

Little Rock School District Bright Smiles Program



When students from Meadowcliff Elementary arrived at school on an early Tuesday morning, they certainly weren't expecting to receive a surprise appearance from Delta Dental's "Captain Supertooth."

The visit from the superhero marked the announcement of the Bright Smiles program, a new school based oral health education initiative, which will coordinate basic oral health screenings and fluoride varnish treatments for pre-kindergarten to 5th grade students across 25 LRSD schools over the next three years.

Bright Smiles includes a three pronged approach to improving oral care:

1. providing training and technical assistance for school nurses
2. providing educational materials and training for outreach to students and families and
3. completion of a risk assessment and fluoride varnish applications for students.

Funding is part of Delta Dental of Arkansas Foundation's Cavity Free Kids initiative, a statewide outreach and education program that seeks to improve oral health through early intervention. The partnership extends Delta Dental's ability to positively impact the oral health of children and families in Arkansas.

After initially receiving a mini grant to pilot the project in select LRSD schools, the district applied for a community grant in order to impact nearly 11,000 students in the District. The Foundation will also provide oral health kits for each Bright Smiles participating child.



Weldon Johnson (right), Executive Director of the Delta Dental of Arkansas Foundation, presents a check to Little Rock School District Superintendent Michael Poore for the Bright Smiles program.



Meadowcliff Elementary students and staff are joined by Little Rock School District officials, Arkansas Department of Health staff, and Dr. Gene Jines of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences at the Bright Smiles announcement.



Dr. Lindy Bollen, Jr. of the Arkansas Department of Health Office of Oral Health administers fluoride varnish to a Bright Smiles participant.

School nurses at each site completed a training certification offered through the Arkansas Department of Health, Office of Oral Health that allows them to administer the screenings and fluoride varnishes to the students. Additional technical assistance is provided by students from the dental hygienist program at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS). The program occurs under the supervision of the LRSD Chief Physician with support from other District central office staff.

Each school will also host an outreach event designed to promote positive oral health care. Parents and students will receive educational materials provided by the National Children's Oral Health Foundation that describe the long-term benefits of preventative oral health measures taken during early childhood.

Bright Smiles participants will receive bi-annual screenings and varnish applications with parental permission. Additionally, any participant that requires a more comprehensive dental assessment will be referred to a pediatric dentist for further treatment in an effort to connect each LRSD student to a dental home.

This is not Delta Dental's first collaboration with the District. The Future Smiles Dental Clinic at Wakefield Elementary currently provides comprehensive, school based dental care to five LRSD schools and also receives funding and support from the Delta Dental of Arkansas Foundation.



Each year, the Foundation provides financial support to organizations to help further our mission, and we encourage community-based oral health programs in Arkansas to apply for grants for programs designed to improve oral health. For more information about our community and mini grant programs or to apply, visit www.deltadentalar.com.

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