

May 20, 2020

The Honorable Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Roybal Building 21, Room 12000
1600 Clifton Road, NE
Atlanta GA 30329

Dear Dr. Redfield:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to inform the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that during our 2019 Annual Meeting, the AMA House of Delegates established new policy directing our organization to work with the CDC and other stakeholders to promote a meaningful health curriculum (including nutrition) for grades kindergarten through 12.

There are approximately 50.8 million students learning in public schools across the U.S., and more than 5.7 million students being educated in private schools across the country.¹ Schools have direct contact with our nation's students, for approximately six hours per day. Schools across the U.S. serve as a critical lifeline in shaping students' social, psychological, physical, and intellectual development. K-12 schools play an important role in promoting the health and safety of children and adolescents by helping them to establish lifelong health patterns. Ensuring the continuation of health curriculum in grades kindergarten through 12 is more crucial than ever as the world battles the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CDC's current curriculum, Components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC), allows schools to provide students with opportunities to learn about and practice healthy eating, physical activity, and chronic disease management (asthma, diabetes, food allergies, and poor oral health).² Individuals with serious chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and asthma, are at a higher risk of experiencing serious complications from COVID-19.^{3,4} As the country navigates educating students in-person and/or virtually, during this unprecedented time, we urge the CDC to take a more active role in promoting its curriculum

¹ <https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/education-statistics/index.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscs/components.htm>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/asthma.html>

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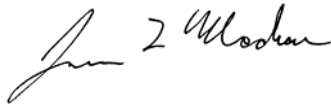
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including its Virtual Healthy School (VHS), an interactive tool that shows schools how to support the health and academic achievement of students through the WSCC model.⁵

The AMA recognizes that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we may need to wait until the pandemic is under control in a greater way before fully exploring ways to bolster the CDC's current curriculum and involve other relevant stakeholders to promote the health education curriculum across our nation. If you have any questions, please contact Margaret Garikes, Vice President of Federal Affairs, at margaret.garikes@ama-assn.org or 202-789-7401.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/vhs.htm>