

Water Promotion in Schools

A snapshot from St. Louis, Missouri



When children drink enough water, they learn and perform better at school and on the field. Water helps improve cognitive function and helps energize muscles. Having access to water while they learn means students will be alert, energized, and refreshed. Check out this snapshot to learn how St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) increased access to drinking water by installing water bottle filling stations, and motivated students to drink more water.



Getting Buy-In

Installing water bottle filling stations was an important long-term change to each school building. The first step was to get staff on board. Teachers were concerned about increased trips to the bathroom or, for younger students, accidents in the classroom. Custodians were worried that students would spill water at the stations. To address their concerns, the program started as a pilot in two school buildings. Staff learned from their pilot, shared results, and adjusted before it was introduced to other buildings.

"Operation H2O - Hydration"

Students were challenged to accept various missions, including saving the planet (from plastic water bottles), water their brain, zap zits, and avoid dehydration and mid-day "tired attacks." The schools were also in competition with each other by counting how many plastic bottles each building kept out of a landfill. The water bottle filling station's each have a counter keeping track. In just one semester, 11 schools had kept 987,000 bottles out of a landfill.

Tips to Create the Program

- Purchase clear water bottles for all students. Make it fun and include your school logo and colors.
- Come up with a cleaning plan. At SLPS, some schools allowed students to take their bottles home. Another kept the bottles at school to be cleaned by the art teacher in their large sink with weekly help from students.
- Send a letter home to parents to tell them about the changes and the importance of water and hydration.
- Create an informational sheet for teachers explaining the connection between hydration and academics.



7.5%

increase in SLPS students at a healthy weight between 2015 - 2019.



"The greatest impact has been students, and staff, drinking more water, which they know is safe, and staying hydrated throughout the day. By being more hydrated, we are combating fatigue, headaches, and anxiety which increases attention and energy in our classrooms, PE, and recess. This has been a great addition to our school and helped increase our climate physically, academically, and socially."

DR. KELLI CASPER, PRINCIPAL AT MULLANPHY INVESTIGATIVE LEARNING CENTER



Top Tips from Leanne White, HSHC Project Director, SLPS

1. **Get buy-in from staff.** Listen to their concerns and try to address them. It's okay if different buildings take different approaches.
2. **Start small.** Consider a pilot project in 1-2 schools in your district. You'll be able to showcase results and make adjustments along the way before you consider expanding your project.
3. **Make it exciting for the kids.** Healthy change can be fun! Use games, challenges, and fun facts to engage students.

Check out the [Win with Water toolkit for water promotion talking points, social media graphics, and more!](#)