



UPLIFT PARTNERSHIP

Activity Report

2022-2023



UPLIFT

FOR HEALTHIER GENERATIONS

The UpLift Partnership

The UpLift Partnership is a School–Community–University partnership supporting the health and learning of children and youth using a [Health Promoting Schools \(HPS\)](#) approach. Supporting the Partnership is a core team hosted within Dalhousie University’s [Healthy Populations Institute](#), that works with government, school communities, non–profits and the private sector.

The work of the UpLift Partnership builds upon more than 15 years of provincial research dedicated to understanding and improving the health and learning of children and youth through HPS. Funding for the UpLift Partnership comprises \$5m from the Public Health Agency of Canada and \$3m from private sector contributions for a total of \$8m over 6 years. The activities of the Partnership run from 2019–2024.

UpLift brings together partners across sectors to collaborate in creating conditions for healthy learning environments. A key component is engaging children and youth to drive the changes they want to see, through the work of UpLift’s Youth Engagement Coordinators (YECs) and HPS Leads. UpLift then collaborates with decision makers to enhance children and youth health and well–being through youth engagement..

UpLift works with school communities and government partners to ensure collaborative and innovative delivery of the proven HPS model in the regions we operate in.



OUR STRATEGIES



Partnership and Leadership



Youth, School and Community Engagement



Capacity Building



Evaluation and planning



Communications and Knowledge Exchange

Partnership and Leadership

A core component of the UpLift Partnership is bringing together different groups and partners that are invested in HPS such as government partners, not-for-profit organizations and school communities. UpLift's work to advance partnership and leadership includes:

PROJECTS

Partnership Mapping

The Partnership Mapping Task Team, made up of UpLift partners from Nova Scotia Health, Regional Centres for Education (RCEs) and the UpLift Evaluation Team, has guided the work of mapping key groups and partners of the HPS networks across three regions. A network map was created to show the connections that support HPS work in Chignecto-Central and Annapolis Valley RCEs. A partnership mapping technique was used to explore how the role of the YEC supported partnership development within HPS networks. In both regions the connections and depth of working relationships were analyzed. Data were used to populate the visual network maps, and relational assessments were used to highlight opportunities for further collaboration among HPS groups and partners. We are continuing this work now in a third region, Tri-County RCE, to explore the differences in network structure with the HPS Leads model.

UpLift Expansion

This year the partnership continued to roll out across the Annapolis Valley RCE and expanded into the Strait RCE. This is UpLift's last expansion, since funding for UpLift ends in August 2024.

The Strait RCE launched an Expression of Interest process to schools in November, with 14 schools applying right away to participate in the Student Action Grant process!

Meet UpLift's new Youth Engagement Coordinators (YECs) [here!](#)



Capacity Building

The UpLift Partnership supports school communities to incorporate existing HPS policies and practices. Training and learning opportunities enable students, teachers and community partners to build their knowledge, and develop their skills and capacity in youth engagement and HPS approaches. UpLift offers tools and resources to help schools, children and youth and staff to create healthy school environments.

PROJECTS

Youth Engagement in HPS Online Course

Through a collaborative partnership with the Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development, over the last year the UpLift core team completed the development of an online course, called Building Healthy School Communities Through Youth Engagement. Exploring both HPS and Community Youth Development Frameworks, this course creates opportunities to build capacity and understanding of the impact of youth engagement in HPS and the value of creating healthy school environments.

The course is hosted on the Brightspace platform at Dalhousie University and was reviewed by UpLift's key partners. The course takes roughly 10-15 hours to complete independently, and engages learners through critical reflective questions that will help them apply their learnings in real-world contexts.

UpLift is now launching learning cohorts across the partnership, offering the opportunity for learners to have a space to learn collaboratively with peers. For more information on how to sign-up for the course as an individual or as part of a learning cohort, contact upliftad@dal.ca



PROJECTS CONTINUED

Peer Research Project

With the success of the first iteration of the Peer Researcher project in 2021, the UpLift core team organized a second round of youth engagement during the Summer of 2022. This project focused on recruiting a diverse group of children and youth from across Nova Scotia public schools, who were engaged in different stages of the research process (e.g. development of the interview guide, data interpretation workshop).

11 Peer Researchers from across 5 Nova Scotia school regions!



In total, we recruited 11 Peer Researchers from across five of the seven Nova Scotia school regions. All 11 of these Peer Researchers participated in training on interview methods, conducted interviews with their peers and took part in a focus group to discuss their experience with the project. Some of these students also participated in an online data interpretation workshop in Spring 2023 to help validate the second round of interview findings. Various outputs are being planned from this project, including a publication on the process and evaluation of the peer researcher experience, and one on the second round of interview findings.



Education Leadership Consortium of Nova Scotia (ELCNS) Professional Learning Module

ECLNS provides education and training for school administrators across Nova Scotia. With an understanding of HPS identified as a priority in their data, the UpLift Partnership worked with two external consultants to develop a 3-day professional learning module for ELCNS, called 'Promoting Student Well-being through Health Promoting Schools'. This module also builds on the Youth Engagement in HPS course described above.

Communications and Knowledge Exchange

The UpLift Partnership develops tools and resources to align everyone's understanding of the benefits of involving children and youth voice in HPS.

PROJECTS

Film Project

The UpLift partnership is excited to share a series of three short films that showcase UpLift's work, from the perspectives of the YECs that UpLift funding supports, the adult champions in the schools we work in and the children and youth we have engaged.

- **Catalyzing Youth Engagement in Health Promoting Schools:** watch [here](#)

This video shares some of the behind the scenes work of the YECs in building capacity and a culture of youth engagement with an HPS approach.

- **Adult Champions in Youth Engagement:** watch [here](#)

This video shares the role that staff champions have at the school and how they nurture and support youth engagement as part of an HPS approach.

- **Empowering Youth Through Youth Engagement:** watch [here](#)

This video shares an example of a youth led project at a school completed through the UpLift Partnership.

Framing HPS Working Group

The Framing HPS Working group, consisting of representatives from the UpLift core team, Nova Scotia Health and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), spent the last year collaborating on an HPS Communications Toolkit. This working group has demonstrated the value and impact of building strong relationships, to navigate the change and complexity of collective action.

The Fall of 2022 was dedicated to producing drafts of three initial products, which were approved by the UpLift Advisory Committee in early 2023. The upcoming year is dedicated to finalizing and rolling out the Toolkit, supported by the UpLift core team and spearheaded by partners from Nova Scotia Health to ensure sustainability of the products.

Youth, School and Community Engagement

The UpLift Partnership involves youth as change agents for their school, families and communities. Engaging youth to actively participate in decisions that impact them increases efficacy of programs and policies and acknowledges the skills and knowledge that youth bring to the table.

PROJECTS

Municipal Policy Project

Since April 2022, the Kings County Steering Committee has come together to plan and host several community engagement sessions to inform policy actions that will support play-friendly communities across Kings County. The committee has gained input from local youth through an activity-based survey during the summer of 2022, from community members during two online engagement sessions, and from other local recreation groups and partners through a workshop in January 2023. The experiences and input from these community members have been used to inform the drafting of an Outdoor Play Policy that hopefully will pass and be implemented in Kings County municipalities in the months to come.

[Check out Outdoor Play Canada's blog post on UpLift's Municipal Policy Project!](#)



Student Engagement Community of Learning (SECOL)

SECOL meets monthly as a capacity building and collective learning opportunity for YECs and others working in youth engagement within HPS. SECOL explored several topics over the last year, including Community Youth Development (CYD) and HPS frameworks, storytelling and communications, and opportunities to collaborate with local not-for-profit agencies. This year, SECOL members filled out an evaluation and the results were shared back to the group, with discussions on the value of, and ideas to improve, the community of learning model that SECOL uses.

Planning and Evaluation

UpLift's work is evaluated through a process involving students, school staff champions, YECs, and other members of the HPS network in Nova Scotia.

PROJECTS

Impact Report

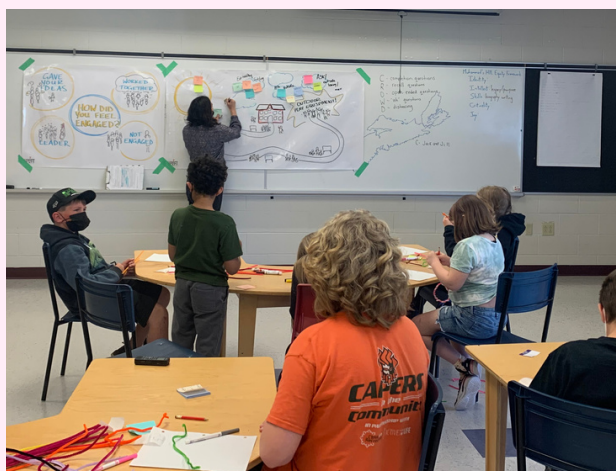
As part of this comprehensive evaluation, student focus groups were completed in the spring of 2022 by UpLift evaluation staff with students who had participated in UpLift projects. A total of eight focus groups were conducted with twenty schools and 215 students, to help explore student perceptions of a healthy school environment and assess their experience with UpLift, including the development and implementation of the HPS UpLift Student Action Grants and their satisfaction with their experience and engagement. Data were collected through a range of methods including focus groups, surveys and story sharing.

A total of 8 focus groups were conducted with 20 schools and 215 students!



Key outcomes of this evaluation are available through our 2019 – 2022 Impact Report.

Read the Impact report [here](#).



Themes Emerging Across the Partnership

Deepening Connections and Collaboration

1

The activities of multiple working groups are supporting and leveraging one another's impact.

- The Peer Researcher Project represents a capacity building initiative that also fed into the Youth Engagement Strategy.
- The Framing HPS working group and Film Project are examples of work that will elevate the ELCNS HPS module, and the online Youth Engagement in HPS course through compelling content. These online channels will further embed the work from the Framing HPS working group for long term sustainability.

Strong Commitment from Partners

2

Key partners show considerable interest in a range of projects across the work and commit staff time to support the activities of various working groups. For example, there is a strong commitment to building collaborative processes across working groups such as SECOL.

Building for Sustainability

3

The team consistently reflects on, and plans for, how the activities of the partnership will carry on after the UpLift Partnership is finished. A few examples of sustainable practices emerging are:

- The online course, Building Healthy School Communities through Youth Engagement is being embedded into Nova Scotia Health as a form of training.
- Discussions are happening across working groups about building sustainability plans for these groups to continue after the work of the UpLift partnership ends.
- Many of these collaborative efforts are building a foundation for longer-term sustainability and these conversations are cropping up in many working groups and project activities.

Strengths of the Partnership

1

Bringing partners together to work on HPS:

The work of SECOL and the Framing HPS working group is deepening relationships across key partners who are working together to support the health and well-being of young people in Nova Scotia.

2

Balancing long-term vision with short-term impact:

The partnership has the ability to keep eyes on the horizon, look for long-term sustainable impact, while quickly responding to partners' needs to capitalize on opportunities for immediate change and impact.

3

A growing operational team with varied expertise:

The core team does the foundational work across collaborative projects, and sets partners up to contribute and/or provide input, while continuing to mobilize the work in line with UpLift's funding timelines. The partnership has recruited individuals with expertise needed in response to the emerging work; in systems thinking, youth engagement, evaluation and other skills.

4

Providing expertise in youth engagement for long term systems change:

The partnership provides opportunities for connections between existing youth serving organizations and key partners with the aim of catalyzing relationships that will exist beyond this work.

The Youth Engagement Coordinators are building capacity with core staff, groups and partners across the work to embed youth engagement practices into their systems.

LOOKING AHEAD

Some areas of focus for the next year will be:

Sunsetting the UpLift Partnership

HPS has existed in Nova Scotia since 2005, and the work of the UpLift Partnership has been dedicated to catalyzing the model through youth engagement. The value of HPS has been demonstrated internationally as contributing to improved health and learning outcomes with a strong and compelling return on investment. The partnership has worked to embed best practices for youth engaged HPS approaches that can contribute to the well-being of Nova Scotians now and into the future. The UpLift Partnership is wrapping up in August 2024, and the focus of the work for the next 12-18 months will be on continuing to embed and sustain the work across partners.

Expanding capacity building initiatives

The course Building Healthy School Communities through Youth Engagement and other learning opportunities will expand across the province this year.

Ongoing Evaluation of UpLift's work

Focus groups and other forms of evaluation will take place in the next year to learn and iterate UpLift's impact along the way.



We thank you for your ongoing support of the UpLift Partnership!

We are all Treaty people. Nova Scotia is in Mi'kma'ki, which is the unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people. Those involved with the UpLift Partnership recognize the Mi'kmaq stewardship of this land and will work towards relationships of peace and friendship.

UpLift
1318 Robie Street, B3H4R2
Halifax, Nova Scotia
www.upliftns.ca
upliftco@dal.ca