Diversifying and Expanding the School Health Pipeline

Themes from a conversation with Kima Joy Taylor, MD, MPH

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About Healthy Schools Campaign

- Works at the intersection of education, health and equity

- Chicago focused but nationally minded

- Multi-issue with a strong focus on leveraging school Medicaid services to expand access to healthcare

- Focus on policy and systems-level change, cross-sector collaboration

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Interview Speakers

- **Kimá Joy Taylor, MD, MPH**
Anka Consulting – Kimá is a consultant to Healthy Schools Campaign

- **Jessie Mandle, MPH**
National Program Director, Healthy Schools Campaign

Who makes up the school health workforce?

- **Qualified Professionals in Schools and Within the School Community**
  - Provide a continuum of care, including health services and mental and behavioral health supports
  - Registered school nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, physician assistants, health educators, school psychologists, allied health personnel and more!

Why is having a diversified workforce important?

- **The student population is racially and ethnically diverse, and the workforce needs to reflect that diversity.**
  - Through a diverse staff, kids see the possibility and what they can achieve.

- **Schools need to educate students and contribute to their lifelong success. Healthy students lead to better learners.**
  - A diversification of staff can support the whole child in reaching improved education and health outcomes.

- **Students need culturally and linguistically effective care.**

Why *else* is having a diversified workforce important, and how are schools and partners needed?

- **Schools have an important role in creating opportunities for students and building the future workforce.**
  - We need to create educational systems that teach and support kids in attaining goals.
  - Schools have a unique influence on pipeline development programming.

- **Partners like Medicaid can work with schools to create the kinds of structures and operations needed to improve health of the student population. Building a diversified workforce is one strategy.**
  - Even non-traditional partners like universities can facilitate health-related rotations in schools (i.e., rotations for nurses and physicians in training) or encourage graduates to help mentor K-12 students.

What are some challenges to diversifying the workforce?

- **Some vital K-12 pipeline development and post-secondary education pathways are stopped or don't have needed momentum.** Even implementing mentoring and shadowing opportunities can be helpful.

- **Key equity challenges like attendance, discipline policies, graduation rates and others exist.** Attention to addressing equity challenges can reduce many barriers that affect kids of color. Conducting policy and data review to build environments where children thrive is needed.

- **Post-secondary education is costly.** Offering supports like scholarships, including those that tie to a commitment in a student's own community, can be helpful.

- **Beyond workforce recruitment, strategies focused on *retention* are needed.** Be intentional to promoting retention from the start through equitable financing structure for healthcare providers (e.g., Medicaid), incentives, etc.

What key principles keep equity at the forefront?

1
Leadership that centers student wellness

2
Identification and use of short- and long-term goals to chart the path

3
Partner engagement including youth from across the school environment

4
Review of disaggregated data about the student population and outcomes

What are some supportive policy and practice examples?

- **Schools and their partners can:** Enhance training and development of existing staff, including work to identify those staff that may be seeking career advancement. Support staff educational costs and incentives to keep with or return to the school.
- Develop policies that intentionally address and monitor key equity challenges, incorporating review of data in achieving equitable outcomes.
- Create the policy environment that allows innovative, health-related workforce development programming (e.g., STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] programs) to take shape.
- Seek and tap into federal, state, and additional resources including lessons learned that can be levers to advance equity efforts and facilitate diversifying the school health pipeline.
- Build health into everyday practices to strengthen norms and ease adoption to improved wellness.
- Foster trust with the community - lacking trust can limit engagement and uptake of policies and practices.

What are some supportive policy and practice examples?

- Rethink the school environment to advance students' overall development, applying insights from related efforts with school disciplinary reform, restorative justice, social and emotional learning promotion, and being responsive to how youth themselves envision any changes.
- Allocate budgetary resources to develop systems and infrastructure, as well as provide interventions.
  - Determining students' needs and how they can be fulfilled in coordination with school community partners is critical to this alignment of resources.
  - Focus on the quality of culturally and linguistically effective care. Having more professionals in the schools may not be the answer.
- Create the space beyond the school day for health professionals to provide quality care and education to students.
- Utilize telehealth to expand the breadth of diverse providers and offer more equitable care.

It is important to start somewhere. "… just get started … any place you start is OK."
- Kimá Joy Taylor

The work builds. Schools are important to diversifying the school health pipeline, but they are not alone and it takes help from partners.

View resources at Healthy Schools Campaign to help with expanding and diversifying the school health pipeline: **healthyschoolscampaign.org/school-health-pipeline**