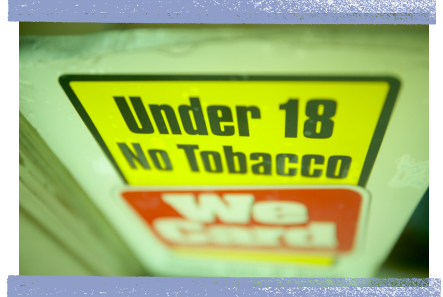
- Teach how to access HIV information, products or services.
- Provide PD on HIV prevention to lead health education teacher.
- Create HIV policies that address attendance, discrimination and confidentiality.

Colorado schools rank in the lowest quartile of all schools in the country in terms of the following HIV education and policy areas, suggesting optional areas for improvement:

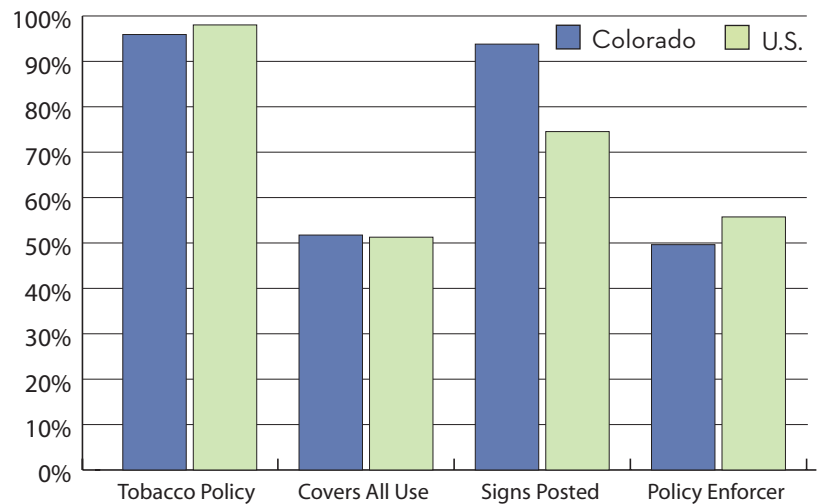
- Schools that taught how to access HIV information, products, or services in a required course. (CO = 74.0%, U.S. = 90.6%)
- Schools in which the lead health education teacher received PD during the past two years on HIV prevention. (CO = 19.7%, U.S. = 40.9%)
- Schools with HIV policies that addresses attendance, discrimination, confidentiality. (CO = 48.1%, U.S. = 56.5%)

Findings Related to Tobacco

Colorado has benefited from the passage of the Tobacco-Free Schools Law that prohibits the use of tobacco on any school property, including outdoor patios and school-owned vehicles. This law also requires that signs to be prominently posted to ensure compliance. While almost all schools (or 96%) report having a tobacco policy and most (or 93%) post signs marking a tobacco-free school zone, just over half of Colorado schools have policies that explicitly prohibit all tobacco use at all times in all locations and only half have identified someone to enforce tobacco policies.



Tobacco Policies in Colorado Schools Compared to the U.S.



What Can Colorado Do?

- Provide or arrange for referrals to cessation services for faculty and students.
- Work with local agencies to plan and implement cessation events.

Other areas where additional efforts can be made relative to tobacco policies and protocols in Colorado schools are provided below:

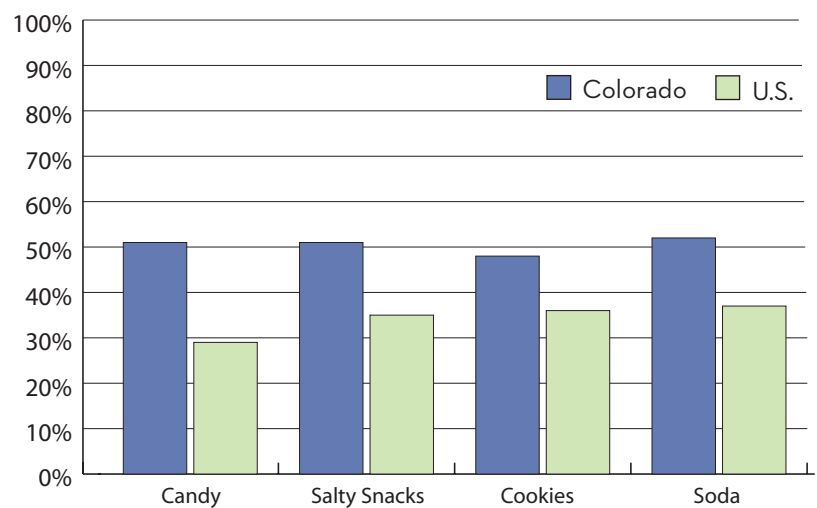
- Provide or arrange for referrals to cessation services for faculty and students. (CO = 28.3%, U.S. = 25.5%)
- Work with local agencies to plan and implement events designed to reduce tobacco use (CO = 59.6%, U.S. = 54.3%)

Findings Related to Nutrition



By law, Colorado schools are required to have policies to ensure that at least 50% of all items offered in vending machines be healthful foods or beverages and meet acceptable nutritional standards. Results from the School Health Profiles suggest that Colorado schools lag behind other parts of the country in terms of limiting access to foods and beverages that have limited nutritional value. As demonstrated below, half of all Colorado schools allow students to purchase candy, salty snacks, cookies and soda pop in school venues. (Average for food items shown below (CO = 51%, U.S. = 34%).

Comparison of Vending Machine/Food Purchase Options in Colorado Schools and the U.S.



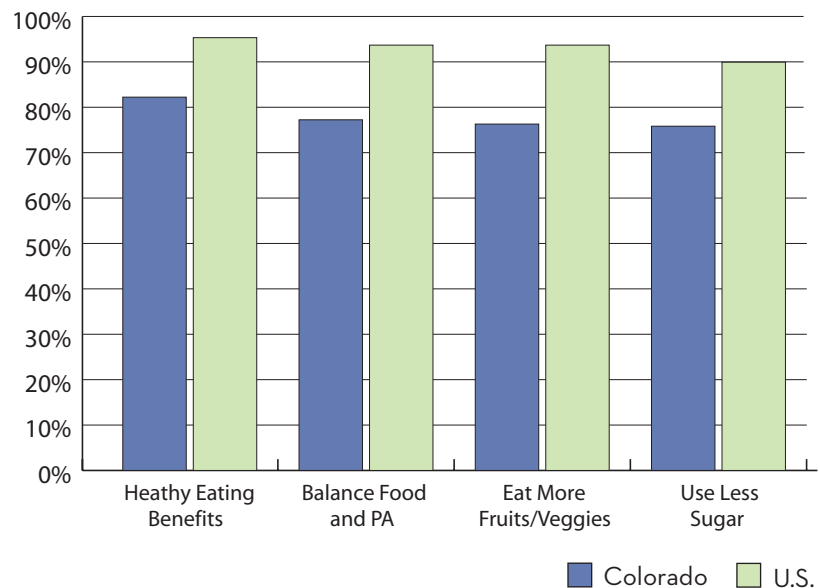
Findings Related to Nutrition

What Can Colorado Do?

- Price nutritious foods lower than non-nutritious foods.
- Provide information to students and families about calorie content of foods.
- Collect suggestions from students, families and staff about food preferences and strategies to promote healthy eating.
- Prohibit all forms of advertising for candy, fast foods and soda.

Nutrition education is provided to 6th through 12th grade students in over three-fourths of Colorado schools, yet nutrition topics are almost universal in other parts of the U.S. (CO = 79%, U.S. = 92%).

Nutrition Education Topics Covered in Colorado Schools and the U.S.



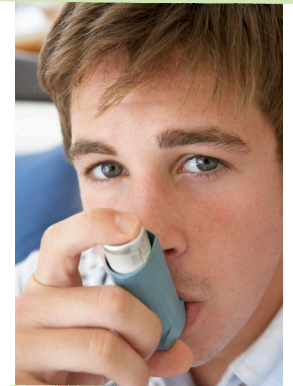
Nutrition related policies and practices that could be improved in Colorado include the following strategies:

- Price nutritious foods lower than non-nutritious foods. (CO = 11.4%, U.S. = 11%)
- Provide information to students and families regarding the calorie content of available foods. (CO = 44.8%, U.S. = 48.9%)
- Collect suggestions from students, families and staff regarding food preferences and strategies to promote healthy eating. (CO = 53.8%, U.S. = 49.4%)
- Prohibit all forms of advertising for candy, fast foods and soda. (CO = 46.1%, U.S. = 49.5%)

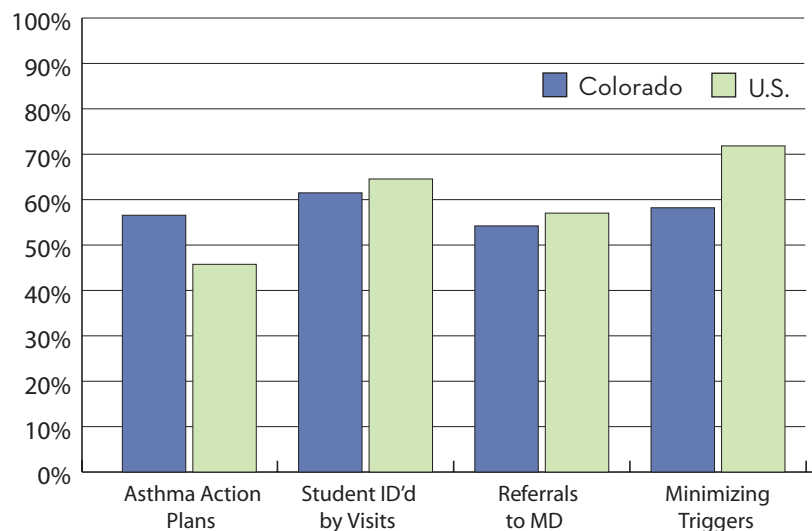
Findings Related to Asthma

Schools in Colorado are only half as likely as those in the rest of the country to have a full-time nurse (CO = 23%, U.S. = 40%). Despite this, professional development related to asthma is more prevalent (CO = 55%, U.S. = 37%) and Colorado schools are more likely to have asthma action plans, compared to schools in other states (CO = 57%, U.S. = 46%).

Colorado nurses are proactive about identifying and referring students with asthma. Nonetheless, findings from the School Health Profiles highlight areas where further efforts can be made to address the needs of students with asthma such as proactively identifying students with poorly controlled asthma and minimizing asthma triggers in the school environment.



School Policies and Protocols for Addressing Students with Asthma for Colorado and the U.S.



What Can Colorado Do?

- Offer access to asthma medications, spacers and peak flow meters at school.
- Offer asthma education for students and families.

Other areas where Colorado schools could work to enhance services for students with poorly controlled asthma include:

- Offer access to asthma medications, spacers and peak flow meters at school. (CO = 76.8%, U.S. = 83.3%)
- Offer asthma education for the student and his/her family. (CO = 37.9%, U.S. = 47.1%).

Findings Related to School Health Coordination

What Can Colorado Do?

- Appoint a school health coordinator.
- Obtain a copy of the school district's wellness policy.

Coordinated school health is a model for planning and organizing health-related programs, policies, and services to meet the health and safety needs of K-12 students. It connects the various school activities that can influence health and learning including health education; physical education; health services; nutrition services; counseling and psychological services; a healthy school environment; family/community involvement; and health promotion for staff.

With support from CDC, Colorado has been disseminating the coordinated school health model to schools throughout the state. Profiles results show that over four-fifths of Colorado's schools (or 85%) have a coordinator who coordinates school health and safety programs and more than half of all schools have a school health council (57%). Another positive sign that Colorado schools are involved in the coordination of school health activities is that three fourths report having a copy of their District's Wellness Policy.

Areas where additional progress can be made are as follows:

- Given the complexity of school health activities, all schools should appoint someone to coordinate school health. (CO = 85%, U.S. = 91%)
- All schools should have a copy of their district's wellness policy. (CO = 75%, U.S. = 89%)

Coordination of School Health in Colorado and the U.S.

