

NEWS RELEASE**Blue Cross NC Media Line:** 919-765-3005**Blue Cross NC Online Newsroom:** <http://mediacenter.bcbsnc.com>**For Immediate Release: May 23, 2024****Buncombe County Schools, Healthy Blue Partner to Help Students
Learn Healthy Habits**

DURHAM, N.C. – During the 2023-2024 school year, more than 1,600 Buncombe County Schools (BCS) seventh graders learned how to strengthen their long-term health by increasing their physical activity and choosing more nutritious foods. For the third year, BCS students participated in MATCH Wellness, a school-based interdisciplinary program that empowers adolescents to make healthy choices. Funding from [Healthy Blue®](#), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina's Medicaid managed care plan, helped bring MATCH to Buncombe County and continues to support its implementation.

Students participating in this research-tested program have boosted their physical activity levels and adopted healthier eating habits, decreasing risk factors for chronic diseases. More than 75% of BCS seventh graders enrolled in PE/Health this school year engaged in an interactive component of MATCH Wellness called the "My Action Plan." This personalized interface allows each student to create personal health and fitness goals and to monitor their progress throughout the semester.

"Giving our students the tools to establish healthy habits is the foundation for their long-term health and the health of our communities," said Angela Boykin Healthy Blue Chief Executive Officer. "Investing in our youth and resources for our schools is one way we are working to make health care better for all."

MATCH is delivered through engaging classroom lessons and interactive activities and aligns with the NC Healthy Living Standards. The program's reach and impact in Buncombe County are thanks to MATCH's partnership with BCS administrators, teachers and families.

"Our Middle School teachers report that the MATCH program provides a very good curriculum for students, a platform that is easy for the students to follow and navigate, and a MATCH coordinator who is very responsive and helpful-which in turn helps our teaching," said Dr. Rob Jackson, Superintendent of Buncombe County Schools. "We are excited to work with Healthy Blue to offer our students the opportunity to build their knowledge base for making healthy choices."

Since MATCH's inception during the 2006-2007 school year, 96,598 seventh graders have participated in the program. Currently, MATCH is in 12 districts, 57 schools, and serves over 9,000 students in North Carolina.

“Buncombe County Schools raised the bar for other participating MATCH Wellness school districts this school year!” said Dr. Bryan Abernethy, Vice President of Educational Programs at MATCH Wellness. “The positive attitudes from participating Health/Physical Education teachers and support from District Coordinator Jennifer Johnson and Superintendent Dr. Rob Jackson have significantly impacted the students of BCS by helping these students understand the importance of adopting lifelong healthy choices.”

About MATCH Wellness:

MATCH Wellness, Inc. was formed in 2007 when a North Carolina school teacher was disturbed by his county leading the state in premature death due to obesity. The program he developed, MATCH- Motivating Adolescents with Technology to CHOOSE Health™, has produced consistent and sustainable improvements in weight status in overweight students, while teaching over 100,000 seventh graders since its inception. MATCH uses an interdisciplinary approach to empower students to make healthy choices through lessons in nutrition education and by increasing physical activity. MATCH meets educational objectives of teachers while being engaging to students, producing unprecedented health outcomes simultaneously. These health outcomes reduce risks of cardiometabolic diseases, resulting in a reduction in health care costs and creating a healthier population. For more information on MATCH Wellness, visit www.matchwellness.com.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina:

Blue Cross NC, the leading not-for-profit health plan in North Carolina, is committed to making health care more affordable, easier to navigate and accessible for all. Since 1933, the health insurer has created programs and initiatives to provide North Carolinians the opportunity to be healthy. Blue Cross NC serves its customers and communities of more than 4.2 million members, including approximately 1.1 million on behalf of other Blue Plans. Blue Cross NC is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Visit Blue Cross NC online at bluecrossnc.com. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

###