

## Audubon Elementary School

Spokane, Washington



*Kaiser Permanente knows healthy schools support improved learning for children and higher job satisfaction among teachers and staff. That's why every year we are proud to sponsor America's Healthiest Schools, one of the country's longest-running national recognition programs honoring schools for their achievements in supporting the whole health needs of students and school staff.*

*In partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the annual awards recognize schools for implementing best practices and policies in up to nine topic areas related to advancing the physical, mental, and social-emotional health of students, staff, and families.*

*In 2023, 781 schools across 36 states were recognized, including Audubon Elementary in Spokane, Washington.*

Audubon Elementary School knows food security is essential to learning. The school offers a community vegetable garden; Bite 2 Go, a weekend food bag program; and Go-Slow-Whoa, a second chance breakfast nutrition education program. It's no surprise then that improving food and nutrition access is one of the six topic areas the Washington State school was recognized for excelling in last year through America's Healthiest Schools awards.

Audubon Elementary was also recognized for its exemplary efforts in supporting the overall health and wellness of students, families, and staff, including:

- Cultivating staff well-being
- Increasing family and community engagement
- Bolstering physical education and activity
- Supporting school health services
- Strengthening social-emotional health and learning

To learn more, contact [ThrivingSchools@kp.org](mailto:ThrivingSchools@kp.org), visit [kp.org/thrivingschools](https://kp.org/thrivingschools), or follow [@thrivingschools](https://twitter.com/thrivingschools) on X."



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A big part of Audubon's success comes from working collectively. In addition to partnering with a local food bank, the school team also works with community health facilities, providing referrals to help meet students' individual dental, vision, hearing, and other medical needs.

"The advice we can offer other schools interested in implementing similar efforts in their school is to work collectively with community resources and build committees within the school that allow all staff to be involved in the process," said school counselor Aftan Lissy. "It takes a village, and we can't work in silos."

To show their appreciation for the work staff do in and out of the school, cultivating staff well-being is an area the team invests in. A social committee is dedicated to implementing practices and policies building-wide that promote staff self-care and a positive work culture. From Wellness Wednesdays featuring a treat cart to supporting staff in times of need and celebration with cards, flowers and gifts, the staff of 70 is always a priority.

And so are the families of the more than 450 students attending Audubon. A family engagement committee is dedicated to creating monthly events that bring students, families, staff, and the community together to learn about and celebrate the hard work our students accomplish every day. Events include trunk-or-treat in October with learning zones for children and families, a STEM night, reading night, a book and resource fair, open houses and more.

These events all happen in addition to the day-to-day commitment teachers and staff have to educate and support students. Audubon has a robust school counseling system to strengthen social-emotional health and learning. All students receive instruction on conflict management and character development. Students also have access to more individualized support like small groups, sensory interventions, and rewards systems.

Students also get some more expected activities, like multiple daily outdoor recesses, and brain/movement breaks. Self-care, health and fitness concepts and human growth and development are all taught in the classroom as well.

All this work, and the reason Audubon - one of 34 elementary schools in Spokane - was highly recognized this year, is largely because of their experience with the Kaiser Permanente and Alliance for a Healthier Generation Action Center. The school leveraged the Thriving Schools Integrated Assessment and Resilience in School Environments (RISE) Index tools to build an action plan in alignment with their priorities. They also partnered with a Healthier Generation project manager to execute their planned activities.

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Audubon Elementary also used Kaiser Permanente's RISE program resources, some creativity and a little funding, to improve staff morale and connectivity with the help of a staff break room makeover.

"The biggest takeaway for our school is that we were already doing the work. The application process and our building work with the RISE program helped us to be more intentional in our efforts," said Lissy. "We look forward to continuing the work and we're shooting for [awards in] all 9 categories next year!"

*The America's Healthiest Schools awards reinforce the mission of Kaiser Permanente's Thriving Schools initiative, which works to strengthen the health and well-being of school communities across the country, so every school succeeds, every employee excels, and every child thrives.*

*Kaiser Permanente is proud to be a partner in health to schools like Audubon Elementary throughout the year. For more information on Thriving Schools, visit [kp.org/thrivingschools](https://kp.org/thrivingschools) or follow @thrivingschools on X.*

*[Learn more](#) about the America's Healthiest Schools awards.*

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