

Reading, writing & a trip to the dentist - Cincinnati News, FOX19-WXIX TV



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CONNECT

\(FOX19 Now)

LOWER PRICE HILL, OH (FOX19) -

A visit to the dentist can feel like a necessary evil.

But many Cincinnati kids never get access to a dental chair.

Considering 60% of decay happens before kindergarten, pediatric dentists believe the long term health impact can be disastrous.

Now, a new initiative is changing the way some Cincinnati kids get dental care.

At Oyler School in Cincinnati, student's education reaches outside the classroom.

Some of life's lessons are taught in the dental chair.

The clinic at school is small but hygienists use every inch of their tight quarters.

Through Children's Oral Health Network, Delta Dental Center is one of three sustainable clinics inside Cincinnati Public Schools.

Staff sees around 25 every day, most are Oyler kids.

"The treatment and the amount of decay that we see even until this day on a daily basis is something that is overwhelming," said Oyler dental coordinator Tiffany Hamm.

She adds students feel the same way.

As dental coordinator she knows those cool shades they wear during a cleaning hide some nervous eyes, many have never seen a dentist.

A lack of dental insurance is a big reason kids don't go to the dentist.

Medicaid only pays thirty cents on the dollar, most dentists need sixty cents just to break even forcing kids and their parents to endure lengthy wait lists at clinics that do accept Medicaid.

At Oyler, kids are seen during school hours, and quality care starts in the waiting room.

Hamm says she feels like all 700 of the students at Oyler are her own kids.

But being 'mom' is a big job, Tiffaney makes sure every student gets a cleaning and follow-up care like fillings.

Since the clinic opened four years ago Oyler's Principal, Amy Randolph, says school attendance is up.

But during the summer, kids were not in the habit of brushing.

"As you can imagine, it almost made me sick to my stomach. I couldn't believe that we had worked as a team so hard, only to be kind of slapped in the face the fact that we're obviously missing something," said Hamm.

Last school year, Hamm changed her approach.

"I can't control diet, I can't control what goes on at home but I could control a piece of the pie that these kids needed to actually follow through," said Hamm.

A grant allows Oyler to provide pre-pasted, disposable toothbrushes which means kindergarteners, 1st and 2nd graders brush their teeth at the start of every school day.

And hopefully take this habit home.

"I remember when we first started the tooth brushing program the kids complained about how bad it hurt," said Hamm.

There was a bit of a learning curve.

"There was a lot of blood in the sink and you could tell gingivitis and oral health the needs weren't being met at home," said Hamm.

But with the consistency at school and plenty of encouragement the kids are happy now and looking forward to it.

In less than one year, new decay has essentially been cut in half.

Faculty says sometimes kids don't remember their address let alone a toothbrush if they've moved six times since in six months.

It's not something most people grew up with so some people don't understand that.

"We're going to put a lot better adults into our community with a lot healthier understanding of what life is supposed to be like," said Hamm.

And along with that knowledge, a healthier smile.

As part of the toothbrush grant, students get to take a home a new brush every Friday.

And last year, Oyler's class of seniors was the first to graduate cavity free and internships at the on campus clinic have encouraged more students to pursue a degree in the medical field.

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