

Achieving Healthy Schools for All Kids in America

Proceedings Report From a Working Forum

March 22–23, 2016



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Foreword

The Robert Wood Foundation (RWJF) was privileged to host *A Working Forum on Healthy Schools* as part of our work to build a Culture of Health in the United States. We deeply appreciate the many Forum participants, who gave generously of their time, expertise, and ideas. Insights from the Forum, from a series of community workshops we hosted leading up to the Forum, and from many other dialogues and fact-finding efforts will inform RWJF's strategies going forward.

We are pleased to share these proceedings with stakeholders who are working to ensure that this nation's children and families have full opportunities to be healthy. Our hope is that this report will stimulate further thinking, dialogue, and action to create a nation where healthy schools for *all* are the norm and not the exception.

I. Introduction

In the two years since sharing its vision for creating a [Culture of Health](#) in the United States, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has set out to expand existing partnerships and form new alliances in order to take on the most pervasive challenges of our time: improving the health and well-being of everyone in America. Creating a Culture of Health requires working across all sectors and places where people of all ages live, work, learn, and play. It also requires that we think about change with a generational perspective.

“So many great programs and research exist. Where we’ve done less is creating the systemic environment to allow those programs and interventions to be sustained long term.”

Olga Acosta Price, Center for Health and Health Care in Schools

RWJF has formalized its commitment by bringing together its work under the thematic efforts of *Healthy Children, Healthy Weight*. The goal of this work is to “enable all children and their families to attain their optimal physical, social, and emotional development and well-being.” Within this thematic area, one of our continued priorities is schools, where children spend the majority of their waking hours. Schools provide a vital setting to ensure children have many of the building blocks that help support lifelong health and opportunity. As part of our learning journey, the Foundation convened *A Working Forum on Healthy Schools* on March 22–23, 2016, in Washington, D.C.

Building on decades of investment and two years of intentional conversations with a wide range of stakeholders (including current and past grantees), RWJF hosted the Forum to explore systems-level efforts that could make healthy school environments the norm and not the exception in the United States. The Forum convened 75 participants from many sectors and levels—from school buildings and community organizations to federal

agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the business community along with RWJF staff—to spend a day and half listening to and learning from each other. The meeting design created a space where diverse voices could be heard and where the lived experiences of students, families, and educators could interweave with the voices of other education and health experts, policymakers, advocates, and academics.

Objectives

Forum objectives were shaped to inform the Foundation as the meeting sponsor and to create opportunities for participants to engage in dialogue and form new relationships that could support their work. Specifically, the Forum was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To assess alignment among diverse stakeholders about:
 - » the most significant opportunities and barriers to address in order to create conditions for health-promoting school environments that reinforce and support learning.
 - » the most powerful levers for promoting equity and improving outcomes for all students.
 - » systems-level investments and efforts that might significantly support educators and communities to be effective and motivated in creating schools that embody a Culture of Health, and thus create healthier schools, healthier kids, and healthier communities.
- To disrupt and expand participant thinking to encourage robust feedback.
- To learn what will create solution-oriented conversations that foster the collective efforts of education and health advocates, inclusive of educators, students, parents, families, and related professional and community partners.
- To open space to identify new relationships—and foster existing relationships in the room—to support rich continued learning and dialogue.

See Appendix 1 for Forum Agenda and Participant List.

Background

RWJF is committed to building a Culture of Health in the United States, where all children—no matter who they are or where they live—have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential and live the healthiest life they can. Evidence shows overwhelmingly that education and health are inextricably linked, making a healthy school environment that supports the academic success of all children the bedrock for maintaining lifelong health.

Apart from their homes, most children spend more time at school than any other place. School is not just where children go to class. For many children, schools provide a safe and nurturing place to learn and grow. School is where they get healthy meals; may receive critical health care services; build a support network; develop critical thinking and social skills; and establish and maintain a community among their friends and peers. For low-income children, school can offer an extra layer in the safety net through access

to community programs and services. And schools often are centers of community that receive support and attention from families, community groups, and businesses.

Informed by its Culture of Health explorations, stakeholder dialogue, and the work of others in the field, RWJF hosted the Forum in order to further explore its perspective that, as a nation, we must move from siloed school health efforts in false competition with academic priorities. We must understand that social, emotional, and physical development promotes and improves student success—and that educational outcomes are major predictors of lifelong health. Approaches in schools must be reinforced in the homes and communities where children live; what happens in schools must be supported in these other settings, and vice versa.

Thus, partnerships with parents, families, and many sectors of communities will be critical in making healthy schools the norm.

To ensure that the lived experiences of students, families, and communities were elevated within the Forum, RWJF sponsored three community-level workshops on healthy schools in December 2015 and January 2016. Using a Design Thinking methodology, these community workshops called forth the visions, challenges, and starter solutions of the participants, which helped to inform the Forum design, materials, and content. These workshops were held across the country and focused on participants who live and work in high-need communities. Several workshop participants attended the Forum, including high school students, educators, and leaders of community-based organizations.

“We do a lot of reacting versus responding. If we could focus on what students feel, need, and how that’s connected to schools and families, we can change. It’s not that we don’t have enough assets, it’s that the assets we have aren’t developed. How do we carry this work out the door, back to where we work?”

LaShonda Taylor, Alternatives in Action, Oakland, Calif.

Key Themes

While the Forum did not aim to find “the answer” to creating healthy schools or even to reach consensus among participants about the best strategies, the meeting did underscore a broad-based agreement among participants about the needs, gaps, and opportunities related to healthy school environments. There was also a shared recognition that we cannot create truly healthy schools for *all* in an unhealthy society, but it is critical that we find places and ways to start. Health was broadly defined by Forum stakeholders to encompass interconnections between physical, emotional, and mental health as well as the economic, social, and political factors that affect individual and school health. Participants expressed a shared commitment to thinking and working broadly to tackle challenging systemic issues that serve as potential barriers to healthy schools—and they expressed appreciation to the Foundation for fostering this discussion and for its interest in supporting strategies that may emerge.

This does not mean that there was unanimity on all topics and suggested approaches. These proceedings summarize the varied discussions and recommendations that emerged from the meeting, including areas of alignment and areas of divergence. It is important to note that divergence was less about “disagreement” and more about the different perspectives of people working for changes in different contexts, different fields, and at different levels. Indeed, divergence underscores the fact that, in order to foster healthy school environments, we must pursue the conditions for change on multiple tracks.

Several overarching themes emerged from the Forum, which transcended individual topics of discussion or areas of alignment and divergence. [Section III](#) explores these themes, which include:

- Creating healthy schools must start with the lived experiences of all stakeholders who make up the school community.
- Structural inequities, including racism, are part of the lived experience of many; we must understand and address these conditions in order to influence education and health.
- There is a need for practical local solutions as well as systems change that rethinks and reworks how schools operate and who is engaged with them.
- Sustainable and lasting change happens only when it is community owned, and when it is accompanied by structural and systems changes. Community ownership requires that diverse voices be engaged on an ongoing basis.
- Young people must be engaged in this effort; too often they feel marginalized by the systems that are supposed to support them.
- Trauma at the personal and community level impacts many young people, their families, and their schools. Healthy schools work with communities to change the conditions that cause these traumas.
- Healthy schools must operate from a framework of empathy and caring.
- It is not possible for any single sector to make these changes in isolation.

Defining Terms: Systems Change

“Systems” and “systems change” are terms used throughout the Forum and within these proceedings. Systems influence where we live, learn, work, and play.

Systems are the practices, policies, and procedures of institutions, corporations, agencies, and other organizations that influence the determinants of health.

Improving (or changing) systems—and the way they work together—is RWJF’s approach to eliminating health disparities.

It’s only when we critically examine these systems—be they access to quality health care, income, public safety, community environment, employment, housing, education, etc.—that we

can find approaches to improve lives and reduce health disparities. We want everyone in our country to have an equal opportunity to live a healthier life, which is vital to building a Culture of Health.

Source: www.rwjf.org/en/culture-of-health/2015/03/investing_in_systems.html

II. Summary of Sessions and Discussions

This section provides a summary of the activities and discussions that took place during the Forum. It sets the stage for Section III, *Overarching Forum Themes*, and Section IV, *Recommendations*, which elevate the broader themes and concrete recommendations that emerged from the event.

Day One: Setting the Stage

The Foundation's View



Kristin Schubert

Kristin Schubert, RWJF's managing director for *Healthy Children, Healthy Weight*, opened the meeting on Tuesday evening. In setting the stage for the work to follow, she noted that meeting participants were there, in part, because they share a common goal: for every child to have the opportunity to fulfill her or his potential. This means that all children, no matter who they are or where they live, deserve a great education that puts them on a path to a healthy life.

Schubert went on to provide an overview of how the Foundation views the interweaving of education and health. The more educated a person is, the more likely she or he is to live a longer, healthier life. Now, more than ever, having a high school diploma can predict the likelihood of having diabetes, heart conditions, or other diseases. Yet, the education and health sectors too often approach their work independently, even when they seek to serve the same children and families. The Foundation knows that there are many promising approaches across the country and the people at this meeting are often involved with them. But these promising approaches are not yet the norm, and simply asking schools to take on more will not make them the norm. Rather, the Foundation and others working to create healthy schools must address systemic issues that impact our children's ability to excel.

There are no simple answers. Each community, each school, each family is under pressure. Children’s lives are hard. They bring to their classroom more than their books—they bring the challenges of life. The people who work in schools know this. Schubert noted, “We’ve never heard a teacher, a principal, or a superintendent say we don’t want a healthy school. But school systems are fragile and we cannot approach this work in ways that cause schools to break.”

The Foundation’s view of what it means to be a healthy school has expanded over time. It is bigger than getting kids active and eating healthy foods. It is about buildings and grounds that are safe and help students and school staff members feel energized and ready to learn. It’s about supporting educators so they can support students. It’s about providing the right supports to families so they can help their kids achieve in schools. And it’s about the community lifting up schools and helping to create environments that promote learning and resilience inside and outside of school walls.



Jennifer Ng’andu

Following Schubert’s remarks, RWJF senior program officer, Jennifer Ng’andu, added her welcome and introduction. She traced the long history of the Foundation’s work in and with schools, noting that many of those in the room were current or past grantees. Over the past two years the Foundation has been listening to and learning from those in the room as well as countless others. It has heard a continued emphasis on the importance of academics along with a heightened recognition of the need to support student and community health. This means that the Foundation’s work must be bigger and bolder with an even stronger emphasis on systems change.

Recognizing that there are many ways to pursue a goal of bold systemic change, RWJF believes that whatever work it supports must be part of a shared accountability for children’s well-being. The Foundation seeks to be a partner in, not the sole driver of, change. And without exception, equity must be central to these efforts. *All must mean all.*

The Participants’ View

The next part of the evening called on participants to help set the stage by sharing their vision of healthy schools—what healthy schools should and could look like and what social norms need to change so that healthy schools become the societal norm.

First, meeting facilitator Lisa Silverberg led participants in a visioning exercise about what healthy schools look like. They shared their visions on sheets of poster paper with category headers representing opportunity areas that emerged from the community workshops (such as Prioritizing Health with Funding, Learning Outside the Walls, Mutual Understanding and Support, etc.) and other areas (such as Health Education, Community Involvement, Employee Wellness, etc.). Among the categories where participants found common vision were family and community engagement and involvement; mental and social health and wellness, including the importance of trauma-informed* approaches; and the physical environment of the school.

*While definitions of trauma-informed approaches and practice systems are diverse, they share an understanding that exposure to trauma in everyday life and/or traumatic events is widespread and may negatively impact physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional health or ability to function. Many entities, including schools, are being responsive to this understanding and adjusting systems, settings, and practices.

Workshop participants share their vision of healthy schools



In creating their visions, participants were able to give full rein to their creativity. As in other parts of the discussion, several broad categories emerged:

- A **healthy school environment** is one that gives communities access to school facilities and opens up parks and other spaces to the people in school. It has plenty of natural light. The water is clean and safe to drink. The physical spaces, such as bathrooms, are safe for all students including those who are LGBTQ. The location and surrounding environment are safe for students to walk, bike, or roll to school. The school nutrition environment helps to make healthy choices the default choices. Older students are given the opportunity and responsibility to support younger students and to model healthy behavior.
- **Home and school are bridged** in ways that value families and support caregivers. Family engagement is supported through family liaisons and teacher home visiting programs. Families are engaged in learning about and helping to plan the school's programs and services. Community involvement is fostered through community schools and partnerships.

"We must build community capacity to be effectively engaged. If people can't actively engage 'at the table,' they won't be effective and inform what's happening at the table. Trust is huge. Trust moves things."

Jasmine Opusunju, CAN DO Houston

- In a healthy school **the learning environment** includes a wide range of offerings. Health education should support the development of health literacy and healthy behavior. Physical education should be innovative and inclusive. All classes and curriculum should be inclusive and reflective of diversity. Students should have opportunities for project-based learning and access to the community through field trips, including walking field trips. Students have opportunities to be active before, during, and after the school day. Educators should be aware of the challenges in their students' lives and be able to recognize and respond if trauma is impacting student behavior and learning potential.
- Students and staff **have access to health services** through access to insurance, provision of school nurses and primary care services, and innovative use of funding from multiple sources to support health-providing partnerships. School staff members have access to wellness programs and opportunities.
- The **social and emotional climate** should value kindness and empathy. The healthy school teaches and uses restorative practices in discipline. There should be access to counseling and mental health services in the school and community that are caring and safe for all students and that acknowledge and address trauma appropriately.

Disrupting Social Norms

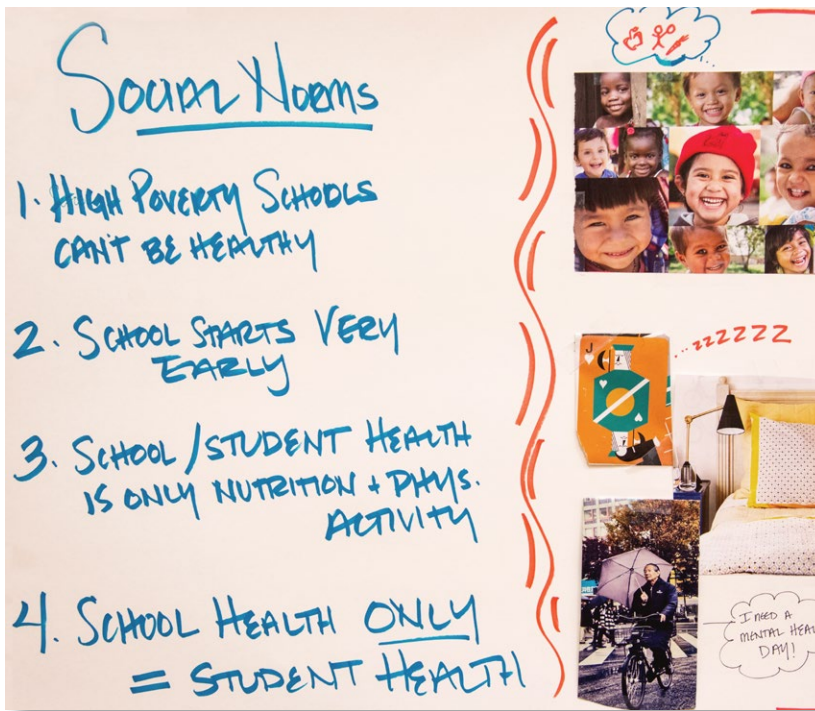
Following the visioning exercise, participants engaged in tabletop conversations and created posters that portrayed societal and social norms they felt need to change in order for their healthy school visions to be realized. The norms they identified fell into several “big bucket” areas, which are provided below with some examples. Many of these norms and ideas had also surfaced in the community workshops.

- Apathy and disregard for public education and the people in it
 - » Disregard and disrespect for teachers
 - » People working in schools feel powerless
 - » Parents who “opt-out” rather than trying to change the system

“We need to stick with something—not just for a week or a year. Even if we see some failure, don’t give up on it.”

Janet, a Houston High School Student

- Negative views of high-poverty schools and the people in them
 - » Low standards for some are expected and accepted
 - » The belief that high-poverty schools cannot be healthy
 - » The belief that it is acceptable for kids of different socioeconomic circumstances to attend different types of schools
- Governance and funding practices that are seen as inequitable
 - » Property tax-based funding means funding inequities
 - » Budget cuts impact areas like health and the arts
 - » Belief that financial resources are scarce when the issue is how they are used
- School- or district-level practices that lead to disparate health and education outcomes
 - » Zero tolerance, expulsion, suspension as solutions to problems
 - » Too much testing and reliance on tests
 - » Developmentally inappropriate practices keep kids in their seats
- Lack of community support for healthy schools
 - » Beliefs that health and physical education are not as valuable as other subjects
 - » Assumptions about parents that position them as the problem or uncaring
 - » Lack of recognition of health challenges at all income levels
- Undervaluing student assets
 - » Students feel that they cannot be their authentic selves
 - » Assumptions about what a “good kid” looks like
 - » Students do not feel respected by adults



Sample social norm disruption posters created by participants



Additionally, participants identified several “big picture” societal norms that must change in order to realize a healthy schools vision, including:

- The existence and challenges of racism that is systemic, structural, and individual
- Significant differences across society about the purpose of education
- The equally significant differences in perspective about the roles of families, schools, and community partners and organizations

Day Two: Exploring Challenges, Opportunities, and Systemic Solutions

Jennifer Ng’andu opened the second day with expanded information about the Foundation’s perspective. She started by sharing the two frameworks that underpin the Foundation’s efforts related to healthy school environments. First, she shared the visual representation of the Foundation’s Culture of Health Action Framework. Then, she explained that the Foundation spent the past two years in dialogue with people around the country to help identify an evidence-based framework on healthy schools and surface the key ideas that stakeholders would like to see resourced. This included exploration of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Framework, developed jointly by ASCD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). WSCC builds on previous approaches to healthy schools and recognizes the “symbiotic relationship between health and learning” to offer a child-centered framework for “strengthening a unified and collaborative approach to learning and health.”* But WSCC is neither a cookie-cutter approach nor a prescription that will look the same everywhere. So the challenge remains: how is the framework realized?

* For more on WSCC, see: www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/site/ASCD/publications/wholechild/wsc-c-a-collaborative-approach.pdf

As part of the answer to that question, the Foundation convened a series of healthy school community workshops in different areas of the United States to:

- Understand how people come to a Culture of Health
- Build perspective on what hinders healthy, safe, and nurturing environments
- Gain insights on operational issues and how decision-making (political will) fosters or hinders healthy school environments
- Provide some resources on Design Thinking that participants can take away

Organized around challenges and solutions, the workshops surfaced hundreds of ideas that were synthesized, categorized, and shared on posters in the Forum meeting room. The posters served as an entry point to the day's discussions, which were organized around three core questions related to:

1. Grappling with barriers and opportunities, particularly those where bridges could be built across sectors
2. Identifying levers to promote equity
3. Recommending systems-level investments and efforts that might significantly support educators and communities to be effective and motivated in creating schools that embody a Culture of Health

"You need to be willing to shut down things that don't work, and add things to experiment with to see what works. People in the U.S. are unwilling to ante up funds for things if they don't know they work."

Stuart Butler, Senior Fellow in Economic Studies, Brookings Institution

A panel of 14 participants who work and engage daily at the local school and community level (including students, educators, parents, and community leaders from the community workshops) offered their reactions to the ideas being generated and discussed at the Forum, based on their lived reality and experiences in local schools and communities.

What follows is a summary of the dialogue, ideas, and insights shared for each core question, along with reflections from grassroots participants about what they were hearing.

Forum Question 1 (Opportunities and Barriers):

What alignment or lack of alignment exists among the participants about the most significant opportunities and barriers to address in order to create conditions for health-promoting school environments that reinforce and support learning?

As with the visioning and social norms exercises the previous evening, participants found much to agree on within their different perspectives. To prompt reflection and discussion, posters with challenges identified during the community workshops were on display. Participants were able to suggest additional challenges and explore why these challenges are difficult to surmount.

While issues of human development and trauma had emerged in the community workshops, one group at the Forum pulled it out as a separate topic at this point. Their focus was the lack of attention being paid to emerging human and brain development science around the physical effects of exposure to trauma, including family and community violence. Labeled by participants as the “Unified Science of Human Development,” this group initially focused on the biological impacts of trauma exposure; however, participants returned to the issue of trauma throughout the day, focusing also on the mental and social health impacts.

Participants discussed why all of these challenges seem so difficult to surmount. Their thoughts are summarized below.

- **Community Environment** challenges are difficult to surmount because of under-developed assets in the community, particularly in communities of color and low-income communities. These assets include political power, organizing capacity, and resources. Other reasons include the difficulty of change, silos, and other disconnects that inhibit cross-sector work, and disconnects between community members and civic authorities and/or philanthropists about the “right” solutions. One powerful example of the latter is the various ways in which different stakeholders understand issues of safety, violence, and the role of law enforcement.
- **Student Stress and Peer Relationships** discussions were embedded in the personal experiences of students attending the Forum. They cited difficulties in building and sustaining authentic relationships between students and teachers. Students felt that teachers do not understand their lives and that school does not focus on what matters to them. Students have little to no agency in creating healthy, safe schools and communities. Peer relationships are challenging because, for many, bullying is deeply ingrained in the social norms, as is conformity. Additionally, teachers and other adults in schools may not feel they have the power or tools to address underlying issues of poverty in students’ lives.

Examples of Challenges Identified at Healthy School Community Workshops

Community Environment

- Unsafe streets
- Fast food and quick shops instead of grocery stores
- Lack of green space

Student Stress and Peer Relationships

- Mental health stressors
- Bullying
- Tension in the halls
- Pressure to fit in
- Negative self-image
- Negative role models

Home Life

- Parents not at home
- Unhealthy eating routines
- Unpredictable circumstances
- Interpersonal violence
- Substance abuse

School Resources

- Lack of money
- Lack of training
- Poor facilities
- Overcrowded and understaffed
- Time limitations

School Culture and Competing Priorities

- Focus on tests
- Lack of vision
- Student and educator apathy
- Overburdened staff
- Junk food in schools

Family Resources

- Undependable transportation
- Limited budget
- No health insurance
- Insufficient language skills and system know-how
- No documentation

See [Appendix 2](#) for copies of posters depicting challenges and solutions generated at community workshops.

- **Home Life** challenges are difficult to overcome because of economic pressures on parents and families. Not just extreme poverty but also the everyday challenges many parents have in making ends meet contribute to competing demands on their time. Additionally, many parents and many educators see school and home as different spheres, which may cause parents to hesitate in interacting with schools and may lead to schools becoming unwelcoming places.
- **School Resource** challenges are difficult to surmount in two primary areas. Participants noted the unpredictability of funding, which makes sustaining changes difficult. They also noted a lack of support for adequate teacher preparation and professional development. Some participants also felt that a political environment focused on testing diverts resources from other needs.
- Challenges related to **School Culture and Competing Priorities** are hard to overcome without the leadership to do so. Inadequate teacher professional preparation and development was cited as another barrier, as was a narrow view by many of what is important in schools, including their role in child development.

“I don’t feel the school system treats students of color with equity. Students have lots of stress, problems, and they are real problems in the moment. Instead of more prisons, we need textbooks that are current and the right materials like paper and markers. Teachers are preparing us to run the country, and we have life skills but we aren’t taught what we need.”

Dane’Nicole, an Oakland, Calif., High School Student

- **Family Resources** challenges are exacerbated by financial pressures, including limited financial resources of families as well as resources for schools and community organizations to support families.
- **Unified Science of Human Development** (emerging science around the effects of exposure to trauma) was presented as a solution, whose challenge is gaining broader reach due to its relative newness as a field of study and lack of information on how to translate this research into practice. Some felt that there was not an audience for these concepts in a “no excuses” environment.

After looking at potential solutions generated at the community workshops, Forum participants then suggested how they might address each challenge area if they had any and all resources available. Following table discussions, participants reported on a wide range of potential solutions, from very specific changes in practices to broader and more systemic changes. Examples appear in the following table.

CHALLENGE AREA	SOLUTIONS: PROGRAMS	SOLUTIONS: SYSTEMS
Community Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent education programs • Walking and biking around every school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) that better engage communities of color and reflect their concerns • Eliminate structural racism
Student Stress and Peer Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based mental health services • Restorative justice programs in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators whose lives reflect their students and who can offer empathy for students' lived experiences • Social and emotional learning at all levels
Home Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher home visitation • Expanded funding for child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community vs. individual approach • Year-round continuity of services
School Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible time for teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-centered focus for schools
School Culture and Competing Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for staff • Regional and national communities of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the opportunity of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) whole child accountability systems
Family Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School programs to give families access to healthy food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build community and move away from isolation
Unified Science of Human Development	The discussion around this emerging area focused on the importance of using this science across specific programs and in creating systems changes.	

Forum Question 2 (Levers for Promoting Equity):

What alignment or lack of alignment exists among the participants about the most powerful levers for promoting equity and improving outcomes for all students?

To address this question, Forum participants broke into table discussions around issues that had emerged during the meeting with special attention to any areas of agreement or disagreement. Below are key observations from the report-outs.

SECTORS, NATIONAL ISSUES, AND TRENDS TO CONSIDER

Schools operate within a context of increasing inequality, changing demographics, and fear among some that privileges are being lost. We have an increasing understanding of the scope and impact of trauma and other negative experiences on brain development. Technology is helping to redefine education, including what is taught and what teaching and learning look like. While we don't know the specific subjects and skills young people will need in the future, we do know they will need resilience, social-emotional skills, and health. Can we reset our societal expectations on the bare minimum every child needs? We need a larger discussion of revenue and taxes. Funding goes toward what is sexy and new, but needs to be part of collective impact and building basic capacity. We have scarce resources and don't agree on how to allocate them.

SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS INSPIRED BY THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

We need to consider what drives the system and the relations between schools and health. This means building a bridge between the habits and history that inform school practices, and research and science that can inform changes. As changes are put into place, it is the people in schools who need to implement them. Educators and other school staff need support to understand systems changes and they need professional (and pre-service) development to support success.

PHYSICAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND SURROUNDING SETTINGS

We must create new ways of thinking about the physical space of schools. Can we stretch the idea of the classroom to include the community and beyond? Can we have “co-ownership” of the space between students and adults? How might students be part of creating safe, caring schools? What is the geography of the community? Does it promote health and safety for students, their families, and school staff?

STUDENTS’ ABILITY TO LIVE AS THEIR FULL, AUTHENTIC SELVES, ENCOMPASSING THEIR INTERSECTING IDENTITIES

Student participants highlighted the need to recognize the multiple and intersecting identities they hold including race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender and sexual orientation, and class. They focused on how schools and communities could support every kind of student—moving beyond tolerance to true acceptance and valuing difference. Schools can and should support authenticity through student voice and student choice, and should include multiple visions of what a successful student is and looks like.

“How are we creating more spaces for young people to be at the decision-making table and providing more resources for young people to be leaders?”

Mónica Córdova, Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing

RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING TRAUMA WITHOUT CREATING OR REINFORCING STIGMA

There is a need to build awareness about what trauma looks like, how common it is, and how to address it. Students should be able to self-identify and seek help. Health professionals and others need training to use a lens of prevention and trauma-informed practices to support students. At the same time, it is important to recognize that those who experience trauma do not want to be labeled or seen as only their trauma.

IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE ON STRUCTURAL RACISM IN SCHOOLS

The Black Lives Matter movement offers a way to think about youth being out in front, with the adults, particularly parents, supporting them. We need to consider what it means to have equity—versus equality—in schools. We need culturally relevant curriculum. Children of color need support in valuing themselves and being valued. Political cycles may offer opportunities to address structural racism.

MAKING BRIGHT SPOTS MORE NORMATIVE

Leadership matters and we need to cultivate and affirm the many leaders who can make change. While we may honor educators and others who do exemplary work, we also must recognize the need for more support so these accomplishments can become the norm. There is a need to build trust, which takes time and relationship building. We need community buy-in and, ideally, funding, not just outside funders. We need to be data-driven without buying into the premise that we only care about social-emotional learning because it supports grades and graduation rates. We need to emphasize that we care about students’ health as well.

Voices From the Community

Forum participants who work and live primarily at the grassroots level—as educators, school administrators, students, parents, and community leaders—shared their reflections on the discussions. Highlights include:

› **Ron Walker**, executive director of the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color, talked about creating a conspiracy of care that takes care of the needs of children. He spoke of the impact of trauma and how social media has made trauma more visible. We must address how we can unravel white privilege to build healthy communities for all. The constant question we must ask is, are we bold enough?

› **Kellie Karavias**, culinary arts teacher at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center in Houston, talked about the power of three. Funding comes in three-year increments, but it can take three years to build the trusting relationships for sustainability. We need to be able to sustain and scale up at the local level, but teachers do not necessarily have the skills to know how to do that.

› **Dane’Nicole**, an Oakland, Calif., high school student, addressed the need for students to be part of making the change and for support in their change-making. She noted that we may get students to college, but are they ready and are they supported when challenges arise? Students have many stresses and problems in the moment, and aren’t necessarily taught what they need to succeed. There is inequity in how students of color and other students are treated, taught, and how their schools are funded.

› **Jasmine Opusunju**, executive director of CAN DO Houston, spoke of the need to allocate resources in ways that build community capacity for innovation. If we have preconceived notions about what is needed then we leave out the opportunities for communities to be innovative and responsive to their own needs. Who are the experts? For people to be engaged, they need to know that things can change in response to their input.

› **Mónica Córdova**, program director at the Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing, asked, how are we creating the spaces and resources for young people to be leaders in creating the change? The challenge is how to authentically engage youth in decision-making. What are the investments needed to do so?

› **Janet**, a Houston high school student, spoke of the need for students to be supported. They do not want to feel alone. We believe that we need to stick with things, not for a week, not for a year, but for the long haul, even if there are setbacks or failures.

› **Marilyn Tillman**, co-founder of Gwinnett STOPP in Atlanta, returned to structural racism as one of the most significant parts of the discussion so far. She shared that as a parent organizer, it is wonderful to have parents discussed and valued in this meeting.

› **Jayne Greenberg**, director of physical education and health literacy of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, shared her growing optimism about the power of local control. In her district, there are no suspensions; all students have daily PE taught by a certified teacher; and there is universal breakfast. This is because there is a visionary superintendent and a supportive school board, not because of a federal or state mandate.

› **Gary**, a Houston high school student, talked of the need for a wide range of role models, going beyond social media, entertainment, and sports. How can older students support younger students as well?

› **Fatima**, a Silver Spring, Md., high school student, echoed the need for students to be supported and for that support to follow them from infancy to high school, despite changes in grade or even school.

› **Liz Sullivan-Yuknis**, education campaigns director for Dignity in Schools, talked about the challenges in equipping people in schools to field tough questions around race and racism, gender, etc. There is the need to go back to the teacher preparation programs. We also need spaces at schools for student and parent agency and participation.

› **LaShonda Taylor**, director of community programs for Alternatives in Action in Oakland, Calif., returned to the centrality of relationships. Collaborative relationships can change everything. We also need time for programs and changes to grow. We are often reacting rather than responding. Students, parents, and communities have lots of assets, but they are not nurtured, developed, and supported.

› **Amber**, a Houston high school student, spoke of the power of the community garden at her school to be a safe place for students, a place to reduce stress, and a place to be able to give back to the community.

› **Godwin Higa**, principal at Cherokee Point Elementary School in San Diego, made a compelling case for the importance of trauma-informed schools. He noted that high school students have the third highest suicide rate in the nation and he sees young people who have a sense of hopelessness. But it’s not enough to just talk. We need policy changes at all levels to build hope. At his school they have ended suspensions because when students act out they are reacting to the trauma of their lives and they need the adults to care for them.

CREATING CONDITIONS THAT ALLOW STAKEHOLDERS TO DIRECTLY ADDRESS SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

How do we get a shared definition of what a healthy school is from the community? We need to understand what the community wants and needs from a school, including the diversity of perspectives. Communities need the capacity to do this for themselves. Researchers and experts can inform this understanding, but we need bi-directional relationships and bi-directional accountability.

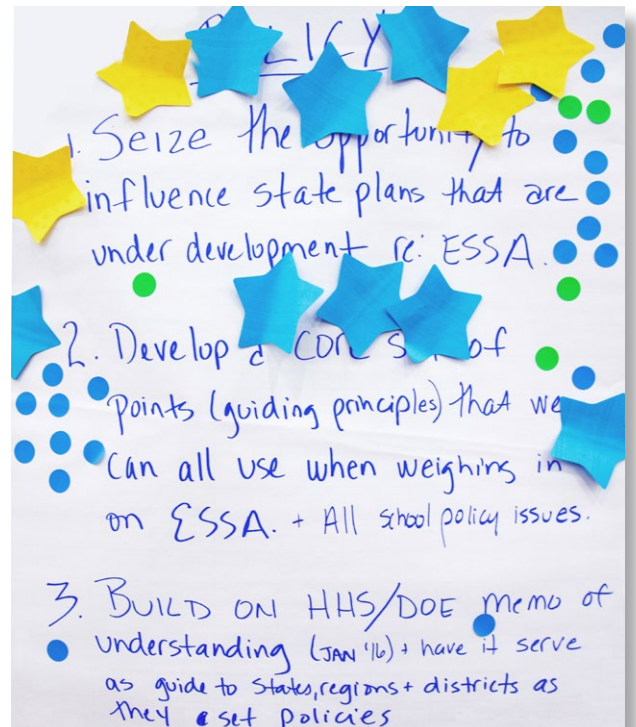
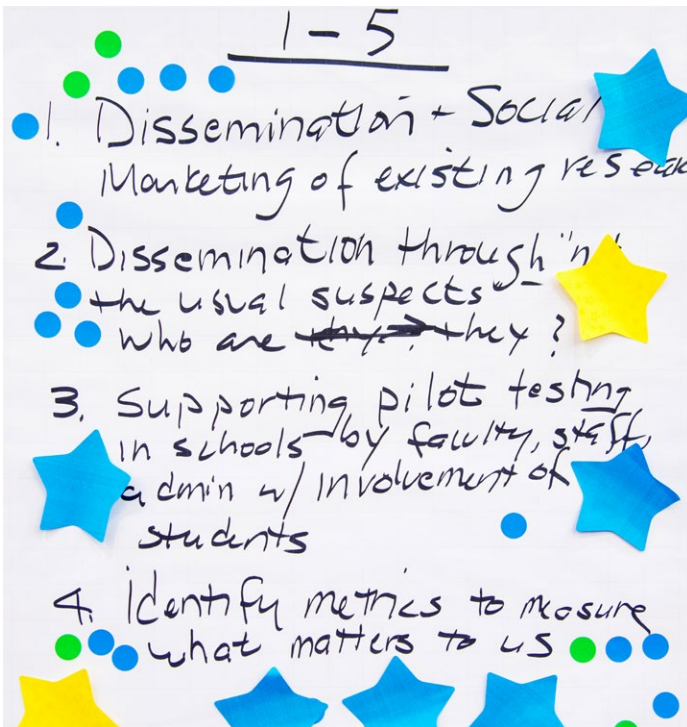
Forum Question 3 (Systems-Level Investments/Efforts):

What alignment or lack of alignment exists among the participants about the systems-level investments and efforts that might significantly support educators and communities to be effective and motivated in creating schools that embody a Culture of Health, and thus create healthier schools, healthier kids, and healthier communities?

The final part of the day focused on identifying and prioritizing systemic solutions. Participants broke into research, policy, and action table conversations to brainstorm and discuss Forum Question 3, above. They then had the opportunity to “vote” using sticky dots for the three participant-generated solutions they thought had the greatest priority and a star for the one solution that, if investment could start tomorrow, would be most useful for their efforts.

The following pages list the research, policy, and action solutions that had the most traction among participants based on this prioritization activity—plus a “unified and systemic approach” generated by participants. Solutions that attracted particular interest among grassroots or non-grassroots participants are noted.

Participants help identify systemic solutions



RESEARCH

Research ideas focused on the importance of practice and policy informing research and vice versa, in a circular process. Participants wanted to see research that incorporates quantitative and qualitative methods as well as incorporating action research conducted by teachers and others in schools. They noted the importance of disseminating research broadly and moving “beyond the usual suspects.” Specific ideas that attracted the most support were:

- Translate research to facilitate practitioners’ ability to mobilize the community. This idea received support from both grassroots and non-grassroots participants.
- Identify metrics to measure what matters. Although participants did not identify specific metrics or audiences at the Forum, this concept received significant support from grassroots and non-grassroots participants alike.

“Training needs to happen to help educators and staff have tough conversations around race, racism, gender, etc.”

Liz Sullivan-Yuknis, Dignity in Schools Campaign

POLICY

The recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was a recurrent theme among participant-generated policy opportunities. Participants also emphasized the importance of policies that offer room for creativity and response to community concerns. Policies should support cross-sector collaborative work. Specific ideas that attracted the most support were:

- Seize the opportunity to influence state plans that are under development related to ESSA. This idea received support from both grassroots and non-grassroots participants. Non-grassroots participants also prioritized coming up with a core set of points or guiding principles that advocates and other groups can use when weighing in on ESSA.
- Repeal zero tolerance policies, which serve to push students, particularly students of color, out of school. Grassroots participants identified this as one of the most important policy changes needed.
- Create cross-sector organizational structures at national, state, and local levels and in the school building to support what the community identifies as the highest priorities. Non-grassroots participants were particularly interested in this idea.

ACTION

This area focused on the many fronts for action, from youth organizing to a national media campaign in support of healthy schools. Participants highlighted the critical importance of student involvement in action, including the idea of school climate teams of students and adults where students are the majority. Other ideas included the importance of connecting

action to research and policy. ESSA was also a priority here within the context of being an opportunity for action. Specific ideas that attracted the most support were:

- Pursue a multi-pronged strategy of youth organizing, including a media campaign related to “school health—what is it?” This idea was attractive to both grassroots and non-grassroots participants.
- Shift to prevention-focused pre-service education for all school staff. Non-grassroots participants prioritized this idea.
- Create and improve coordination infrastructure, with site team coordinators at a central office and site level. Again, non-grassroots participations were particularly interested in this idea.
- Leverage ESSA to prioritize healthy schools. Grassroots participants were especially supportive of this idea.

UNIFIED AND SYSTEMIC APPROACH

While the research, policy, and action categories proved useful for many participants in thinking about solutions, some participants called for a more integrated way to consider systems-level investments and efforts. This “unified and systemic approach,” which received a great deal of support from all participants at the prioritization stage, calls for community involvement in research, policy, and action as part of a continuous, mutually reinforcing cycle.

Described by participants as a community impact model, the approach calls on stakeholders to recognize and act in ways that link research, policy, and action. As seen below in the visual representation created by participants, this unified approach places community around a continuous cycle of research, policy, and action—a cycle that both informs and is informed by community. Funding is based on a specified goal and is available for all three areas. Ideally, this approach helps to shorten the policy-action-research cycle time while also creating systemic changes that are more connected, integrated, and sustainable.



III. Overarching Forum Themes

The *Working Forum on Healthy Schools* sought to create space for ideas and perspectives to emerge from lived experiences of students, families, and educators—and to interweave these ideas and perspectives with those of other education and health experts, policymakers, advocates, and academics. While few meetings can cover every topic in the depth that every participant desires, the deliberately broad-based participant list and wide-ranging discussion topics at the Forum reflected RWJF’s approach to its ongoing work to create a Culture of Health in schools. The mix of voices and perspectives also provided a model for others working on healthy schools to move their work forward.

Looking across the Forum discussions, activities, and report-outs, several overarching themes emerged.

- Participants stressed that the work of creating healthy schools must **start with the lived experiences of all stakeholders** who make up the school community: students and families as well as teachers, other school staff, administrators, and community partners. In many different ways throughout the Forum, participants spoke to the importance of these experiences.
- Students and other participants relayed their experiences of racism, community violence, and low expectations. Racism, particularly structural racism, was raised by participants throughout the Forum as part of the reality and lived experiences of participants and other stakeholders. They emphasized that we must **understand and address fundamental inequities and structural racism** in order to influence education and health. This includes intentionally seeking to create a space where difficult topics can be raised and discussed.
- Forum participants offered suggestions for **practical local solutions while also calling for systems change** that rethinks and reworks how schools operate and who is engaged with them. They noted that many programs and strategies can address immediate

community needs and serve as points of entry for broader changes. School leaders, community leaders, students, and families create or adopt systemic changes at the level that make the most sense to them, from the school building to the state house.

- **Community ownership** was a central concept raised at the Forum. Participants asserted that sustainable and lasting change happens only when it is community owned, and when it is accompanied by structural and systems changes. Participants expressed this as a need for “**top-down**” and “**bottom-up**” approaches to creating and sustaining healthy schools. The ESSA legislation and implementation opportunities it presents at the local, state, and national level served as a galvanizing example of “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches, which found support among grassroots and non-grassroots participants alike. Participants were similarly aligned around the idea of building personal connections and empathy across and within schools and communities.

“With evidence mounting that health and education are inextricably intertwined, it’s an important moment for leadership in our field.”

John Schlitt, School-Based Health Alliance

- Participants stressed the importance of **engaging diverse community voices in healthy schools work** on an ongoing basis. We have made significant progress as a nation in identifying “what is needed” to create healthy schools—but different communities may understand their situations, prioritize solutions, and approach solution-making in different ways. Community voices, according to many participants, should inform and be informed by every part of the research-policy-action cycle. When several participants discussed the issue of resources in low-income neighborhoods, they spoke of *underdeveloped* resources rather than a lack of resources. This distinction highlights the assets and strengths that must be tapped.
- One of the most powerful of these resources is **young people, who are essential to creating healthy schools**. Too often students feel marginalized or stigmatized in a variety of ways. The young people attending the Forum made it clear that healthy schools support young people, respect their voices, and help them in building positive futures. Youth bring assets of strength, energy, resilience, and creativity (among others) and these should be valued, supported, and reinforced.
- **Trauma at the personal and community level** is a significant challenge for many young people, their families, and their schools. Healthy schools recognize that many students are at risk of poor health and provide positive supports without labeling or stigmatizing students, their families, or their communities. From a school principal working to create a safe and successful school to researchers and policymakers, many Forum participants emphasized that trauma demands further attention across the areas of research, policy, and action.

- Yet, as the students reminded others at the meeting, they are more than the trauma they may experience in their lives. They do not want to be defined by trauma; they want support to overcome it. Healthy schools **work with communities to change the conditions that cause these traumas**. They treat young people and their families with respect and seek to connect them to the supports needed.
- Empathy emerged as a theme in the community workshops preceding the Forum and also at the Forum itself. This is the notion that healthy schools operate from a **framework of empathy and caring** that encompasses relatively simple ways to model and treat each other with kindness. It includes creating friendly and welcoming environments for diverse students and families. An empathy framework considers the culture, history, and experiences of students, their families, and the community even as it embraces new research and practices. It values students for the assets they bring to school. It includes and pursues partnerships that ensure all in the school can access the support and services they need to be successful.
- Whether referred to as collective impact, authentic collaboration, distributed leadership, or another term or framework, **multisector engagement** must be authentic to create sustainable healthy schools. Participants emphasized that this work is not the responsibility of a single sector, nor is it appropriate for a single sector to try to dictate changes in other sectors.

As noted earlier in this report, participants agreed that we cannot create truly healthy schools for *all* in an unhealthy society. Yet they also agreed that it is critical to find places and ways to start, and that this meeting was part of that effort.

IV. Recommendations

Forum participants expressed the need for continued support for programs and strategies that elevate the participation and partnership of students, their families, community members, educators, administrators, and others in the work to create healthy schools. This call for broad-based, local engagement can serve to anchor the work of RWJF and others going forward. Following are recommendations for the field based on the challenges, solutions, and overarching themes raised at the Forum.

"Are we bold enough? We must constantly ask that question."

Ron Walker, Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color

Stakeholders working to create healthy schools should:

- 1. Find ways to support specific programs as well as broader systems change work.** Recognize the importance of specific programs at the school and community level supported by the policy and infrastructure changes that can make those programs sustainable.
- 2. Tap existing and potential policy levers at state, local, and school building level.** ESSA presents favorable opportunities at the national, state, and local levels. Participants stressed the importance of using what is already in place.
- 3. Allow for authentic community participation and, ideally, explicit community roles in creation of strategies and decision-making.** Sustainable change requires this type of engagement.

4. **Hear, acknowledge, and engage youth in generating and implementing solutions.** Youth represent an often untapped force for positive change. As with community engagement, youth involvement was considered by participants to be crucial in creating sustainable change.
5. **Recognize that there are challenging root issues of structural racism and poverty that impact the lives of students, their families, and those who work in schools.** Seek ways to understand and address these issues in healthy schools support.
6. **Recognize the impact of trauma as well as its complexity.** It is important to find ways to support students, families, and communities, without creating or enhancing stigmatization or labeling.
7. **Operate from a framework of empathy and caring that models ways to treat each other with kindness.** Create friendly and welcoming environments for diverse students and families that consider their culture, history, and experiences. Value students and other stakeholders for the assets they bring to school.
8. **Prioritize and support cross-sector efforts that do not put control or responsibility with a single sector.** Regardless of the term used to describe this cross-sector work, it deserves both financial and practical support.

Afterword

In a Culture of Health, all families must have the opportunity to raise healthy children from the start so that every child is able to lead the healthiest, most successful life possible. At RWJF, we believe a child’s physical, social, and emotional health are connected. By taking a holistic view of a child’s well-being, we can identify the necessary supports, environmental changes, and policies that can equip and empower parents and communities to give kids a healthy start, from their earliest years through adolescence.

Our focus is on investing in the building blocks for lifelong health and resilience—ensuring children are able to grow up at a healthy weight, with access to nutritious foods, healthy environments, and physical activity; teaching kids social and emotional skills at home, in early child care settings, and in the classroom; creating healthy schools where education and health are inextricably linked; and empowering families, educators, health care providers, and other caring adults to create safe and healthy environments in which kids can grow, learn, and succeed.

Through our work, we seek to improve the lives of all children and families. However, we also recognize that physical and cognitive outcomes for African-American and Latino children today are significantly worse than for other children. These disparities cannot be allowed to persist. This principle guides our thinking, informs our decisions, and inspires urgency in our work.

The *Working Forum on Healthy Schools* and the work that preceded it are crucial components of the Foundation’s efforts to advance our work. We have been privileged to talk with and learn from people and organizations with insights, experience, and expertise—and we will continue to do so as part of our ongoing learning journey. Working together, we can bring about the changes needed to ensure America’s children grow up strong and healthy, now and for generations to come.

Appendix 1

A Working Forum on Healthy Schools

March 22–23, 2016, Washington, D.C.

Forum Purpose

To assess what systems-level efforts would be most impactful in making healthy school environments the norm and not the exception.

Forum Objectives

- To assess alignment among diverse stakeholders about:
 - the most significant opportunities and barriers to address in order to create conditions for health-promoting school environments that reinforce and support learning.
 - the most powerful levers for promoting equity and improving outcomes for all students.
 - systems-level investments/efforts that might significantly support educators and communities to be effective and motivated in creating schools that embody a culture of health, and thus create healthier schools, healthier kids, and healthier communities.
- To disrupt and expand participant thinking to encourage spacious feedback.
- To learn what will create solution-oriented conversations that are inclusive of educators, students, parents, families, and related professional and community partners.
- To open space to identify new relationships – or foster existing relationships in the room – to support rich continued learning and dialogue.

Tuesday, March 22, 2016

Time	Session
5:30 pm	Welcome <i>Kristin Schubert</i> <i>Managing Director: Healthy Children, Healthy Weight,</i> <i>Robert Wood Johnson Foundation</i> Introductions <i>Lisa Silverberg</i> <i>Meeting Facilitator</i> Why We're Here <i>Jennifer Ng'andu</i> <i>Senior Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation</i>
6:15	Dinner
7:15	Envisioning Healthy Schools Looking at Social Norms
8:30	Adjourn

A Working Forum on Healthy Schools

March 22–23, 2016, Washington, D.C.

Time	Session
7:30 am	Breakfast Available
8:30	Looking Back to Move Forward
9:10	Grappling with Barriers to Healthy Schools
10:45	Break
11:00	Building Bridges
12:30 pm	Lunch
1:15	Systemic Solutions in Research, Policy and Action
2:50	Break and Priority Setting
3:10	Observations/Emergent Questions
4:00	Closing Reflections
4:30	Adjourn

A Working Forum on Healthy Schools

March 22–23, 2016, Washington, D.C.

Participants

Olga Acosta Price

Associate Professor and Director
Center for Health and Health Care in Schools

Brigid Ahern

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Turnaround for Children

Wendy Baron

Chief Officer, Social and Emotional Learning
New Teacher Center

Juliette Berg

Researcher
American Institutes for Research

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Sesame Workshop

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Health and Wellness Coordinator
Elev8 Baltimore

Jill Birnbaum

Vice President, State Advocacy &
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American Heart Association

Shirley Brandman

Executive Director, National Commission of
Social, Emotional, and Academic
Development
Aspen Institute

Marsha Broussard

Sr. Program Director, School and
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Louisiana Public Health Institute

Allison Brown

Executive Director
Communities for Just Schools Fund

Charlene Burgeson

Executive Director
Let's Move! Active Schools

Stuart Butler

Senior Fellow
Brookings Institution

Eliza Byard

Executive Director
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network

Dana Carr

Executive Director
Moringa Policy Consulting

Sylvia Castillo

Program Director
The Praxis Project

Kimberly Charis

Director of School Climate, Discipline,
and Equity
National Association of State Boards
of Education

A Working Forum on Healthy Schools

March 22–23, 2016 • Participants *(continued)*

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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Senior Program Coordinator
NEA Healthy Futures

Indira Dammu

Policy and Research Analyst
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Rochelle Davis

President & CEO
Healthy Schools Campaign

Karen Ellis

Principal
MMS Education

Tracy Fox

President
Food, Nutrition & Policy Consultants

Debra Hauser

President
Advocates for Youth

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Professor and Chair
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at Cortland

Jamie Chiqui

Director of Policy Surveillance and Evaluation
Bridging the Gap

Caitlin Codella

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U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Mónica Córdova

Program Director
Fundors' Collaborative on Youth Organizing

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Senior Program Officer
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Jessica Donze Black

Director Kids Safe and Healthful Foods Project
The Pew Charitable Trusts

Alexis Etow

Staff Attorney
ChangeLab Solutions

Jayne Greenberg

District Director Physical Education and
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Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Godwin Higa

Principal, Cherokee Point Elementary School
San Diego Unified School District

Nora Howley

Consultant
MMS Education

A Working Forum on Healthy Schools

March 22–23, 2016 • Participants *(continued)*

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -
School Health Bureau

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Project Director
AASA, The School Superintendent's
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Reuben Jacobson

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Coalition for Community Schools

Sadia Kalam

Program Associate
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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Professionals
American Federation of Teachers

Kellie Karavias

Culinary Arts Educator
Gregory-Lincoln Education Center

Deborah Keys

Director, Equity Programming
National School Boards Association

Jeff Kirsch

Vice President
Council for a Strong America

Kathy Ko Chin

President & CEO
Asian & Pacific Islander American
Health Forum

Sara Bartolino Krachman

Co-Founder & Executive Director
Transforming Education

David Krol

Senior Program Officer
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Jess Lawrence

Owner & Director
Cairn Guidance

Tiereny Lloyd

Director of Health & Wellness Initiatives
Afterschool Alliance

Steven Lopez

Manager
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Megan Lott

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Healthy Eating Research

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Saxon Nelson

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A Working Forum on Healthy Schools

March 22–23, 2016 • Participants *(continued)*

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Executive Director
CAN DO Houston

William Potts-Datema

Chief, Program Development and
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Division of Adolescent and School Health

Paul Roetert

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SHAPE America

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Sean Slade

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Vice President and Institute Fellow
American Institutes for Research

Elena Rocha

Director, Youth Development Partnerships
and Policy
YMCA of the USA

Erin Rogus

Policy Assistant to Sen. Bill Frist, MD
NashvilleHealth

John Schlitt

President
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Lisa Silverberg

Meeting Facilitator
Process Matters

Maisha Simmons

Senior Program Officer
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Robin Stern

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Yale University

Liz Sullivan-Yuknis

Education Campaigns Director
Dignity in Schools Campaign

LaShonda Taylor

Director of Community Programs
Alternatives In Action

Marlyn Tillman

Coordinating Committee/Co-Founder
Gwinnett STOPP

A Working Forum on Healthy Schools

March 22–23, 2016 • Participants *(continued)*

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Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color

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Broader, Bolder Approach to Education

Corey Wiggins

Director
Hope Policy Institute

Sandy Won

Vice President
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Mike Youngblood

Design Anthropologist
The Youngblood Group

Howell Wechsler

CEO
Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Roger Weissberg

Chief Knowledge Officer
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and
Emotional Learning

Amanda Wilson

Strategic Engagement & Project Manager
Active Living Research

Terri Wright

Director, Centers for Public Health Policy and
School, Health and Education
American Public Health Association

Sara Zimmerman

Program and Policy Director
Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Several high school students from across the U.S. – including students from Houston, Oakland (CA), and Silver Spring (MD) – also attended.

Community Design Session Posters

BACKGROUND

In December 2015 and January 2016, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation organized a series of community design sessions in Oakland (CA), Silver Spring (MD), and Houston (TX). These “Healthy School Community Workshops” brought together students, teachers, parents, and other local stakeholders from high-need communities to collaborate in designing local solutions for youth health and wellness in their neighborhoods and pre-K-12 public schools.

The purpose of these design sessions was 1) to better understand the health challenges for public schools and communities from the expert perspective of on-the-ground stakeholders, 2) to get community input on priority areas for change, and 3) to brainstorm starter ideas for change that community members considered practical, implementable, and impactful.

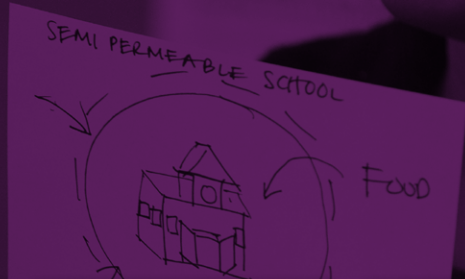
POSTER CONTENT

Each of the posters represents one of six key challenge themes that were recurrent in the design sessions, with accompanying examples of more specific challenges that came up frequently in the sessions. The posters also include sketches of relevant starter ideas for addressing challenges, as created by community members in rapid brainstorming sessions. These sketches are just a small sampling from nearly 300 ideas, and show some of the range of local solutions discussed by the community stakeholders.

Home Life

CHALLENGES

- Parents not at home
- Unhealthy eating routines
- Unpredictable circumstances
- Interpersonal violence
- Substance abuse



COOKING CLASSES

- PAY STAY @ HOME MOMS
- TRAIN THE TRAINER
- A TIME FOR FAMILY TO BOND WHILE PREPARING A MEAL TOGETHER



FAMILY COOKING CLASSES

This idea envisions parents training other parents and their families how to cook healthful meals together.

Teaching life skills lesson to students...



LIFE SKILLS CLASSES FOR STUDENTS

This idea involves teaching practical skills that help students succeed at home and in other areas of life beyond the school walls.

Lack of Sleep Class

12:00 a.m. 7:15 a.m.

Students have to wake up at 6:00 to 6:30 am

Less homework for better learning



MORE SLEEP FOR BETTER LEARNING

This idea seeks to improve learning and attentiveness in class by helping students get more sleep at home.

Exercising as a family



FAMILY EXERCISE

This idea is about encouraging and supporting families being physically active together to build healthy routines and strengthen families.

Increase Home Visits Method

School personnel has to reach more their students homes in order to know better why students show certain social-emotional behaviors

Home Visits Area



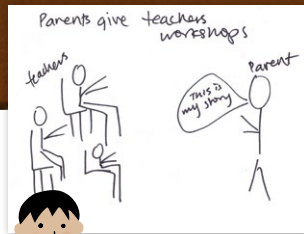
HOME VISITS

This idea proposes that educators and counselors visit students' homes to better understand their living situations and the types of support that students need.

School Resources

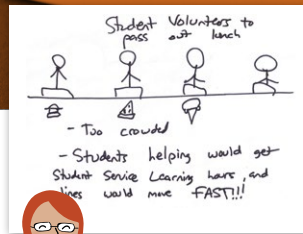
CHALLENGES

- Lack of money
- Lack of training
- Poor facilities
- Overcrowded & understaffed
- Time limitations



PARENTS GIVE WORKSHOPS TO TEACHERS

This idea envisions parents as trainers for educators, providing context and insight to help them better understand their students and be more effective.



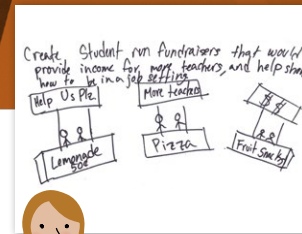
STUDENT VOLUNTEER LUNCH WORKERS

This idea awards service learning credit to students who help serve lunch, in order to speed up lunch lines and give kids more time to eat.



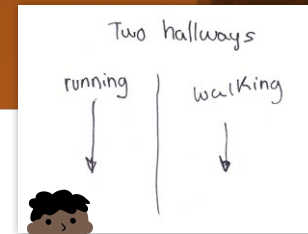
EDIBLE SCHOOL YARD

This idea leverages schoolyards as educational space, where students can learn about healthy food and take classes outdoors.



FUNDRAISERS AS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

This idea imagines students designing and running small pop-up businesses to fund school resources and learn job skills in the process.



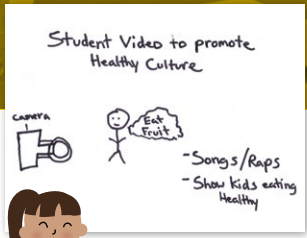
2 HALLWAY LANES: 1 FOR RUNNING, 1 FOR WALKING

This idea repurposes existing school infrastructure and gives kids permission to exercise in a way that comes naturally for them.

Student Stress & Peer Relationships

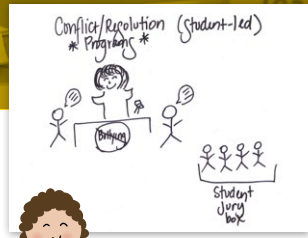
CHALLENGES

- Mental health stressors
- Bullying
- Tension in the halls
- Pressure to fit in
- Negative self-image
- Negative role models



STUDENT VIDEOS FOR HEALTH

This idea imagines a creative platform through which students can be healthy influencers and role models in their schools.



STUDENT-LED CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This idea envisions peers acting as counselors and mediators to resolve interpersonal frictions in their school.



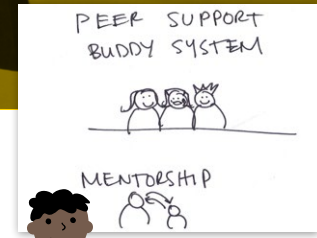
MULTI-CULTURAL LUNCHROOM

This idea involves school cafeterias serving food from different cultures to promote intercultural learning and inclusiveness.



CULTURE OF KINDNESS AND AFFIRMATION

This idea promotes self esteem and student harmony through exposure to positive messages throughout the school day.



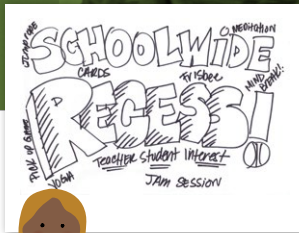
PEER SUPPORT SYSTEMS

This idea envisions students helping their peers with social and emotional challenges through buddy systems and mentoring by older students.

School Culture & Competing Priorities

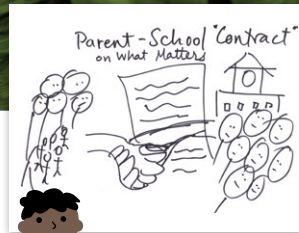
CHALLENGES

- Focus on tests
- Lack of vision
- Student and educator apathy
- Overburdened staff
- Junk food in schools



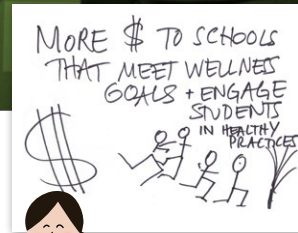
SCHOOL-WIDE RECESS

This idea reimagines recess as a time for both students and teachers to recharge body and mind together in shared activities.



PARENT-SCHOOL CONTRACT

This idea envisions parents and schools agreeing on their mutual goals and responsibilities for ensuring student wellness and success.



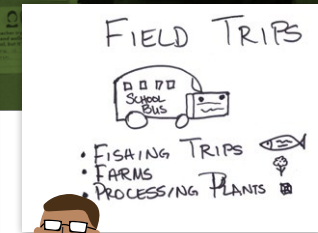
INCENTIVES TO SCHOOLS FOR HEALTH

This idea considers schools' success more broadly than just test scores, and provides additional funding to schools that meet wellness goals.



IDEAL LUNCH

This idea redesigns school lunches to be a model of good nutrition and an experiential education in healthy eating.



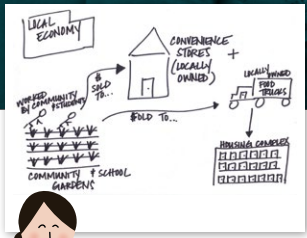
HEALTHY EDUCATION FIELD TRIPS

This idea gets students out of the school building and into real-life contexts to learn about food and healthy living.

Community Environment

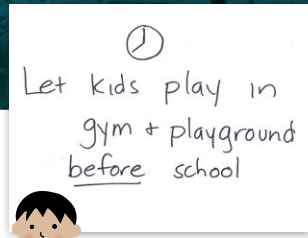
CHALLENGES

- Unsafe streets
- Fast food and quick shops instead of grocery stores
- Lack of green space



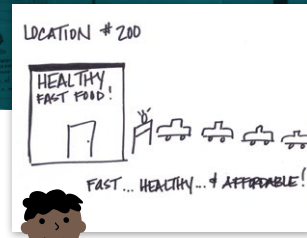
SCHOOL GARDENING FOR THE COMMUNITY

This idea involves students and community members working together in local gardens, and selling fresh produce to local quick shops and families.



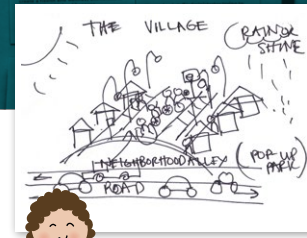
MORNING ACCESS TO SCHOOL FACILITIES

This idea opens up school playgrounds and gyms before school begins, giving kids the chance to start their day with physical activity.



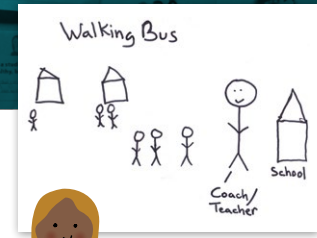
HEALTHY FAST FOOD CHAINS

This idea turns ubiquitous fast food restaurants into outlets for healthy meals—without sacrificing convenience and affordability.



POP-UP PARKS

This idea envisions temporary, low cost neighborhood parks and play spaces that bring kids and families together in outdoor physical activity.



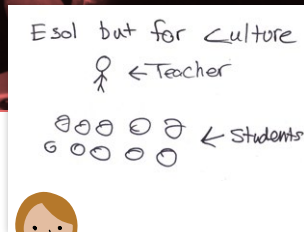
WALKING BUS

This idea gives kids daily exercise and safe passage to school by walking together in adult-led groups.

Family Resources

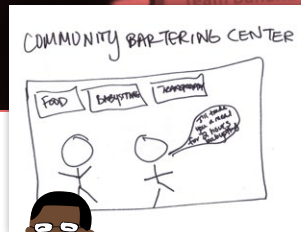
CHALLENGES

- Undependable transportation
- Limited budget
- No health insurance
- Insufficient language skills and system know-how
- No documentation



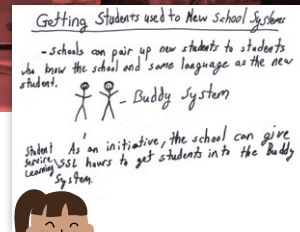
ESOL FOR CULTURE

This idea offers training in local culture to help kids from other cultural backgrounds succeed in their school and community.



COMMUNITY BARTERING CENTER

This idea helps families support each other by trading services and resources for other services and resources they need.



BUDDY SYSTEM FOR NEW STUDENTS

This idea enlists experienced students as mentors and buddies for incoming students to help them navigate the system in their new school.



CAR POOLING

This idea envisions community ride-sharing, enabling students and families to get safely to sports practices, health appointments, or grocery stores.



MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT

This idea provides multilingual services to ensure that non-English speaking parents have equal access to information about school and local resources.