



## Education Matters: Invest in Learning for Health April 29, 2015

**Federal investments in education are crucial to provide a health-literate populace, ensure student academic success, and strengthen the U.S. economy.**

The health and well-being of today's students is directly connected to their academic success, school completion, and their development into healthy, resilient, and productive citizens. Schools are uniquely positioned to help children and youth acquire life-long, health-promoting knowledge, skills and behaviors. Providing access to quality health education and physical education, qualified counselors and nurses, health services, and nutritious school foods will ensure that students develop these life-long skills in a safe and engaging school environment and become adults who contribute to, rather than become a burden upon the US health and welfare systems.

### Invest in education to:

- Reduce the burden on and cost to federal health programs
  - Federal outlays for health care go disproportionately to the care of people with limited education, who tend to be sicker and require more intensive care.
  - The average annual healthcare costs of those with low health literacy levels are four times greater than that of the general population.<sup>1</sup>
  - Individuals with low health literacy are less likely to participate actively in health care decision making and more likely to struggle with health management tasks and to face significant challenges navigating the health system.<sup>2</sup>
- Improve student academic achievement
  - Students who are physically active tend to have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance, and classroom behavior.<sup>3</sup>
  - Student participation in the USDA School Breakfast Program is associated with increased academic grades and standardized test scores, reduced absenteeism, and improved cognitive performance.<sup>4</sup>
- Strengthen the economy by increasing the productivity of the workforce, lowering unemployment rates, improving earnings and tax revenue
  - Education is important for obtaining jobs that include health benefits, such as health insurance coverage, and the income to not only live a healthier lifestyle but also live in neighborhoods that promote good health.<sup>5</sup>
  - If the health status of less-educated Americans were the same as that of their college-educated peers, the related improvements in health would save more than a trillion dollars annually.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Friedland, R.B. & Summer, L. (1999). *Demography Is Not Destiny*. Wash, DC: National Acad on an Aging Society.

<sup>2</sup> Martin, L.T., & Parker, R.M. (2011). Insurance expansion and health literacy. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Published online August 9, 2011. Retrieved 10/25/11, from <http://jama.amaassn.org/content/early/2011/08/05/jama.2011.1212.full>

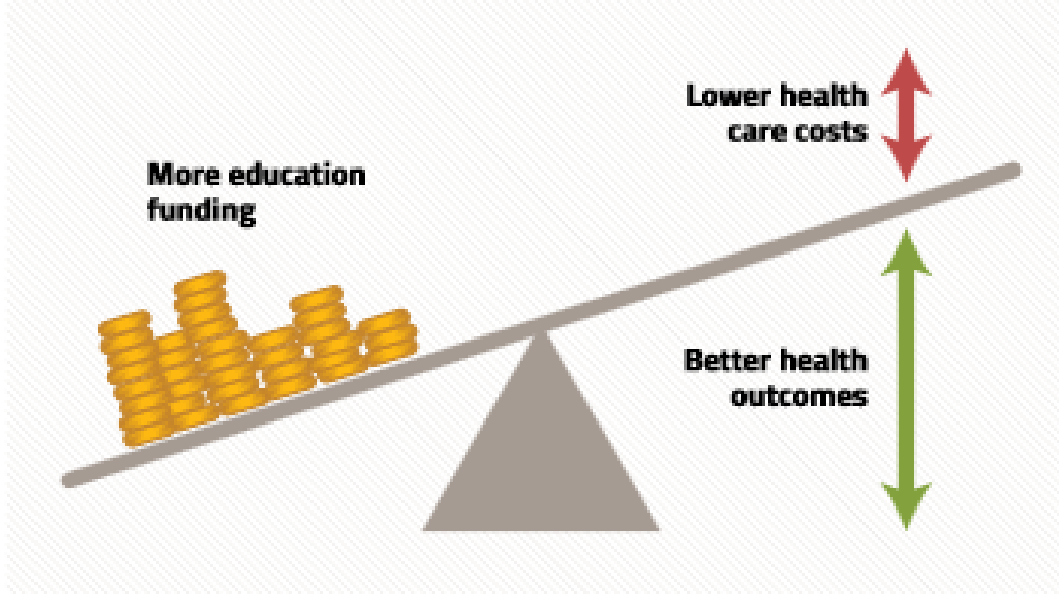
<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Student Health and Academic Achievement Web site. [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/index.htm). Accessed April 9, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Bradley, B, Green, AC. Do health and education agencies in the US share responsibility for academic achievement and health? *Journal of Adolescent and School Health*. 2013; 52(5):523-532.

<sup>5</sup> Goldman, D., Smith, J.P. The increasing value of education to health. *Soc.Sci.Med*. 2011;72(10):1728-1737.

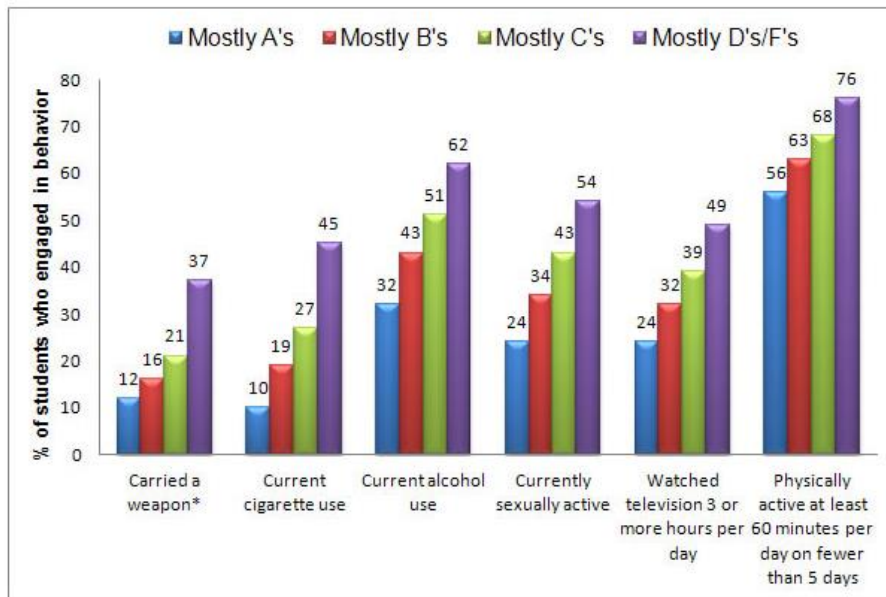
<sup>6</sup> Schoeni, R.F., Dow, W.H., Miller, W.D., Pamuk, E.R. the economic value of improving the health of disadvantaged Americans. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2011; 40(1, Supplement 1):S67-S72.

**Figure 3. More funding for education may work as a counterweight to rising health care costs by improving health**



Source: Center on Society and Health, Investments in Education are Investments in Health: The Federal Perspective. Virginia Commonwealth University

**Percentage of high school students who engaged in selected risk behaviors, by type of grades earned – United States, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009**



\* This means that 12% of students with mostly A's carried a weapon and 37% of students with mostly D's or F's carried a weapon.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health and Academics Web site

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