

The ABCs

OF ASANTE'S SCHOOL NURSE PROGRAM

For many kids, it is the school nurse who is the important link between well-being and academic success. If a student has an asthma attack, gets hurt on the playground, or needs quick diabetic care, it's the school nurse who gets the child back to class or to a doctor.

Now in its seventeenth year, the Asante School Nurse Program includes three nurses, who work with students in kindergarten through eighth grade in the Ashland and Phoenix-Talent school districts. "This is a great resource that Asante provides," says Steve Retzlaff, principal of Ashland Middle School.

School nurses provide case management for kids with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and asthma; they also triage concussions, fractures, headaches, and allergic reactions. "No two days are the same," says Belinda Brown, RN, Asante school nurse program coordinator.

Also provided are health screenings for hearing, vision, dental, and height and weight, to help promote overall wellness. Mental health counseling and a suicide prevention program are also available.

"One of the unique opportunities we have is to develop long-term, trusting relationships with kids and their families," says Belinda. "I've known some of these kids since kindergarten, and I have a really good understanding of their health history."

Principal Retzlaff has known Belinda for the 11 years he has been at Ashland Middle School. "She goes way beyond the Band-Aids and ice packs; she's like a social worker. Belinda is great at finding out what support the students need outside of school and connects them to those resources. And not just for the student but for the family too."



Jaiden, a student at Bellview Elementary School, sits with Belinda while testing her blood sugar.

With nearly 2,800 students in the district, Belinda says some require individualized care plans for chronic conditions such as asthma, allergies, and seizures. "We work with doctors and parents to develop health plans as well as train teachers and office staff about what a child needs to be safe at school."

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