

“WHAT DOES A SCHOOL NURSE DO?”

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As parents, we know that children must be healthy and feel well to concentrate on learning. When we send our children off to school for the day, it is important that their health needs will be met. In the Montclair Public Schools, the school nurses address the physical, mental, emotional, and social health of our children. Their ultimate goal is support of student success in the learning process. Our school nurses have specialized training – each is a Registered Nurse (RN) with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in nursing and a post bachelor's state certification in school nursing. There is one school nurse in each elementary school and middle school (except Renaissance, which has a part time school nurse), one in the 9th Grade Academy and two part time school nurses in the high school.

What does a school nurse do? In accordance with NJ Department of Education protocols and schedules, school nurses conduct height, weight, blood pressure, vision, hearing, and scoliosis screening of our children, and notify parents and guardians of any abnormalities found.

In addition, the school nurses promote and maintain optimal student health by:

- Providing first aid and arranging for assessment and assistance to a child who becomes ill or injured at school or is demonstrating a significant change in behavior, whether due to a physical or social/emotional cause;
- Communicating with parents and guardians when further medical care or attention may be needed, and making referrals as appropriate;
- Supporting the health curriculum by teaching health lessons to students and/or serving as a resource to classroom teachers;
- Educating the school staff about health matters that affect students and/or staff;
- Collaborating with other school professionals, parents/guardians and the student's health care team, as needed, to foster maximal student success.
- Providing health counseling to students as needed on an ongoing basis.

The school nurses work closely with the student assistance counselors to address a child's social- emotional as well as physical health needs. If a child

complains of a headache or stomach ache that seems to be caused by worry, stress or another emotional cause, the school nurse may refer the child to the student assistance counselor.

From our children's point of view, the school nurse is a caring adult to whom they can go for reassurance when feeling ill or just overwhelmed at school. From the parents' point of view, the certified school nurses have the important role of maintaining the safety of our children. As Edgemont school nurse Nancy Otskey explained, "Because of the uniqueness of our professional training, we are able to assess the children appropriately from an experienced medical "lens" and intervene appropriately; whether that be referrals, urgent medical care, or simply discussing the matter with parents; suggesting when action is needed and when it is not."

The health services provided by the school nurses and the counseling services provided by the student assistance counselors are two of the eight components of the federal Center for Disease Control's "coordinated school health" model for comprehensive school health services. The other components are: health and safety policies and environment, health education, physical education, nutrition services, staff wellness, and family/community involvement.

The school nurse pages on the district website contain valuable information, including a list of nurses by school, information for parents and guardians, and tips and resources on common childhood health concerns. Please visit the School Nurse web pages at: <http://www.montclair.k12.nj.us/WebPage.aspx?Id=29>