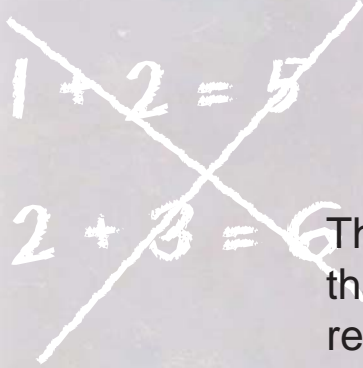# SCHOOL HEALTH CENTERS:
Helping Educators Close the Achievement Gap

What do these students have in common?

a chronic asthmatic   a depressed adolescent

a pregnant 9th grader   a 6 year-old who's been bullied

a diabetic 16 year-old   a 10th grade drug user

a teen with chronic headaches   a 3rd grader with tooth decay

They all experience health and behavior problems that compromise their academic potential and result in missed classes, poor academic performance, and increased risk for school dropout.

"Lots of kids attend school in the after-shocks of violence. Violence destabilizes lives and relationships, undermines security, and provides yet another barrier to learning. Without mental health care, trauma can go undiagnosed, unacknowledged, and untreated. I can't understate the effects on a child's academic performance."

— Assistant Principal

What do these students have in common?

a 3rd grader who misses only a few days of school   a well-behaved 9th grader

a 7th grader who is successful in school   a 12th grader headed for college

Their health is not a barrier to their learning. Research confirms what experienced educators intuitively know: Health disparities contribute to the achievement gap.

"Several of my kindergarteners have serious tooth decay. Their teeth are black and rotting. We all know how much a toothache hurts. Can WE concentrate with throbbing pain? No. It's unrealistic for us to expect a five-year old to do what we can't."

—Teacher

By meeting the health and mental health needs of students, school health centers close the wellness gap and help educators close the achievement gap.

California
School Health Centers
www.schoolhealthcenters.org

School health centers support learning by meeting health and mental health needs.

ATTENDANCE

Chronic and acute health problems, like asthma, diabetes, injuries, and the flu, keep children home from school.

Children with asthma miss 13 million days of school annually. That's 13 million lost days of learning.

School health services keep children in the classroom by helping them control their asthma and other chronic diseases.

$$1 + 2 = 3$$
$$2 + 3 = 5$$ ☺

ATTENTION

Poor oral health and hygiene lead to abscesses, cavities, and gum disease, all of which are painful and distracting.

One in four children has an untreated dental cavity. Persistent pain from poor oral health makes it difficult to pay attention in class.

School dental services allow children to concentrate on learning by providing affordable preventative care and treatment. and other chronic diseases.

I love my school health center!

BEHAVIOR

Untreated mental health disorders, such as ADHD, anxiety, and depression, negatively impact student behavior.

More than 13% of children suffer from a mental health disorder, such as depression or attention deficit hyper-activity disorder, making it hard for them to control their behavior and causing classroom disruption.

School health services dramatically reduce disciplinary referrals and improve school climate by meeting students' mental health needs.

GRADUATION

Youth engaging in high-risk activities — alcohol/drug use, unprotected sex, and violence — are less likely to graduate.

Only half of adolescent mothers earn a high school diploma, compared to almost 90% for other girls.

School health services prevent dropout by engaging students in research-based strategies to prevent teen pregnancy.