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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:

Melissa Reeves, [mdreeves@jeffco.k12.co.us](mailto:mdreeves@jeffco.k12.co.us), Jeffco Public Schools, 303-982-6567

Lynn Setzer, [lsetzer@jeffco.k12.co.us](mailto:lsetzer@jeffco.k12.co.us), Jeffco Public Schools, 303-982-6810



## **GRANT HELPS SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS THRIVE**

Jeffco's Healthy Schools initiative and Kaiser Permanente's Thriving Schools Initiative are working together to help make good health a part of everyday life in Jeffco Schools.

A \$200,000 Thriving Schools grant will be used to help Jeffco schools and PE teachers purchase or make improvements like new physical activity equipment, pedometers, walking tracks or playground makeovers. Launched nationally by Kaiser Permanente in February 2013, Thriving Schools engages school communities to champion change by incorporating evidence-based, community health improvement practices.

"This is so exciting for us because a PE teacher in Jeffco typically has a yearly budget of \$300 to \$400 and you can't buy or upgrade equipment for nearly 500 students with that small of a budget," said Jeffco Healthy Schools coordinator Emily O'Winter. "We are going to use the grant money to help PE teachers increase and extend physical activity into the classroom and school day."

O'Winter added that studies prove increasing physical activity directly impacts the brain and impacts students' learning. "The more they move, the more they can learn and that excites me and it excites schools," she said. "Some of our schools have already seen anecdotal evidence that physical activity is helping student behavior and affecting student growth."

Last fall, Kaiser Permanente Colorado invited school districts to apply for Thriving Schools grants. More than \$1.4 million was awarded to 21 school districts representing 633 schools and more than 400,000 students and staff.

"Thriving Schools offers us a unique and targeted campaign to work collaboratively with Colorado schools to advance health and improve academic performance," said Donna Lynne, DrPH, president of Kaiser Permanente Colorado. "In addition, healthier schools cultivate a stronger Colorado workforce for the future."