Kaiser Permanente Awards Schools $1.5 Million in Funding for Mental Health Support, COVID-19 Prevention

Five local school districts, including Pueblo District 70, receive new round of Thriving Schools grants

PUEBLO, COLO.— Ahead of the new school year, Kaiser Permanente today announced five local school districts will receive a total of $1.5 million in Thriving Schools mental health grants over the next three years. The grants are designed to help districts expand implementation of Kaiser Permanente’s Resilience in School Environments initiative (RISE). The initiative empowers schools to create safe and supportive learning environments by cultivating practices that strengthen the social and emotional health of all school employees and students.

As schools plan to reopen after being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, grant funds will also be available to support their COVID-19 prevention efforts in each school district including sanitation and hygiene, expanded testing, social distancing support, and safe meal distribution to food insecure students.

“We’ve supported the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of students, teachers, and staff in Colorado for more than 50 years—it’s part of who we are at Kaiser Permanente,” said Mike Ramseier, president for Kaiser Permanente in Colorado. “With the COVID-19 pandemic, we are aligning our Thriving Schools grants to address today’s unique challenges. We’re excited to provide this support for districts across Colorado.”

Pueblo School District 70 was awarded a $300,000 Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools grant. This grant supports implementing Thriving Schools RISE framework in 20 schools across the district. Professional learning opportunities will be promoted to increase trauma-informed competencies and reduce the effects of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma for staff. Pueblo 70 plans to scale its social-emotional wellness work, practices and policies, to reach approximately 80 percent of schools in the district.
"We realize that this year, more than ever, we need to be mindful of the mental toll this pandemic has taken on our students and staff. We thank Kaiser Permanente for their continued support and this amazing grant," said Ed Smith, Pueblo School District 70 superintendent, “With the recent budget cuts to schools, we know that any extra programs would be difficult to create and maintain. Thriving Schools RISE will help D70 provide the foundation and training that will ultimately benefit our community. Going back to school this year will be different than any other year, we've never opened schools during a pandemic and there are a lot of anxious emotions. The ability to provide those increased mental health and stress management supports will be invaluable. I also want to thank our Nutrition Department for recognizing that food service sometimes is more than filling stomachs, it's taking care of the whole body."

All of the Thriving Schools grants are supported by technical assistance and evaluation support provided by Colorado Education Initiative and Alliance for a Healthier Generation. The other school districts awarded Thriving Schools grant funding are:

**Boulder Valley School District ($300,000)**
The Thriving Schools grant will help Boulder Valley School District continue its collaboration with the University of Colorado’s Boulder Institute of Behavioral Sciences social-emotional wellness program. This program addresses underlying factors of stress in schools by developing strategies and sharing best practices that foster more positive school environments.

**Thompson School District ($300,000)**
To address increased job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and stress management among teachers and staff, Thompson School District will use its portion of the Thriving Schools grant to continue its focus on the importance of self-care, including training on ways to build it into everyday life. Each participating school will have Thriving Schools RISE site leaders to improve relationships between students and staff. These positions will provide training and coaching at each site. Thompson will provide training and coaching in core RISE competencies and Trauma Informed Practices to increase social emotional learning skills.

**Cherry Creek School District ($300,000)**
Cherry Creek School District will use its portion of funding to support the expansion of the Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS) program that started with Prairie Middle School, Colorado’s largest middle school. HEARTS integrates racial equity work with common language, practice, and policies. CCSD will use Kaiser Permanente’s RISE framework to expand HEARTS training and programs within six elementary schools that feed into Prairie Middle School.

**Douglas County School District ($300,000)**
Douglas County School District will use its portion of grant funding to implement several activities to support the advancement of social emotional wellness across the district. DCSD will identify district social-emotional wellness champions and provide training opportunities to support adult social-emotional learning and staff wellness, burnout, and self-care with district and local school leads. Finally, DCSD will revise, improve and implement social-emotional wellness policies and practices.
Additional Mental Health and COVID-19 Support

In addition to the Thriving Schools mental health and COVID-19 prevention grant funding, Kaiser Permanente has plans in place to begin offering schools a unique virtual platform for learning about, identifying, and living with mental health needs. These plans include expanding the availability of programs like RISE UP, a complimentary learning session for school staff, administrators, and teachers, designed to foster resilience and support school staff as they work with students using trauma-informed practices as well as Ghosted, an interactive play and workshop designed to address mental health needs, break down stigma, and provide resources to teens and teachers.

Kaiser Permanente also recently announced a $500,000 donation to the state’s COVID-19 Relief Fund, $300,000 of which will be restricted to organizations applying to do contact tracing. In addition, Kaiser Permanente committed $1 million to Denver’s Housing and Homeless Services Fund, which provides necessary resources for the preventing the spread of COVID-19 among the city’s homeless population.

To learn more about Kaiser Permanente’s work with its communities, please visit: about.kp.org

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**About Kaiser Permanente:**
Kaiser Permanente is committed to helping shape the future of health care. We are recognized as one of America’s leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans. Founded in 1945, Kaiser Permanente has a mission to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve 12.4 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia, including more than 605,000 members in Colorado. Care for members and patients is focused on their total health and guided by their personal Permanente Medical Group physicians, specialists and team of caregivers. Our expert and caring medical teams are empowered and supported by industry-leading technology advances and tools for health promotion, disease prevention, state-of-the-art care delivery and world-class chronic disease management. Kaiser Permanente is dedicated to care innovations, clinical research, health education and the support of community health.

**About Pueblo School District 70:**
Pueblo County School District 70 (D70) is located in beautiful Pueblo, Colorado where the Fountain River meets the Arkansas River and the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains meet the Great Plains. D70 was consolidated from 34 smaller school districts in June of 1950. We are one of the largest geographical school districts in the state of Colorado, educating over 10,000 students from all over Pueblo County. D70 is a place where all children and adults are valued, similarities and differences are addressed, individuals are respected, and all children are treated as our most valuable resource and best hope for the future. We see a safe and trusting environment where children and adults are actively engaged in lifelong learning. We see a partnership with our schools and communities that flexibly responds to the educational needs of all learners in an ever-changing world.