



Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Division Of Health & Wellness Newsletter

THRIVING TOGETHER:

FOSTERING STUDENT AND STAFF WELLBEING

WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

WELCOME

Greetings from OSSE's Health and Wellness Division to all staff, faculty, administrators and support personnel, and community partners!

This school year begins with strong momentum for DC students. Just last week, Mayor Bowser and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education announced results from the spring [2025 statewide assessments](#), showing the largest gains in math and reading proficiency since the pandemic. These improvements were seen across all tested grades in both DC Public Schools (DCPS) and DC public charter schools, and are a clear sign that investments in our schools are working.

These results build on over a decade of historic investments in public education. Through the FY26 budget, Grow DC, Mayor Bowser is doubling down on her commitment by investing \$2.8 billion to support students across DCPS and public charter schools, including \$270 million for teacher pay raises and \$2 billion for ongoing school modernizations.

Mayor Bowser also recently released the [2025 Back to School Guide](#), a comprehensive resource for families of students in pre-K through grade 12. The guide includes important information on enrollment, attendance, academic supports, career and college readiness programs, and more. Families can visit backtoschool.dc.gov for additional resources, including [guidance on transportation and the new DCPS cell phone policy](#).

-An excerpt from PRESS RELEASE: "Bowser Administration Breaks Ground..." 08.27.25

Contact Sarah Mack at Sarah.Mack@dc.gov with any ideas, stories, photos and/or highlights you would like to see featured.

TOP NEWS



Kimochis Are Coming!

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has partnered with the Plushy Feely Corp to offer all DC public and public charter elementary schools the Kimochis curriculum. Kimochi (KEY-MO-CHEE), meaning “feeling” in Japanese, is a universal social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum designed to give children the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively.

The Kimochis SEL curriculum incorporates innovative and fun activities developed to teach children how to manage challenging social situations with skill, character, and confidence.

Curriculum kits include:

- Early Childhood Curriculum Toolkit (pre-K 3 to kindergarten)
- Elementary Curriculum Toolkit (grades 1-5)
- Six Kimochi character dolls (Bug, Cat, Cloud, Huggetopus, Lovey Dove, and Nesting Heart)
- Mixed Bag of Feelings (33 feeling pillows)

Follow H&W’s [EventBrite page](#) for upcoming Kimochis training announcements. For more information, please contact osse.hydt@dc.gov.

NOW AVAILABLE: School Garden Guide Version 2 – view [here!](#)

This recently updated comprehensive guide to support school garden programs in the District ([see StoryMap](#)) is intended for a broad audience, including teachers, school administrators, community-based organization staff, community members, and parents. It provides recommendations for

establishing a new school garden program, maintaining an existing school garden program, and using the school garden for instruction.

TOP 5 things to plant in the school garden now!

Kale

Lettuce

Summer Squash

Beets

Carrots

For more information about seasonal gardening schedules, check out the [OSSE DC School Garden Planting Calendar!](#)



Speak Up Be Safe

OSSE has partnered with Child Help to offer all DC public and public charter schools the Speak Up Be Safe (SUBS) curriculum. SUBS is an evidence-based universal prevention program for grades pre-K to 12 that helps children and teens learn the skills to prevent and interrupt cycles of child abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, bullying, and online dangers.

SUBS is a strengths-based curriculum that builds student knowledge, awareness, skills, and resistance strategies so they can recognize abusive situations of various types and know how to get away from them and speak up to the safe adults in their lives.

Curriculum access includes:

- Self-paced facilitator training
- Core curriculum lessons (pre-K to grade 12)
- Human Trafficking curriculum (grades 6 to 12)
- Staying Safe from Online Harm curriculum (grades 5 to 9)
- Reinforcement lessons and activities
- Parent engagement take-home materials.

For more information, please contact osse.hydt@dc.gov.

STOP THE BLEED® Kits and Training for Public Charter Schools

Would you like to strengthen your school's emergency preparedness and help protect students and staff in the event of a crisis? DC Health is offering free STOP THE BLEED® kits and training to public charter schools. These kits are designed to empower bystanders to take immediate action in bleeding emergencies—situations where minutes can make the difference between life and death. Each kit includes essential medical supplies such as gauze, tourniquets, and protective equipment. Once the STOP THE BLEED® wall cabinets are installed in your school, DC Health's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers are available to provide training to your staff at no cost. To participate, or if you have any questions, please contact Jeff Hodgkiss, Emergency Management Specialist at DC Health, at Jeff.Hodgkiss@dc.gov.

UPCOMING EVENTS & DATES

2025-26 First Year Cadre – APPLY TODAY!

OSSE's Advancing the Recruitment and Retention of Our Workforce (ARROW) is announcing the launch of the 2025-26 cohort of the First Year Cadre for school-based behavioral health providers, i.e., school social workers, school psychologists and counselors (school counselors and licensed counselors), who are new to working in a school-based setting and have an employment start date of Nov. 1, 2023 or after!

The First Year Cadre is an opportunity for providers in their early years of working in a school-based setting to build foundational skills necessary to be successful in the school environment. The cohort will run from October 2025 to June 2026. Please see OSSE's [ARROW website](#) for more information and the eligibility criteria. [Applications](#) opened Monday, Aug. 18, and close Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2025. Participants who successfully complete the cadre will be eligible for a \$1,000 stipend. Questions? Reach out to OSSE.HYDT@dc.gov.

School Strengthening Work Plans DUE SOON!

All schools should submit the School Strengthening Work Plan (SSWP) to the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) by Nov. 1, 2025. The SSWP is your tool for creating and implementing a strategic plan for school behavioral health support. Your School Behavioral Health Coordinator will continue to use an individualized link in Quickbase to complete your SSWP. Your team will use that link to review and make updates during the year. If you have not yet designated a staff member to be your School Behavioral Health Coordinator, do so as soon as possible so there are no delays in accessing the link to your SSWP.

If you have a new School Behavioral Health Coordinator this year, email Celeste Brown at Celeste.Brown@dc.gov with their name and email address.

COMMUNITY SHOWCASE

America's Healthiest Schools 2025

We are proud to announce two DC schools – Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School's East End and Brookland campuses – were named among "America's Healthiest Schools for 2025" by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Congratulations to this year's awardees for advancing evidence-based policies and practices that support the health and well-being of students, staff, and families. To see the full list, [click here](#).

School Gardens in the District are thriving!

Check out the Thriving School Gardens in the [District StoryMap](#) highlighting school garden successes during 2024-25 school year. Learn about the creative and impactful ways that schools are engaging students in garden-based learning and add your successes to the page for all to see!

2024 Turnip the Beet! High Quality Summer Meals Award Program

Congratulations to *DC Central Kitchen* and *DC Centro Nía* for being awarded the USDA's Gold Level Turnip the Beet Award for 2024!

The Turnip the Beet! Awards recognize outstanding summer meal program sponsors across the nation who work hard to offer high-quality meals that are appetizing, appealing, and nutritious to children during the summer months. For summer 2024, 199 winners were recognized, with a total of 86 gold, 91 silver, and 22 bronze recipients. Congratulations again, and thanks to everyone working hard to ensure both food and nutrition security for our nation's children during the summer months.

Healthy Tots Program (HTA) Congratulates POC Learning Center and Rosemount Center

Healthy Tots Program (HTA) congratulates POC Learning Center and Rosemount Center for successfully completing OSSE Wellness Guidelines Community of Practice (CoP) for early learning facilities. For completing the CoP, participants received a HTA reusable shopping bag, reusable mosaic data tracker, HTA blue teddy bear, and \$200 worth of gift cards. The center enjoyed 10 weeks of learning about the wellness guidelines, discussing health and wellness topics, and sharing resources. Thank you for your commitment to our children, families, and community.

WHISK WITH WELLNESS: RECIPE SPOTLIGHT

Corn and Edamame Blend



Try this delightful Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)-inspired [Corn and Edamame Blend](#) recipe filled with corn, carrots, and edamame beans seasoned with a hint of sesame oil! This is a perfect recipe to use up some of the fresh vegetables currently available at your local farmer's market.

Reminder: The OSSE CACFP application season is underway with more than 75 sponsors and 375 centers/day care homes expected to participate during FY26.

[Click here](#) for more information on how to apply.

OSSE STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Interim Assistant Superintendent for the Division of Health and Wellness

Rachel Sadlon serves as the Interim Assistant Superintendent for the Division of Health and Wellness at the OSSE. In this role, she leads the agency's school health and wellness portfolio, which includes the administration of federal and local child nutrition programs, health and physical education, school-based mental health, and school

health policy. In addition, Rachel leads OSSE's strategic priority, Foster Student and Staff Well-being, where she oversees cross-cutting physical, mental, social-emotional health, and student attendance initiatives.

Directly prior, Rachel served as the Director of Healthy Schools and Wellness Programs for the Division of Health and Wellness since 2023. Rachel has proudly led teams in launching the Advancing the Recruitment and Retention of Our Workforce (ARROW) initiative to build DC's school mental health workforce pipeline; redesigning the Whole Child and Educator Wellness grant program; overseeing implementation of the DC Environmental Literacy Plan; and coordinating training and technical assistance for health and physical education teachers on Healthy Schools Act requirements.

Prior to joining OSSE, Rachel served as the Associate Director of Research and Evaluation at the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (CHHCS) at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health. Before her time at CHHCS, Rachel worked for Middletown Public Schools in Middletown, CT, managing the federally funded Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant program. Rachel began her career in youth prevention programs and positive youth development in Connecticut. Rachel has 15 years' experience in K-12 school health programs and services, prevention science, and community health.

Rachel attended the University of Connecticut, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Master of Public Health degree. She earned a graduate certificate in Health Policy from the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health and is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) through the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc.



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