

Swallows Charter Academy

Pueblo, Colorado



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 Swallows Charter Academy in Pueblo, Colorado.

Tattle jars were in every staff breakroom at Swallows Charter Academy. Staff were encouraged to add notes to tell on their coworkers. School administrators found it built team morale.

The "tattle" jars were, in fact, little bits of gratitude. They offered opportunities for school staff to recognize each other before every staff meeting. This was one of the many reasons Swallows Charter Academy was recognized in five separate health categories in this year's America's Healthiest Schools awards.

The K-12 academy demonstrated excellence in supporting the overall health and wellness of students, families, and staff, and was rewarded for it in the following areas:

- Cultivating staff well-being
- Increasing family and community engagement
- Enriching health education
- Implementing local school wellness policy
- Bolstering physical education and activity

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“It was so rewarding to see the America’s Healthiest Schools banner—the students can see it and know that our school is a healthy school and that we are trying to make a difference,” said Rebecca Tomlin, Wellness Coordinator and Achievement Specialist.

The school took full advantage of all the tools and resources the Healthier Generation and Kaiser Permanente Action Center provides. It uses the Resilience in School Environments (RISE) Index and Thriving Schools Integrated Assessment (TSIA) to set agendas for wellness committee meetings. Using the assessment responses, the school was able to identify priority areas and create subcommittees to work on specific areas of need.

“When you start going through the assessments, you’ll be surprised at how many things you are already doing,” Tomlin said.

In addition to the “tattle jars,” the school hosted a staff-family picnic to build relationships, complete with food, games, and a pumpkin patch. They created a wellness room that includes spa features and made sure breakrooms on each floor of the school are filled with comfortable seating, board games, popcorn machines, and coffee and tea stations.

“Staff were so grateful for the massage program and the updated wellness room because they have been so stressed,” said Tomlin. “These little activities helped connect staff and bring them together.”

Supporting the staff is a critical component of Swallows Charter Academy’s values, which include making sure people can live, learn, work, and play in a safe community where everyone is an integral part. That means the school didn’t stop at building staff supports.

Family and community engagement is always a key priority. The school surveys caregivers every year to assess health concerns and food access and transportation needs. Results are all incorporated in the school’s Wellness Committee action steps, as well as an overall state improvement plan.

To support mental health, the school uses “brain breaks” at least once a class. All students receive a recess during the day, including those with special health care needs, who get peer assistance to provide adjustments to meet specific abilities.

While Swallows Charter Academy includes health education as part of its reading and science curriculum, it goes a step further and emphasizes sleep education as well. The health instructor discusses the importance of sleep and how it affects physical and mental health. The students even log their sleep routines.

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These are just some of the ways Swallows Charter Academy is working to support student and staff health and wellness. The school is committed to going beyond what is expected, and added their own school-level goals to the district policy to ensure they continue to do everything they can. The wellness coordinator's advice to others with the same ambition is to start small and stay organized.

"Have other people help you with assessment and applications. In order to create something sustainable, it is important to have a team working on wellness," Tomlin said. "This work matters, it makes a difference in student's lives and changes your school's culture."

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 Swallows Charter Academy throughout the year. For more information on Thriving Schools, visit kp.org/thrivingschools or follow @thrivingschools on X.

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

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