

November | 2022

# UpLift Partnership

## Cross Region Evaluation Report (2019-2022)

November 15, 2022

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## List of Abbreviations

CSAP:	Conseil scolaire acadien provincial
CCTH:	Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
DEECD:	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DHW:	Department of Health and Wellness
HPS:	Health Promoting Schools
HPSAT:	Health Promoting School Assessment Tool
NSH:	Nova Scotia Health
PHAC:	Public Health Agency of Canada
PP:	Pre-primary
SAC:	Student Advisory Council
RCEs:	Regional Centres for Education
YECs:	Youth Engagement Coordinators

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The UpLift Partnership's vision is *a healthier Nova Scotia through a youth-engaged Health Promoting Schools approach*. In working towards this vision, a focus of the UpLift Partnership is to align with and enhance work that is currently underway to support the health and well-being of children and youth through effective implementation of the HPS model.

This is the third annual evaluation report of UpLift evaluation and describes several aspects of the work including school engagement and action, youth/student engagement, and partnerships at the regional and community level. In addition, in two regions the evaluation assessed key outcomes associated with these areas of work.

The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative methods and gathered data from multiple sources to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The data from the various methods (e.g., tracking forms, surveys, interviews, focus groups, story sharing) and sources (e.g., students, school staff champions, Youth Engagement Coordinators) were analyzed and compiled into the evaluation report.

## School Engagement and Action

### YEC Role

In September 2019, the UpLift Partnership was launched in two of the seven English language RCEs in Nova Scotia and in January 2021 two more regions were engaged (the provincial CSAP with the YEC model and another RCE with the HPS Lead model). In January 2022, a fifth region (fourth RCE) was engaged, with two YECs hired.

Over the past three years, 69% (n=113) of schools in the five regions have been engaged in UpLift through both the YEC and HPS Lead models. The YEC model engagement approach includes a participatory and flexible approach that has been refined over time and includes: a process to help identify school readiness; meetings with and support of various stakeholders in the schools (e.g., administration, teachers and other school staff, students); data collection spearheaded by students to identify school needs and assets; and support for grant/project development and implementation.

The year 1 and year 2 UpLift evaluations suggested a lack of clarity around the role of the YEC among various stakeholders, which was not surprising given the community development and flexible approach to the work – which meant the role has been defined and refined over time.

Through the year 3 evaluation, clarity about the YEC role and key functions of the YEC position has emerged. The YECs work at various levels and have diverse roles as depicted below:



**YEC Functions:**

- Planning
- Communication
- Outreach and connection
- Navigation and problem solving
- Building capacity
- Facilitating student engagement and leadership
- Supporting advocacy

The evaluation findings reveal that the YEC role has enhanced HPS work through strengthening relationships between schools and existing HPS infrastructure as well as facilitating student engagement. Given that the YECs are limited term positions through the UpLift Partnership funding, there would be value in sustaining these positions, or some iteration of them, to continue to enhance HPS and student/youth engagement efforts in a way that is currently not incorporated in other regional positions.

**Recommendations:**

- Identify leadership structures and decision makers within the regions and province to share the UpLift evaluation findings with, including articulating the benefit of the YEC position and the value of investing in this role and associated work.
- Bring together key stakeholders supporting HPS within the province to identify strategies to sustain the YEC position and/or the work of the YECs.
- Develop a business case to illustrate the value and imperative of investing in positions to facilitate student/youth engagement within HPS work and student health and well-being; and ensure the business case builds on and aligns with existing government policy.
- When presenting to senior leaders and decision makers and developing the business case, align with government priorities such as goal #6 in the Action Plan for Health and climate change agenda (e.g., the potential of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions through investment in Active Transportation to and from school).

## Staff Champions

The findings from the HPSAT related to school staff engagement, in both the YEC and HPS Lead models, reveal an opportunity to engage and build capacity within schools to support HPS work (e.g., providing training/education such as how to deliver physically active lessons, healthy eating education, training about the NS Food and Nutrition Policy; providing resources to promote student physical activity and movement, healthy eating and mental health; engaging teachers in HPS work such as menu planning).

A key element of the role of the YECs is to engage and build capacity of school staff, including teachers and administrators. The YECs have played an important role in connecting staff champions to HPS resources and potential funding opportunities. The YECs have helped to emphasize the importance of student engagement and increased knowledge and skills in this area among staff champions. The ability of the YECs to provide capacity building was limited given their many competing priorities, but the importance of this capacity building is recognized. Critical to supporting staff champions is providing opportunities and mechanisms for them to connect, network, share and learn from one another.

### ***Recommendations:***

- Explore the creation of communities of practice for HPS staff champions within regions across the province.
- Explore opportunities through Education and Health for a Summer Institute to help prepare HPS staff champions and those working to support student health and well-being in their roles.
- Identify opportunities (through existing mechanisms) to offer professional development about HPS and youth engagement to staff champions and other school staff.
- Continue to promote and highlight HPS and UpLift stories through existing mechanisms (e.g., existing newsletters, social media, etc.) to help inspire schools and other partners working to support student health and well-being.
- Explore the creation of Health Consultant positions within RCEs/CSAP to focus on supporting physical education and health teachers in embedding HPS within curriculum and other processes/infrastructure, with a focus on youth engagement.

## Supporting Enhancements to the HPS Environment

The HPSAT helped the YECs and HPS Leads to build an understanding of the current enablers and barriers to health and well-being within the school and to plan the HPS UpLift Student Action Grants. An assessment of the HPS environment in schools through the HPSAT revealed opportunities for improvement in specific HPS areas including: healthy living and practices related to physical activity/active schools; incorporating healthy eating, active schools and

mental health within teaching and learning; and marketing of healthy food choices. As of June 30, 2022, \$360,000.00 in funding has been provided to 72 schools through HPS UpLift Student Action Grants to support enhancements to the physical and social environment, particularly in the areas of physical activity and mental health.

The grants were more than simply a funding opportunity and served as an effective catalyst to help schools prioritize student engagement and leadership and support a culture change. The findings reveal that the HPS student engagement model was aligned and/or embedded within curriculum outcomes, student success planning, and school structures such as Student Advisory Councils, which are viewed as key to sustainable and longer-term student health and well-being outcomes.

### ***Recommendations***

- Strategize with provincial and regional staff working in Student Success Planning about how to use and potentially embed UpLift tools such as the HPSAT within Student Success Planning goals and strategies and ensure their alignment with existing data collection processes.
- Identify existing opportunities (e.g., professional development) to share strategies such as how to align and embed HPS within existing curriculum (e.g., Citizenship 9 curriculum, leadership electives, other classes such as math and science, etc.).
- Work with DEECD to identify opportunities to reach Citizenship 9 teachers to share learnings from UpLift and strategies for embedding HPS with Citizenship 9 curriculum.
- Work with the DEECD to explore the creation of curriculum guide supplements or other tools about how to embed HPS within existing curriculum to disseminate this work across the province and broaden the reach.
- Explore strategies to enhance capacity to develop and implement Active Transportation initiatives with community partners (e.g., Municipal Physical Activity Leaders (MPALs), municipal recreation departments, Regional Physical Activity Consultants (CCTH)); in town/village schools.
- Share the findings of the HPSAT related to Active Schools and Active Transportation along with findings related to outcomes with DEECD to help inform the Physical Activity Framework currently under development (e.g., invest in building capacity within schools, and supporting school and community partnerships).
- Explore enhancing funding for schools to support student-led projects to ensure continued engagement of youth in building healthy schools.

## **Youth Engagement**

As previously described, YECs and HPS Leads have played a pivotal role in prioritizing and enhancing student/youth engagement within HPS and other work to support student health and



well-being. In exploring the YEC model in two regions it was found that the work of the YECs has helped to strengthen students' voices in HPS work and build student leaders for HPS within schools. This is a critical finding as the HPSAT revealed that there is opportunity to more effectively engage students in the creation of a healthy school (e.g., engaging students as leaders and decision makers in menu planning and healthy eating; engaging students as leaders and decision makers in physical activity and movement initiatives; ensuring students from diverse backgrounds lead the organization of healthy school initiatives). The findings illustrate that students can and want to be meaningfully engaged in school life beyond conventional curriculum and teaching and learning. The value of engaging students and building student leaders for HPS extends beyond the school with the creation of community leaders who have knowledge, skills and confidence in a range of areas that will last a lifetime.

***Recommendations:***

- At a provincial level, develop a document that describes the model of youth engagement developed through UpLift.
- At a provincial level, use the youth engagement model to develop capacity building tools to support its implementation (e.g., youth engagement modules currently under development, module being developed through the Education Leadership Consortium of Nova Scotia).
- Identify audiences for participation in the youth engagement modules and other capacity building opportunities and promote the opportunities to these audiences (e.g., School Health Promoters from NSH and other staff working with schools, Child and Youth Care Practitioners from SchoolsPlus, Student Success Planning staff from the RCEs, etc.).
- Incorporate the youth/student engagement model developed through UpLift as a criteria/requirement to access funding provided to schools (e.g., funding provided through HPS innovation grants, funding provided through DEECD to support Healthy Schools).
- Explore opportunities to further support youth engagement in HPS work and student health and well-being including Regional Youth Summits that would be supported through Education and Health and other partners (e.g., CCTH).
- Build awareness and capacity among existing school structures such as Home and School Associations and School Advisory Councils about how to effectively engage students/youth.

## Partnerships

In addition to the work they do in schools, the YECs and HPS Leads also support building relationships and partnerships to facilitate system change. The findings reveal that the YECs and HPS Leads are working at various levels to build partnerships and have helped to facilitate schools

strengthening their community partnerships. Both the YECs and HPS Leads discussed work to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion. The findings illustrate the work YECs are doing in some regions to connect with RCE/CSAP staff working in this area (e.g., Consultants of Student Equity) to help ensure inclusive approaches to student/youth engagement.

In one region, a partnership mapping process was done to explore the relationship building process and the evaluation findings reveal that the YECs are central figures within the regional HPS network with many connections and strong collaborative relationships. Further, the partnership mapping findings reveal that YECs play a key and unique role in connecting school-level partners into the regional network and play a central role in knowledge exchange – helping to build capacity for HPS and expand its reach.

### ***Recommendations***

- Recognize the role of the YECs in connecting schools to regional HPS work (which was lacking prior to this position) by sustaining the positions and/or incorporating this role within other positions.
- Continue to support schools to strengthen relationships with community partners to support HPS including municipalities – given that a goal in the provincial Let’s Get Moving Strategy is for municipalities to work with key settings including schools to advance their work in supporting physical activity and movement.
- Continue to build partnerships with and engage RCE staff working to support equity, diversity and inclusion (e.g., Coordinator of African Canadian Education Services, Coordinator of Mi’kmaw Services/Education, Consultant of Student Equity) to help ensure inclusive approaches within UpLift and HPS work.
- Explore using the partnership mapping methodology and tools in other regions as it has been effective in helping to identify new and strengthened partnerships and for supporting planning work.

# Introduction

## Background

The UpLift Partnership is a school-community-university partnership that involves government departments (Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD); Health and Wellness (DHW); Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH), Nova Scotia Health (NSH), the Healthy Populations Institute (Dalhousie University), IWK Health, Regional Centres for Education (RCEs), the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), and other community and non-profit organizations that support the health and well-being of children and youth.

Drs. Sara Kirk and Camille Hancock Friesen, the project Co-Leads from Dalhousie University, formed a partnership in 2016, to explore funding through the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) multi-sectoral partnerships program and support improving child and youth health and well-being through the school system. Much work was done prior to securing funding (2019), and officially launching the project including formation of a funding consortium involving the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation, Dalhousie Office of Advancement, and the QE2 Foundation. In addition, the Co-Leads used existing funding to hire project management and communications consultants to support partnership building with the public and private sectors. A key partner group was formed in 2018, and subsequently became the UpLift Partnership Advisory Committee.

The novel multi-organization Funding Consortium, together with the Co-Leads, secured \$2.86 million in private sector funds (as of October 2021) which was matched >2:1 by the PHAC multisectoral partnerships program resulting in a net \$7.86 million investment in Nova Scotia. The funding is provided over five years from January 2019 to August 2024. Project staff began to be hired after the PHAC funding was secured with the first position, the Project Manager, hired in February 2019. Other positions hired in the first year were a Communications Coordinator, Youth Engagement Coordinators in two RCEs, and an Evaluation Coordinator.

The vision of the UpLift Partnership is *a healthier Nova Scotia through a youth-engaged Health Promoting Schools approach*. The vision is achieved through six areas of work. These areas and associated goals are:

- **Partnerships and Leadership:** Health Promoting Schools (HPS) approach that is resourced by and embedded within the NS health and education system;
- **Planning and Evaluation:** Evidence-informed HPS approach across NS with a comprehensive accountability framework aligned with partner goals;
- **Youth Engagement:** Engaged and empowered NS youth who support child and youth health and well-being through a HPS approach;

- **School and Community Engagement and Action:** School and community environments across NS that support child and youth health and well-being through a HPS approach;
- **Capacity Building:** Evidence-informed practice within the NS health and education systems to support HPS; and
- **Communication and Knowledge Exchange:** Community support across NS for a HPS approach.

The long-term outcomes of the UpLift Partnership include impacts for children and youth, schools and communities and the system:

- **Children and Youth:** Improved health and well-being of children and youth;
- **Schools and Communities:** Healthy school communities that support students in achieving their well-being and learning goals; and
- **System:** Increased investments for Health Promoting Schools (HPS) in NS, and a sustainable and consistent HPS approach with embedded evaluation for improving healthy school communities in NS.

A key feature of the UpLift Partnership is to align with and enhance work that is already underway to support the health and well-being of children and youth. This refers to the enhancement of the HPS model/approach in Nova Scotia, in addition to aligning with key actions to support the attainment of school and student health and well-being goals (the Student Success Planning process mandated and completed each year by schools in Nova Scotia is one example).

The Nova Scotia HPS model/approach involves a wide range of programs, activities and services that take place in schools and school communities. It provides an overall framework for key school health and well-being related initiatives, combining elements of teaching and learning; partnerships and services; supportive physical and social environments, and health promoting policies. School initiatives may, for instance, address healthy eating, physical activity, mental health, substance use/addictions, or violence/injury prevention in the school setting, among other issues. These activities are intended to develop over time and to strengthen the school community as a healthy setting for learning, playing, working, and living.

In September 2019, the UpLift Partnership was launched in two of the seven English language RCEs in Nova Scotia (referred to in this report as Regions 1 and 2) and in January 2021, two more regions were engaged, one from an English language RCE (Region 4) and one from the French language school board - CSAP (referred to as Region 3 where two YECs were hired). In January 2022, a fifth region (fourth RCE) was engaged (referred to as Region 5) with two YECs hired. Work in four regions is undertaken by Youth Engagement Coordinators (YECs), who are supported through UpLift funding and are positioned within NSH regional structures (three regions) and CSAP (one region). In the other region (Region 4), a different model is being implemented where UpLift resources support existing school staff to increase the number of days they allocate to HPS work. In this region, school staff (called “HPS Leads”) allocate one day a month to support HPS work (the Regional Centre for Education provides this funding). The UpLift resources increase the time to three days a month through funds to support substitute teachers.

The first evaluation of the UpLift Partnership covered the period from program initiation in January 2019 to June 2020, and a report of the findings was completed in the fall of 2020. The second annual report covering July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 was produced in the fall of 2021. This is the third annual evaluation which covers the period from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 and is focused on three elements of the logic model: school engagement and action, student/youth engagement, and partnerships. The findings present data for both process and outcome measures related to these project components.

In addition to this cross region evaluation report, two regional reports were produced for regions one and two (the first two regions engaged in UpLift). The findings from this cross region evaluation will be used by the UpLift Partnership to continue to adapt and enhance its work.

## Methods

An evaluation framework was developed collaboratively in 2019 for the UpLift Partnership to guide evaluation work and includes a logic model and evaluation matrix which identifies indicators and data collection methods for the outputs and outcomes in the logic model. As the implementation of UpLift continues, the evaluation matrix continues to be updated and expanded. To evaluate the work of UpLift from 2019 to 2022 the following data methods were used:

- **Health promoting school assessment tool (HPSAT):** created in 2019 and administered by the YECs and HPS Leads to gather data to help assess the school environment related to key indicators such as youth engagement, teacher engagement, inclusion, community partnerships in four areas: school food and nutrition, active schools, active transportation, and mental health and inclusion. The findings from the assessment tool provide a snapshot of the school environment and a measure that could be used to monitor change over time; it is also used to help support HPS planning within schools and the broader region. The findings are presented in graph format with accompanying text in the body of the report. The data is presented across all regions and schools engaged in UpLift. Reports of the findings are also produced per region when requested, and it is interesting to note that the findings across regions is similar to within region findings.
- **School engagement monitoring database:** created in 2021 to compile data on school engagement and continually updated by the UpLift evaluation team to help monitor key variables of interest (e.g., year schools are engaged, including grades and numbers of students; HPS UpLift Student Action Grants distributed, etc.)
- **Tracking forms:** YECs and HPS Leads complete quarterly tracking forms to gather data to describe their work (e.g., relationships and partnership building activities, activities to engage schools, activities to support youth engagement, communication activities, capacity building activities, etc.). The tracking forms were reviewed and analyzed using

quantitative (descriptive statistics) and qualitative (thematic analysis) methods. In addition, periodic interviews were conducted with the YECs to clarify data/information in the tracking forms.

- ***YE Story Sharing Workshop***: held in the spring of 2022 with those who lead student engagement within the context of HPS through the UpLift partnership (YECs, the UpLift Youth Engagement Consultant, and the Active Healthy Living Consultant in Region 4). Prior to the session, the YECs and Active Healthy Living Consultant were invited to share a written story about their experience with UpLift. At the session, participants were invited to share their perspective on and experience with how UpLift (the work they have been doing) has made/is making a difference in the lives of students, teachers, other school staff and/or the broader school community. The findings from the session were compiled into a brief report that included a graphic recording of the meeting outcomes.
- ***Student focus groups***: completed in the spring of 2022 by UpLift evaluation staff with students who had participated in UpLift Regions 1, 2 and 3. A total of eight focus groups were conducted in twenty schools, with 215 students, to help explore student perceptions of a healthy school environment and assess their experience with UpLift, including development and implementation of the HPS UpLift Student Action Grant and satisfaction with their experience and engagement.
- ***School staff champion focus groups***: completed in the spring of 2022 by UpLift evaluation staff with adult champions (i.e., teachers and/or principals engaged to support UpLift and HPS work) in Regions 1, 2 and 3. A total of five focus groups and two interviews were conducted with 18 staff champions to help assess experience with the UpLift Partnership, including variables such as youth engagement and leadership.
- ***Partnership Mapping tool***: completed in the spring of 2022 to help assess how the YECs have contributed to relationship and partnership building within the context of HPS in Region 2. The partnership mapping was co-led by a member of the UpLift evaluation team and the Strategic Partnerships and Engagement Consultant from Public Health in NSH. The first step was the creation of a network map (depicting organizations and their relationships) using Kumu mapping software. The network map was populated using data from the YEC tracking forms and reviewing existing HPS structures, and then reviewed and validated by key regional stakeholders working in HPS at an in-person session. Following the session, nine stakeholders completed a survey to classify their relationship in relation to HPS with each named member of the network. Relationships were categorized as no relationship, networking, coordinating, cooperating or collaborating. Following the completion of the relationship survey, results were compiled into spreadsheets and analyzed and categorized by network member and level of relationship. A brief report of the findings was produced.

## Considerations

The following are considerations when reviewing the evaluation findings:

- A range of methods (e.g., surveys, tracking forms, focus groups, interviews) were used in this evaluation and data were gathered from the various stakeholders (e.g., students, staff champions, the YECs and HPS Leads). This mixed methodology is a strength of the evaluation and helps to ensure credibility of the findings.
- While qualitative methods provide rich and valuable insight into participants' views and reflections on their experiences, the results are not intended to be generalized or quantified.
- Understandably, the COVID-19 pandemic had significant implications for the UpLift Partnership work (e.g., lack of access to schools and students, some YECs being reassigned from their UpLift work). These interruptions in work have impacted the intervention itself and it is important to recognize this context.
- The evaluation findings compile data from across the five regions engaged by UpLift. However, the findings, particularly the qualitative data and evaluation findings of outcomes, are primarily based on data from the two regions who have been engaged the longest and where additional data collection was completed. Regional reports have been produced for each of these regions and in subsequent years the other regions will also receive reports specific to their region.
- The evaluation findings focus on the YEC model versus the HPS Lead model given that a large portion of data come from the YEC model (versus the HPS Lead model). In the fall of 2023 an evaluation will be completed in the region implementing the HPS Lead model and a regional report produced for this area.

## Findings – Project Description and Supports

The UpLift Partnership includes various components and supports which are described in the following section, including work done to enhance school engagement and action and to build partnerships.

### School Engagement and Action

The following section describes: the approach to engaging schools and role of the Youth Engagement Coordinators (YECs); the number of schools engaged in UpLift to date; the school environment in key areas (assessed through the HPSAT); the number and type of HPS UpLift Student Action Grants developed to date; student engagement and leadership; and staff engagement and champions.

#### ➤ Approach and Role of the Youth Engagement Coordinator

In the early stages of UpLift (i.e., in 2019 when two RCEs were engaged) the approach to engaging schools varied between the two regions (e.g., one RCE identified the schools to be engaged by the YECs whereas the other region left it to the YEC to decide what schools to engage). In 2020-21 the third region's approach to engaging schools was similar to Region 1 where schools were pre-determined. As reported in the first annual UpLift evaluation report, both approaches had challenges (e.g., targeting schools that were not interested or ready to engage was a challenge as was trying to engage too many schools at the same time).

The YEC Story Sharing findings indicated that a key enabler to engaging schools was interest and readiness to participate. This was affirmed in the focus groups with staff champions who noted a key enabler to their work with the YEC was readiness (e.g., an existing champion, ongoing HPS work, student leadership, etc.). Therefore in the second year (2020-21), the approach to school engagement was adapted and refined to include a process to help assess readiness (e.g., an expression of interest (EOI) was sent to all schools in Region 2 to identify interest and readiness and in Region 1 readiness was assessed informally by the YEC). Interested schools were then asked to identify a staff champion (usually a teacher or principal) and an initial meeting was held with the staff champion(s) to introduce UpLift.

In Region 4, the approach to school engagement was different given that UpLift is enhancing funding for school staff (usually a teacher or principal) to work on HPS in schools. There was no need to assess school readiness as all schools were engaged. The approach to the work in the school was determined by the HPS Lead given their current HPS work. Sometimes the HPS Leads have existing HPS School Student Action teams that they work with and some HPS Leads have processes to engage other teachers in their school in their HPS work (e.g., collaborative learning days).

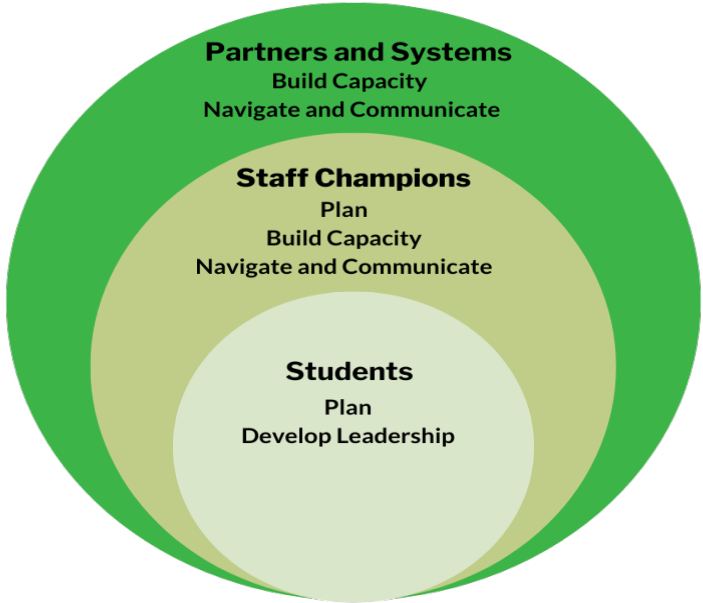


Other elements of the approaches used by YECs and HPS Leads include:

- Meeting with a class, multiple classes or a student leadership team to introduce UpLift and brainstorm ideas for potential projects;
- Supporting completion of the HPSAT;
- Supporting students and adult champions to develop and administer data collection in schools (e.g., surveys, focus groups) to gather feedback from students about needs and areas for improvement in terms of HPS, and project ideas for the HPS UpLift Student Action Grants;
- Supporting the development of the HPS UpLift Student Action Grant (a \$5,000 grant from UpLift to support HPS projects, which is further described in the *HPS UpLift Student Action Grants* section on page 10);
- Supporting project implementation as required; and
- Celebrating project successes and achievements.

The YECs and HPS Leads reported on their meetings through the quarterly reports. An analysis of the data revealed that meetings were conducted with various audiences including: administration or school leadership; teachers and staff (often staff champions); existing student leadership or clubs or action teams that have been formed; and with students and teachers together.

The role of the YEC position is multifaceted and the YECs work at various levels as depicted in Figure 1. The levels include students, staff champions in schools, and partners at the system level. Following the figure is a description of the key roles of the YECs.



**Figure 1: YEC Role**

- **Planning** - introducing UpLift, gathering data to support program planning, developing grants;
- **Communication and Navigating** - building awareness among stakeholders such as teachers, principals, parents, students, partners through various mechanisms such as quarterly newsletters, social media (e.g., twitter), one-on-one meetings and navigating and problem-solving issues such as procurement of equipment through the RCE;
- **Facilitating and uplifting student engagement and leadership** in HPS work by gathering diverse student groups, providing opportunities for them to define needs in their school and take on a meaningful role in realizing their ideas, in collaboration with adult supporters;
- **Building partnerships and relationships** at various levels (e.g., school community, regional, provincial) to support UpLift and HPS work;
- **Outreach and Connecting** - sharing ideas to support schools in their UpLift and HPS work, checking in with schools;
- **Building capacity** of staff champions and others including identifying/developing and providing resources (e.g., templates for student engagement activities, PowerPoint presentation with voice over about UpLift), providing some learning opportunities (e.g., webinar on available funding and how to access), linking school staff to learning and funding opportunities (e.g., shared a list of grants available to support school gardens, shared funding available through CCTH); and
- **Supporting advocacy** - working with students and/or staff champions to advocate for HPS and student engagement (e.g., advocating to EECD for funding/investments to increase accessibility and inclusion in outdoor play and learning).

In the focus groups with adult champions, the importance of the role and support of the YECs in moving UpLift and other HPS work forward and engaging students in the process was consistently discussed.

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*...we have so many barriers, that if we didn't have somebody that we could quickly turn to and ask questions to, and see if we could problem solve it, turn it around, have someone to...talk to us about other funds that we could access to get to where we want to be, it would be all for naught really...a very important position I would say, if you want those projects to continue.*

*...having that YEC I think, is one of the things that made this so successful. Because we do, we see dozens of them [funding opportunities], if not multiple dozens in the run of a school year with this stuff. But having somebody, boots on the ground, made a huge difference.*

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## ➤ Number of Schools and Potential Reach

Table 1:2 presents the schools that participated in UpLift in the three years of the initiative for all five regions including the number of schools, grades encompassed, and number of students in the school. To date, a total of 113 schools (of a potential of 164) have been engaged through the

work of the YECs and HPS Leads with just under 34,000 students potentially reached (the 33,961 students potentially reached represents the entire student population of the schools engaged).

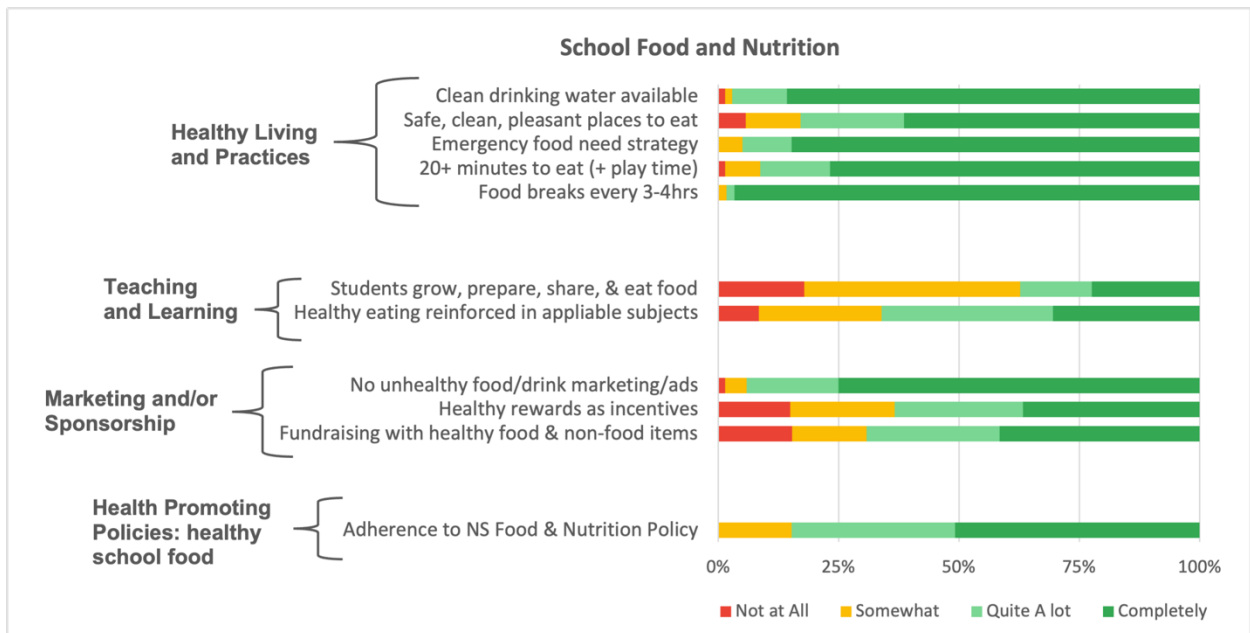
**Table 1: School Engagement**

Year	# of schools	# of Grades	# of students
2019-2020	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PP-6 (n=54)</li> <li>• PP-9 (n=14)</li> <li>• PP-12 (n=9)</li> <li>• 4-9 (n=12)</li> <li>• 5-12 (n=18)</li> <li>• 9-12 (n=6)</li> </ul>	2356
2020-2021	49		12,832
2021-2022	56		18,773
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>70% of potential students reached* (33,961/48,375)</b>

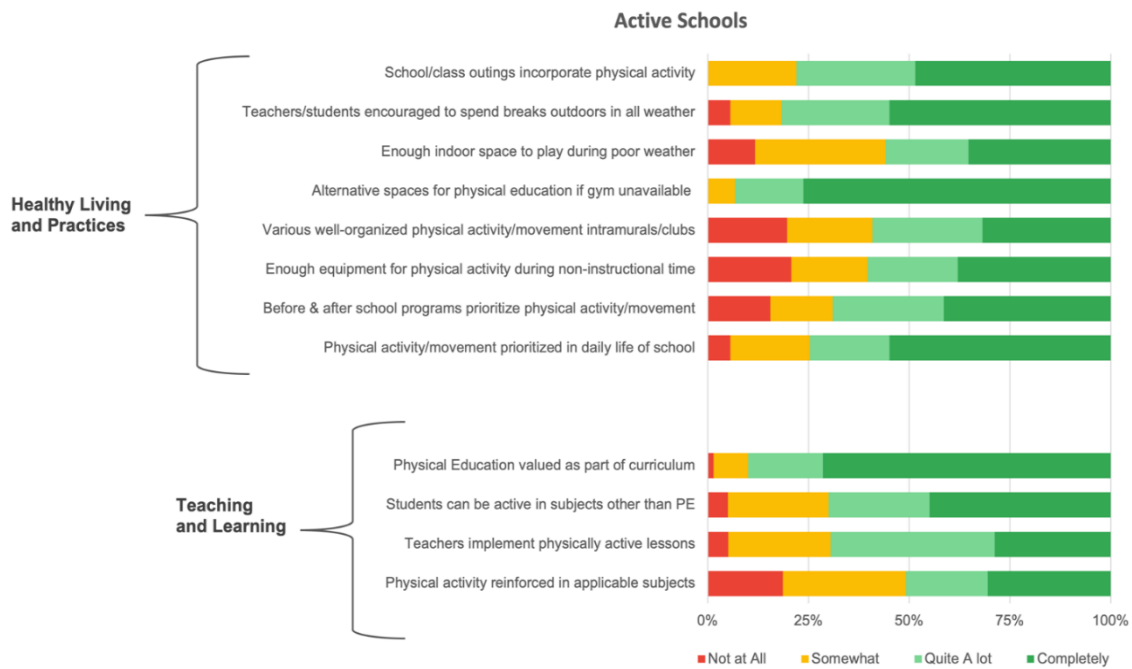
\*Potential reach is defined as the total student population in schools engaged with UpLift.

➤ **School Environment – An Assessment**

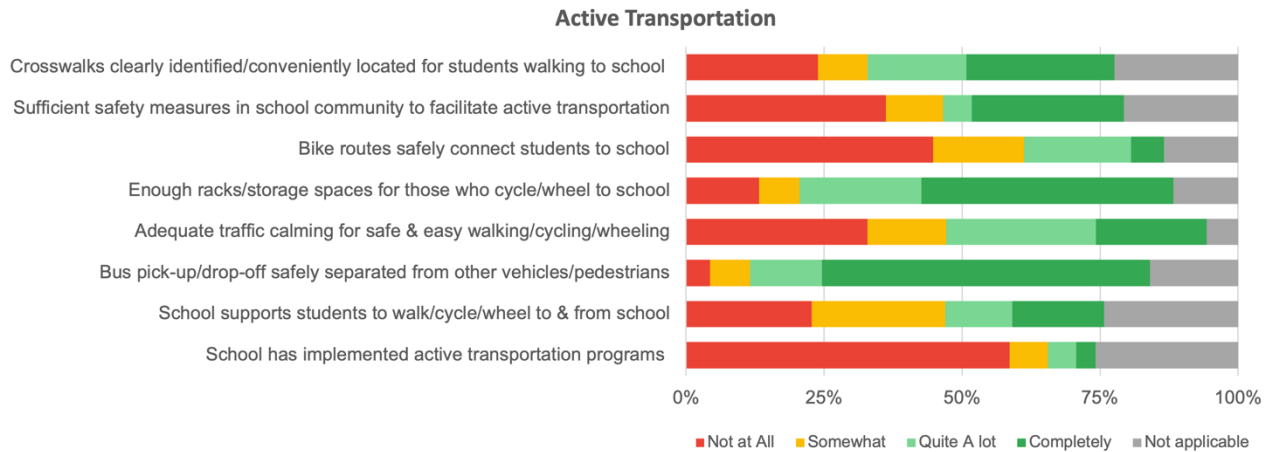
As previously described, the HPSAT was administered by the YECs and HPS Leads in schools to help assess various areas of HPS including the school environment (e.g., healthy living and practices, teaching and learning, policy) related to four areas: school food and nutrition, active schools, active transportation, and mental health and inclusivity. Figures 2 to 5 provide the results of the HPSAT related to the school environment in the four areas. These show that the greatest challenges related to the school environment were in healthy living and practices within the active school’s category (e.g., there were lower ratings for statements such as *Before and After School programs prioritize physical activity/movement, there is enough equipment for physical activity during non-instructional time, there is enough indoor space to play during poor weather, there are various physical activity/movement intramurals/clubs*). In the area of school food and nutrition, the greatest challenge was in teaching and learning and marketing of food. There are also opportunities to improve teaching and learning in all areas, and active transportation is an area for improvement. Overall, the school environment appears to be supporting mental health.



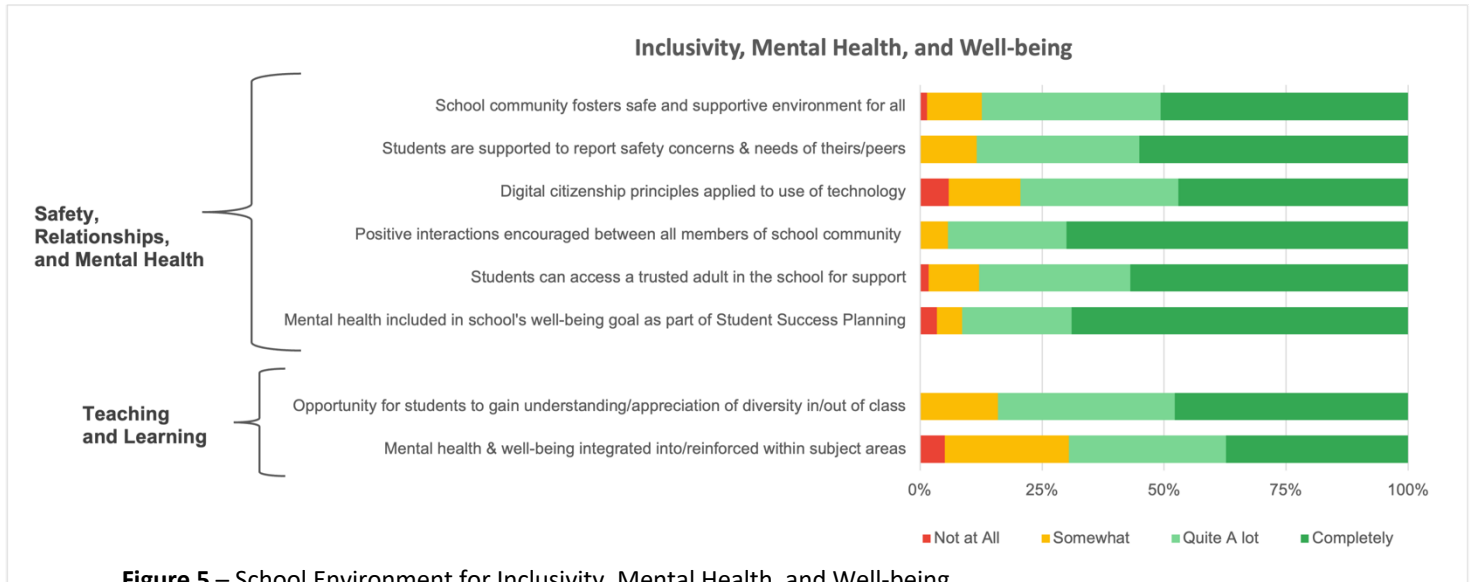
**Figure 2 – School Environment for School Food and Nutrition**



**Figure 3 – School Environment for Active Schools**



**Figure 4 – School Environment for Active Transportation**



**Figure 5 – School Environment for Inclusivity, Mental Health, and Well-being**

## ➤ HPS UpLift Student Action Grants

A component of the UpLift Partnership is a one time per school \$5,000.00 grant available for participating schools. Table 2:3 provides the number of grants approved by year, and as illustrated, a total of 72 grants have been approved over the three years of the initiative. Both students and staff were engaged in the process of developing the grant, including gathering feedback from students outside of the leadership team/class, participating in engagement sessions to brainstorm ideas for the grants and refining ideas based on student feedback, supporting the writing of the grant, and supporting implementation of the project.

**Table 2: HPS UpLift Student Action Grants**

Year	# of grants approved
2019-2020:	4
2020-2021:	25
2021-2022:	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>

As illustrated in Table 4, many of the grants addressed more than one area with most focused on physical activity and mental health. Examples of projects include outdoor infrastructure such as playground enhancements, outdoor shelters or seating areas, outdoor classrooms, a safe space wikuom, a tranquility garden, and flags to celebrate diverse identities within the school community.

**Table 3: Type of Projects Supported Through HPS UpLift Student Action Grants**

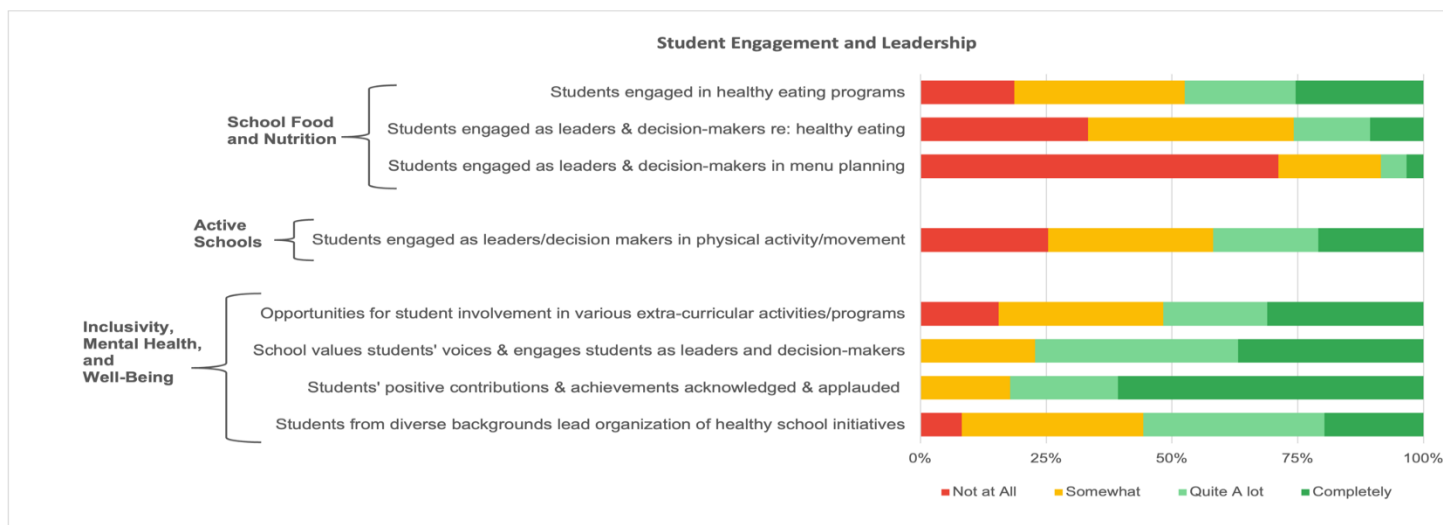
Type of Project	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Physical Activity	2	21	34	57
Healthy Eating	3	5	11	19
Mental health	0	24	38	62

*\*Note: project type #s exceed # of grants approved because projects addressed more than one project category.*

## ➤ Student Engagement and Leadership

### ○ An Assessment

The HPSAT asked schools to reflect on student engagement and leadership in the three areas. Figure 6 provides a summary of the data and illustrates opportunities to engage students more effectively within HPS – particularly in school food and nutrition. The findings also highlight the need for schools to provide opportunities for student involvement in various extra-curricular activities/programs and to ensure students from diverse backgrounds are engaged in HPS efforts.



**Figure 6 – Student Engagement and Leadership**

- **Support for Student Engagement and Leadership**

As previously discussed, the YECs and HPS Leads support student engagement and leadership development in their UpLift and HPS work (page 7-9). The YECs and HPS Leads provide various supports to engage students in project planning, development, and implementation, including experiential learning, team building, face to face and online facilitation using interactive and participatory techniques, leadership development, and recognizing students for their participation and leadership. On a YEC tracking form the following was noted: *“Generally speaking, students are having the opportunity to develop and strengthen leadership skills throughout the UpLift sessions. In this quarter, we’ve had students do presentations, represent the student voice when completing the HPS Assessment Tool, and shape data collection tools to gather input from the entire student population”*. The YECs also provided specific examples of their work:

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*[the YEC] worked with the [regional] Equity Consultant and the student leadership group at [name of school] to come up with a legacy project that the team could work on over the spring. The students decided to create a banner for Pride month and to help the administration at the school plan the Fun Field Day happening at the end of the school year. They also co-designed a survey that was used to capture the voices of the larger student body in relation to Fun Field Day. (YEC Tracking Form)*

*[the YEC] worked with a team of 7 Grade 9 students to finalize project idea (pump track). The Grade 9s had also identified that they were frustrated that they weren’t allowed to use the beautiful, wooded area behind the school, so [YEC] facilitated a meeting with student leaders and principal/vice principal, where students were given permission to clear trails and make some nice, seated areas in the woods. The school bought them supplies (e.g., clippers, wheelbarrow) and gave them time during PE class to do their work. The students did a great job, and it had a very positive impact on the school. [The YEC] also worked with the students to do an inventory of mountain bikes and build a plan for repairs and purchase of new bikes. (YEC Tracking Form)*

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In the focus groups with adult champions, participants discussed the important role that the YECs play in facilitating student engagement and leadership. It was noted that they have the knowledge and skills to engage and work with students and use effective engagement processes.

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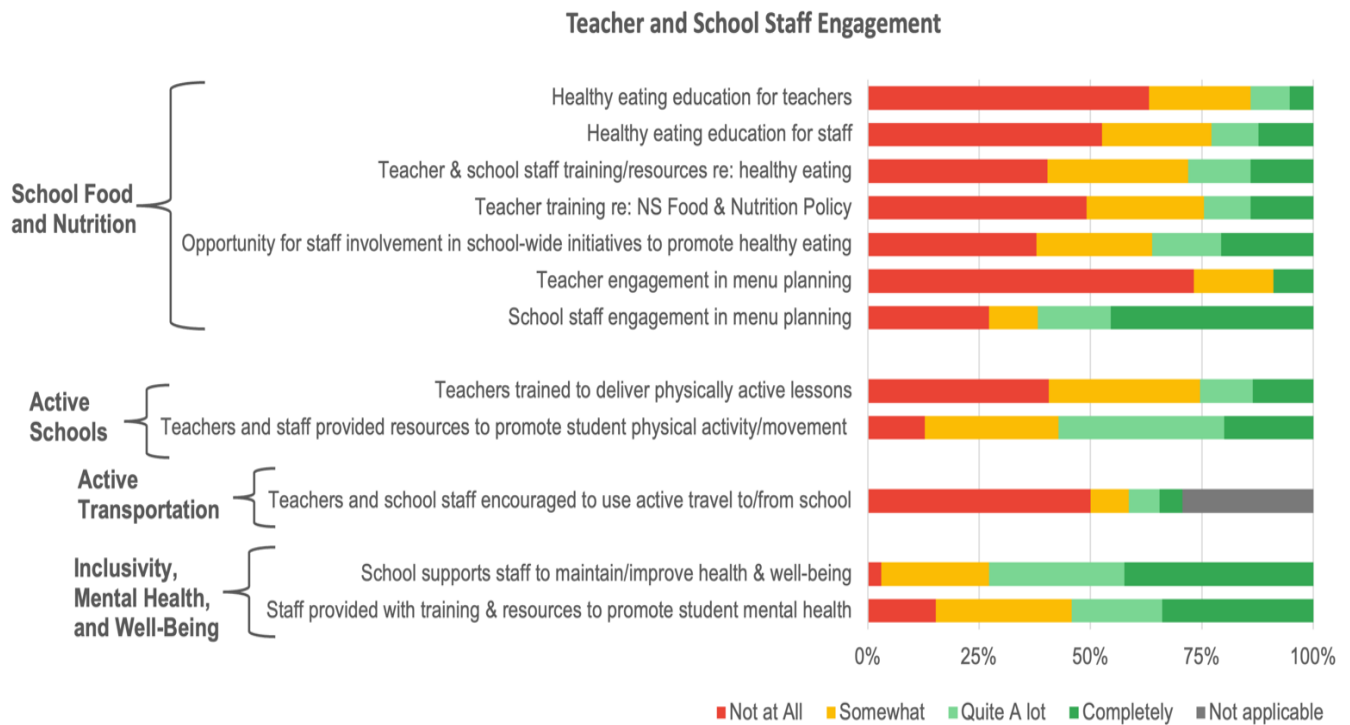
*...the way that they came in and helped to facilitate it was really wonderful. They were great with the kids, and I think the kids really enjoyed sharing their thoughts on things, and they really felt heard. So, it was definitely positive. (Staff Champion Focus Group)*

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## ➤ **School Staff Engagement**

- **An Assessment**

Figure 7 provides a summary of the findings from the HPS assessment tool in terms of engaging and supporting school staff (e.g., providing training/education and resources, involving school staff in HPS work). The findings illustrate that there is opportunity to engage and build capacity of school staff to support HPS work.



**Figure 7 – Teacher and School Staff Engagement**

○ **Adult Champions and Supports Provided**

A key role of the YECs is to identify, engage and support school staff in UpLift and HPS work. These staff are the key point of contact for the YECs and support all elements of UpLift work (e.g., engaging students, supporting grant development, supporting project implementation). Of the staff champions, most were either principals/vice principals or teachers and a few were other school staff (e.g., guidance counsellor, Schools Plus staff).

The YECs provided various support to the adult champions, including connecting them to other schools and resources to support their HPS work; serving as a role model, particularly in terms of engaging students; navigating adult champions through challenging processes (e.g., procurement and helping to problem solve other issues/challenges); and providing capacity building. Through a YEC tracking form it was noted: “[the adult champions] *reach out to us for all kinds of things, which makes us feel like we have built strong, trusting relationships with them.*”

Through the tracking forms, the YECs discussed the importance of engaging and supporting school staff champions – “...with the number of schools to cover, engaging adult supporters in the schools and building their capacity is critical”. The staff champions play a key role in UpLift and HPS such as facilitating student leadership teams, developing the HPS UpLift Student Action Grant, completing the HPSAT, coordinating and supporting project implementation, and connecting with other staff to build awareness and understanding about HPS.



In one region, staff champion focus group participants noted that they appreciated being recognized for their role as a champion in moving UpLift and HPS work forward.

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*The term champion, I just think it's so nice that someone says we're the champions for this. I just think that just makes you feel good about doing some good. And it's contagious, because if you're feeling good about the work that you're doing, and then you see the benefits in the kids, in the faces of the kids, then other people will take it on.*

---

As previously described, the adult champions consistently identified the YECs as critical to the entire process including supporting them in their work.

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*...no YEC no progress. ...they would remind me of what I needed to do...it was quick and easy...it was that support...or if I had a question it was quickly answered. [they are] very active on social media...in my experience, it flowed both ways. They would be very quick to call me and say, hey, I have a question...this school is trying to do this project, what would you do, or what have you done? So, it didn't feel one-sided. It was very much a partnership, which I really enjoyed.*

---

## Inclusion and Diversity

The following provides a summary of the findings from the HPSAT related to inclusion and diversity, as well as findings from the YEC and HPS Leads tracking forms and adult champions focus groups, in terms of the work to facilitate inclusion and diversity in schools.

### ➤ An Assessment

As illustrated in Figure 8, there is opportunity to enhance inclusion and diversity—especially in the area of active schools, by providing all students with access to physical activity programs and equipment, regardless of grade, gender, or ability. There is also opportunity to enhance school food to meet varied needs and preferences, to better support engagement of those with disabilities throughout the school environment, and to facilitate opportunities to celebrate individual differences. Community connections to support inclusion and diversity and implementation of the NS Inclusive Education Policy are strengths in most schools. In some cases, schools indicated they are too small to have capacity to offer girl/female specific sport/physical activity programs.

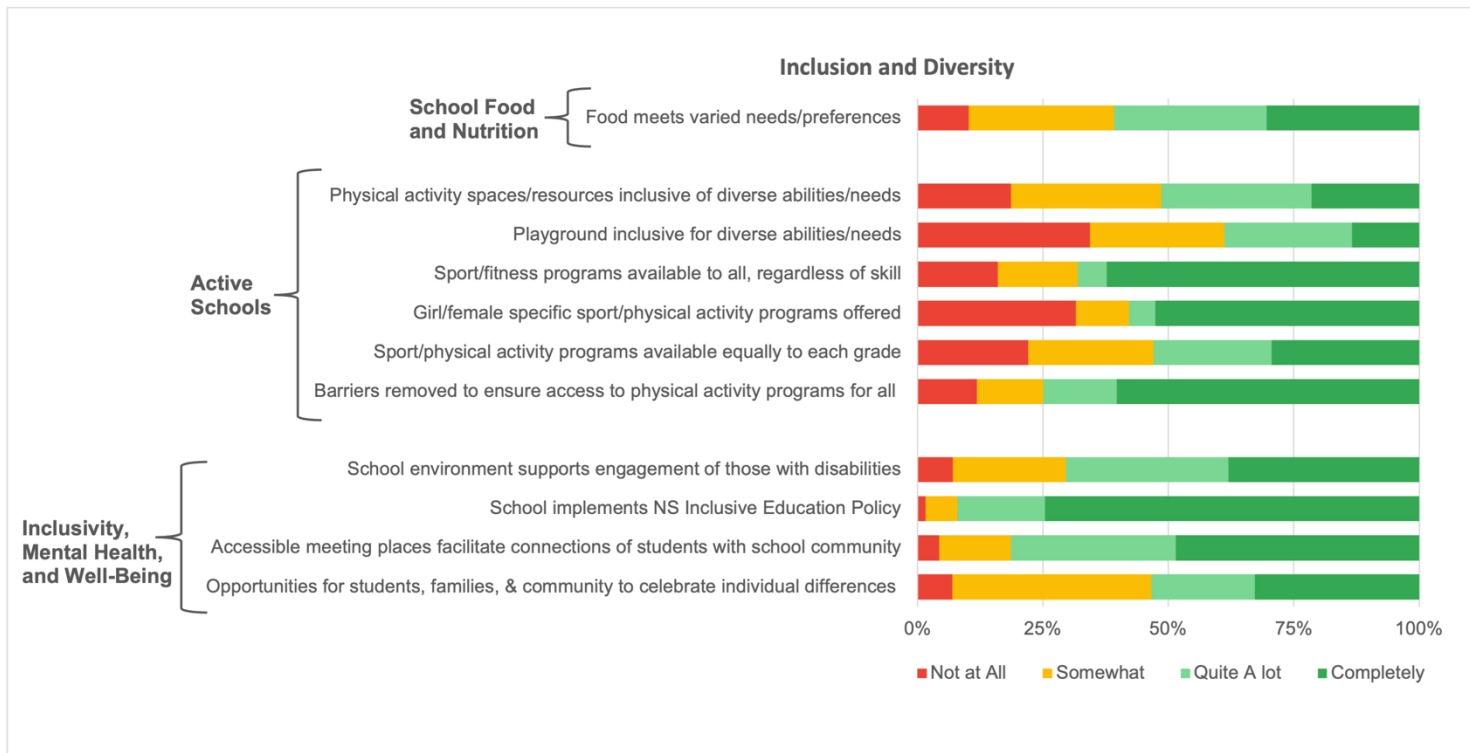


Figure 8 – Inclusion and Diversity

### ➤ Support for Inclusion and Diversity

Through completion of the tracking forms, the YECs describe what they do to help ensure that UpLift/HPS activities are inclusive. The activities/strategies used include:

- Working with the Indigenous and African Nova Scotian student support workers at the RCEs/CSAP (and others working in the area of equity and inclusion) to discuss engagement of students and how to include students traditionally marginalized or not included, and to discuss recruitment of schools to UpLift and students for leadership teams;
- Creating a safe and inviting space for students, including using participatory facilitation techniques, inviting students and school staff to share their pronouns at the beginning of team meetings, collaboratively identifying principles or agreements for working together;
- Encouraging and supporting students who are leading the process to obtain insights from various students, particularly those whose voices are not traditionally heard;
- Prioritizing Indigenous and African Canadian student participation in the development of a Youth Regional Advisory Council (Regional Advisory Council still under development);
- Supporting the region to acquire adaptive equipment to help ensure students with disabilities can participate in physical activity opportunities; and

- Purposefully engaging students not traditionally included (e.g., working with students from the Learning Centre through the UpLift/HPS student leadership team, developing grants and implementing projects that include various cultures and address diverse needs).

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*By partnering with the [regional] Equity consultant and beginning our project selection process with a session rooted in social justice, we were able to frame the project as an opportunity to increase inclusivity at [the school]. (YEC Tracking Form)*

*The project at [school] has been a great success story. Through ensuring Indigenous students were leading the project they have continued to find ways to build connection to land and people...it is a great example of how giving ownership to a group of students empowers them to bring their own unique skills and perspective to the project... (YEC Tracking Form)*

*When we plan our activities, students are always asked to consider the perspective of the situation of all our students at school and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to identify with or participate in the activity. For example, the [name of project] project... we ask participants to ensure that for every theme a mural addresses, that every student at school can relate to it in a positive way. (YEC Tracking Form)*

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In staff champion focus groups, some participants discussed how the YEC worked with them to engage students from diverse backgrounds and ensure the UpLift/HPS work is inclusive of all students.

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*...the accessibility piece, and that's what [YEC] has been working with us on...is making sure that it is going to be accessible for all. Not that we haven't done that in the past, but all the plans going forward are making sure that we're not missing anybody, and that piece is critical. And [that] we know that about healthy food, and how we roll these things out to all of the students. I think their knowledge, and how they're going to weave all of that accessibility into our plan, and it fits with what the students want. The vision that they have is a shared vision that we have for our kids, that we know we can do...those pieces I think are critical to the work.*

*...I think it's exciting because the kids that can excel at this might not be always the kids that might excel at some of the other things that we do in our gymnasiums, or out on our soccer fields, or on our tracks. So, it can be very individual, it can be for all ranges of people.... And you can kind of do what we call, challenge by choice. You can make it as hard or as easy as you want.*

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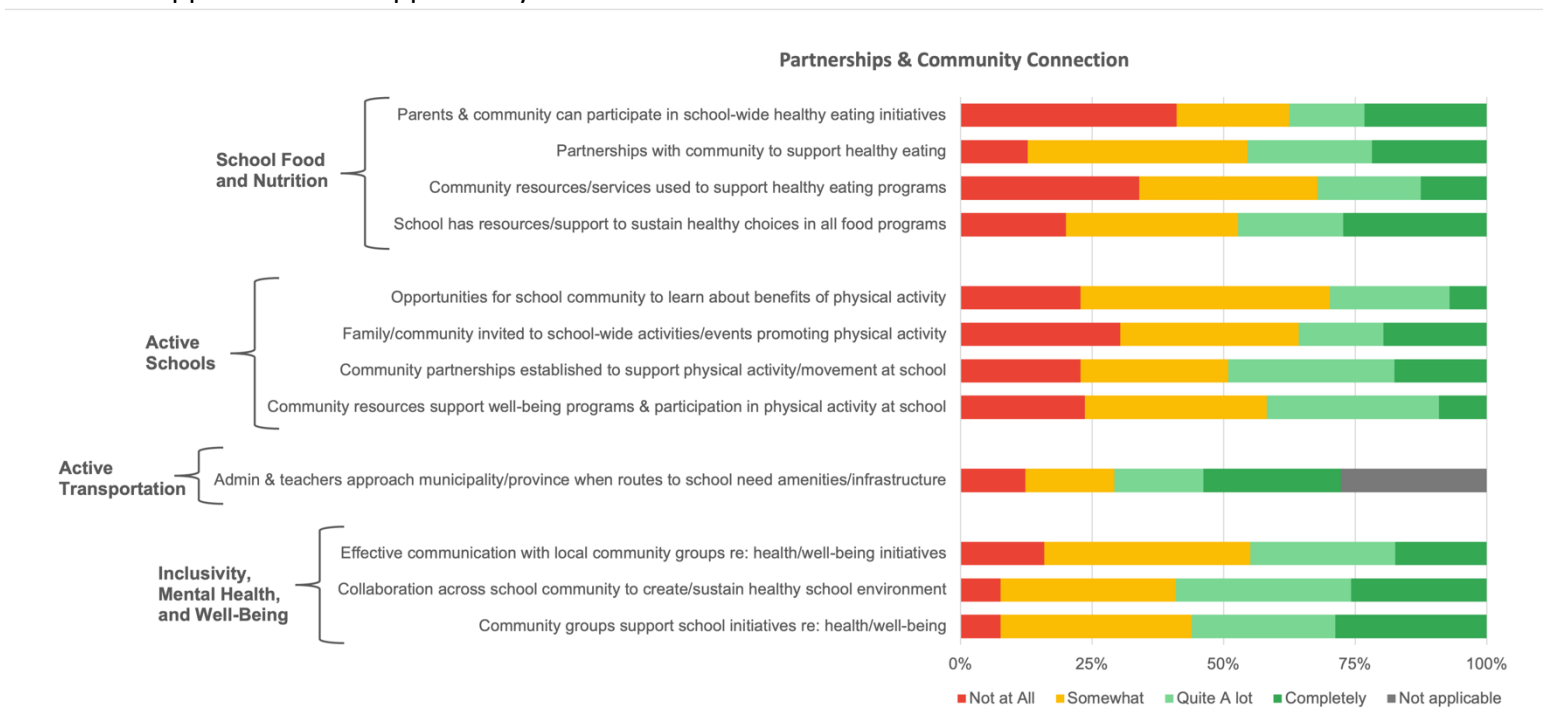
## Partnerships

The following section provides a summary of the findings from the HPSAT related to community partnerships as well as findings from the YEC and HPS Leads tracking forms in terms of partnership building activities they are facilitating.

### ➤ An Assessment

As illustrated in Figure 9, there is opportunity to continue to build relationships with the community to further support HPS and work to enhance student health and well-being. In particular, the findings illustrate that engaging parents and the broader community in HPS work

would be beneficial and working with the community to access and/or strengthen resources to support HPS is an opportunity.



**Figure 9 – Community Partnerships**

### ➤ Partnership Building Activities

Relationship and partnership building are key activities of UpLift, including work done in this area by the YECs at the provincial, regional, community, and sometimes, national level (the HPS Leads also work with partners – more so at the community and sometimes regional level). The partner meetings included one-on-one meetings to build awareness about HPS and/or youth engagement through information sharing, discussing potential activities (planning and coordinating), and in some cases collaborating to support HPS efforts.

The types of organizations reached through outreach and relationship building include:

- **Provincial:** Provincial HPS Team, youth organizations (e.g., HeartWood), organizations working in healthy eating and physical activity (e.g., Nourish Nova Scotia, Healthy Tomorrows Foundation), organizations working in community engagement (Rural Community Foundation of Nova Scotia, Community Sparks), Teachers Association of Physical and Health Education in NS (TAPHENS)
- **Regional:** HPS structures, Public Health staff (e.g., health promoters, school health promoters, nutritionists, etc.), RCEs, CCTH, Mental Health and Addictions Program from NSH
- **Community:** municipalities, community health boards, local youth organizations, community health centre, environmental organizations (e.g., Youth Climate Council), local businesses, others (e.g., women’s organization, guys group, organizations working in food security)
- **National:** Young Canadians Round Table on Health, TakingItGlobal, Build Our Kids Success (BOKS)

## Findings – Challenges and Enablers

Challenges and enablers to the development and implementation of UpLift were explored through the student and staff champion focus groups and the YEC and HPS Lead tracking forms and story sharing workshop (although only challenges were explored through the tracking forms). A summary of the findings is provided below.

### Challenges

#### ➤ Covid-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic was consistently discussed by the YECs, HPS Leads and the adult champions as a challenge to the work because it: limited YEC access to schools and ability to work with students and school staff; meant that the YECs needed to use virtual methods more often to engage students, which was felt to be less effective in some cases; pulled some of the YECs away from UpLift to do work related to the pandemic (e.g., assisting at vaccination clinics); prevented students from different grades coming together as students remained in cohorts with students in their grade; resulted in delays in spending grant funds, as UpLift was less of a priority; resulted in both student and school staff burnout and lack of interest in UpLift; and resulted in YECs not being invited to important meetings given the high priority placed on the pandemic and less time to address other issues/work.

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*The biggest challenge during this reporting period has been the evolution of our approach to work in the face of the restrictions put in place by the pandemic. When we returned after the holiday break, we had to take a step back because the students were not back in person. In addition, when students returned to class, we were limited to the number of visits per school/week, making it difficult to make regular visits (especially on stormy days). We then decided to change our approach to schools to a less in-person format and rather from a leadership role to certain school committees and champions. (YEC Tracking Form)*

*...there really weren't any challenges. Just working around times when kids could be pulled together, and when they couldn't. So, that's more of a Covid challenge than an Uplift challenge. (Staff champion focus group)*

---

Students explained the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their engagement through UpLift, noting that they were not able to form leadership teams or obtain input from the whole school while planning their grant due to restrictions around interacting with students in other classes (full classes were often engaged in the process instead of cross-grade leadership teams). Students also noted the disruptions to the flow of the grant planning process caused by the pandemic (e.g., different students participated at different times, delays in progress).

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*I think last year we were kind of in our own classrooms, and we couldn't really be around the other classrooms, so they [other students] weren't really involved.*

*I think it's just hard to remember because COVID kept stopping everything from going along. So, the whole process, we're not exactly sure from start to finish, to be honest... And then we had different students from different grades come out too, right? All different stages, so it was a big group of people.*

---

### ➤ YEC and HPS Lead Role and Capacity

The YECs, through the tracking forms and story sharing, consistently discussed a lack of capacity to effectively engage all schools given the large number of schools in the region and the fact that they have multiple roles (e.g., supporting student engagement, supporting staff champions, partnership building at various levels, supporting capacity building of schools and partners, etc.).

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*[the YEC] was so busy with engagements this fall [and] didn't feel [they were] able to keep up with some...other responsibilities. In particular, [the YEC] was not able to attend as many principal's meetings during this time. (YEC Tracking Form)*

---

The YEC staffing change in one region, with a new YEC entering the position in February, required a transition and orientation period that meant schools could not be served at maximum capacity, with YECs working together until they were comfortable dividing the work.

In the region with the HPS Lead model, lack of time for the HPS Leads to effectively support the UpLift process was also noted on the tracking forms. The issue is further complicated in this region where substitute teachers replace HPS leads for three days a month. The lack of availability of substitute teachers to replace HPS Leads in their teaching duties so they can work on UpLift and HPS work continues to be a barrier in this region (as reported in last year's evaluation report).

The YECs discussed the challenges in moving the work forward when the sustainability of the YEC position is uncertain.

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*Another challenge encountered during this reporting period was not particularly related to work, but to employment conditions. I find it difficult to work on sustainable solutions when the future of our position within this organization is so uncertain (YEC Tracking Form)*

---

The YECs (through the tracking forms and story sharing) described challenges related to a lack of clarity about the YEC role among various stakeholders including school staff and administration. In one region, this has resulted in the YECs being pulled away from UpLift work to support other activities that are generally out of scope of their YEC role.

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*Many schools believe that our title of Health and Wellness Advisor is more related to "counselling" than to recreation and projects. We receive several messages from health professionals who think we are guidance counsellors. In addition, the position is still misunderstood by many. In several schools, I help with [name] workshops instead of working on projects. (YEC Tracking Form)*

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## ➤ Financial Processes and Procurement Issues

The YEC tracking form in some regions and findings from the staff champion focus groups revealed that the process of administering UpLift HPS Student Action Grants was hindered by delays in procurement processes in the RCEs (e.g., time consuming process to obtain outdoor structures, the cost of some outdoor infrastructure which was variable between RCEs, challenges in connecting with procurement/financial services in some regions).

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*Due to Covid, changes in the financial team at the [RCE] and burnout, procurement processes were delayed...conversations...were delayed...and procurement for some schools did not happen until the very end of the school year...or summer. (YEC Tracking Form)*

*So, really the challenges came from I think, other areas. Trying to work with the Board, their policies, the tender process, and all of that. (Staff champion focus group)*

---

Also discussed as a challenge by some of the YECs was the fiscal year end of UpLift of March 31st (the year end for PHAC reporting) which posed problems as sometimes the grant funding was not spent by that date (due to delays caused by the pandemic or procurement as discussed above).

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*Fiscal year end was a challenge. The financial process has not been clear to date, but we think we have finally smoothed it out. We needed two schools to complete spending by March 31, 2022, but one school did not receive their equipment that they ordered in the Fall, so it didn't count as a completed purchase. A couple of other schools spent the majority of their grant but have a few hundred dollars remaining for outdoor landscaping/installation that is dependent on the ground thawing. The COVID-related delays also contributed to slower grant spending.*

---

In the story sharing, the YECs noted that relationships are integral to UpLift/HPS work and that it takes time to build trust with students and staff, which is another challenge faced by YECs who are often under pressure to develop the grant proposal and have the funding allocated within a short time frame. It was noted in the story sharing – “*from the beginning, there has been a tricky tension between whether we should prioritize the project/grant timelines or whether we should prioritize meaningful engagement*”.

In the focus group with students in one region, some participants described the delays as unpredictable and in some cases, students indicated that this is why they felt less engaged. While most students were understanding and patient with delays, they suggested starting the process earlier or choosing a project that takes less time, to increase chances of accomplishing it within the school year. Adhering to RCE regulations around safety limitations for outdoor play structures was also cited as a barrier that contributed to delays. Once grant projects reached the implementation stage, students in some focus groups indicated that they were unaware of or unclear of next steps, which likely contributed to feeling less engaged.

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*Start doing it earlier because some ideas you won't get until the next year...try not to choose anything that will take a long time, and you're close to the end of the year.*

---

## ➤ School Capacity and Competing Priorities

Discussed by a few staff champions in one region was the fact that there are competing priorities in schools and that teachers are busy, which can pose challenges for engagement of a broader range of school staff. The YEC and HPS Lead tracking forms and story sharing affirmed this finding as the YECs consistently described challenges in engaging some schools and school staff (noted by both YECs and HPS Leads) because of competing priorities and lack of time/capacity.

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*They [teachers] could see that the kids were doing great things, and they would ask them questions and things... but for them to uptake something, they didn't really uptake...They're busy. And they saw that we were doing it, so they're like, okay, good. If you're doing it, that's great. (Staff champion focus group)*

*There have been challenges in engaging schools... Several schools are simply not responding to our emails. We are very sensitive to the likelihood of staff burnout and COVID fatigue, so we aren't pushing too hard, but we are uncertain on whether several schools are still intending to complete projects this school year. (YEC Tracking Form)*

*The biggest challenge encountered during this reporting period is certainly to find academic champions among the school staff. It's hard to maintain a constant presence in all the schools served, so the ideal would be to have a champion in the school who can ensure the sustainability of our initiatives and bring the Healthy Schools philosophy to all projects, but all the staff are so overwhelmed with work. (YEC Tracking Form)*

---

Also consistently discussed through the YECs/HPS Leads tracking form were challenges in engaging students who were too busy or had competing priorities and therefore lacked time to participate in UpLift. Burnout among students (primarily due to the pandemic restrictions) was also described on some tracking forms.

---

*During this reporting period, the biggest challenge I encountered was finding adequate time with young people. It is difficult to take the time to meet with students outside of school hours, as they work or are involved in several sports/activities. During school hours, I try to make effective meetings during the lunch hour, but important members are often missing from the discussion and our solutions are often incomplete. If we meet during school hours, we often still miss students because they do not want to miss their class; teachers don't fully support it and students are afraid of missing something. We try to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of youth engagement in schools and give our champions additional resources to support their actions. (YEC Tracking Form)*

*During this quarter, I saw burnout in students and staff like I had not seen it before. Staff were much harder to contact, they did not follow through on their commitments, and it felt the students were totally checked out. (YEC Tracking Form)*

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In addition to teacher, other school staff and student engagement, the challenge of engaging parents and community volunteers was noted in one region.

## Enablers:

In the focus group with the staff champions and in the story sharing with YECs, participants were asked to describe enablers to moving the UpLift work forward, some of which are described throughout the report. The following is a summary of the enablers identified by staff champions and through the YEC story sharing:

- **The role of the YEC** and support they offer (described in more detail on pages seven and eight) (consistently noted by staff champions and YECs)
- **School readiness** to participate in UpLift including support from administration, having a staff champion, having support from other school staff, having interested students, and alignment with existing work in schools (e.g., linking to student electives) (consistently noted by the staff champions and YECs)
- **Partnerships and support from the RCE and other partners** who helped with project development and implementation and provide information about the unique context of each school community that is important for HPS and youth engagement work (consistently noted by staff champions and YECs)
- **Capacity building for staff champions** who are critical to moving the work forward, including capacity building for these individuals around HPS and youth engagement (noted by some staff champions and consistently by YECs) As noted in the story sharing with YECs - *this work is dependent on having people and engaging staff champions. Because we do not have much time to help build buy in, our task is more about finding people already bought in and supporting their growth as youth engagement facilitators.*
- **Networking and sharing with other schools** to learn about other work/projects underway and learn from others about what has and has not worked (noted by some staff champions)
- **The financial resources** provided through the UpLift HPS Student Action Grant noted by the YECs as *“a brilliant idea for opening doors for us”* (noted by a few staff champions and consistently noted by YECs)
- **Working with older students** who were described as “more mature” and ready to engage in the development of a grant and implementation of the project (noted by a few staff champions and YECs)
- **The process to authentically engage students and staff takes time** to build relationships and trust and it also takes time to support systems change. It is important to build a common understanding of what is required to facilitate system change and also strategize about how best to enable system change (noted by YECs)

## Findings – Outcomes

The following section presents the findings related to outcomes of UpLift and what has been achieved to date through UpLift and the work of the YECs.

### Outcome

#### *Increased awareness and understanding about HPS AND Increased knowledge, skills and confidence to support implementation of a HPS approach and how this approach supports child and youth health, well-being and student achievement*

Capacity building provided through UpLift is in the early stages (e.g., online education about youth engagement will be released in fall 2022; a workshop/modules are being developed through the Education Leadership Consortium of Nova Scotia [funded by UpLift] will be offered in 2022-23; opportunities for adult champions to network and learn from one another are being planned), and it is therefore understandable that in the focus groups with staff champions, participants did not describe an increase in awareness, understanding, knowledge, skills and confidence to support the HPS approach.

However, participants in all staff champion focus groups and some YECs (via tracking forms), noted how UpLift has helped to emphasize the importance of student engagement and in some cases helped to increase knowledge and skills in how to effectively engage students, while providing a model of how to engage students.

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*...it serves as a model for us to use when...we have a problem, or we're faced with a challenge, or data is telling us something, but we're not really sure what to do about it, or what our first steps would be. This was certainly a model about how to go from point A to like the other end of the scale and coming up with a solution that students feel like their voice has been heard. (Staff Champion Focus Group)*

*...Learning that it's important to listen to the kids. Not that I didn't know that, but it's important to listen to the kids because what we think and what they think are two totally different things. And I learned to give the kids some room to develop some of that...because look at what they did. It's amazing. (Staff Champion Focus Group)*

*Especially in the schools where I have been working... I see a positive link in the attitude of teachers to youth engagement. Especially when we are able to highlight the needs of students, teachers are more inclined to understand the needs of students and to support us in our ability to find solutions. (YEC Tracking Form)*

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In the adult champion focus group, some participants discussed how UpLift had increased their understanding about grants to support student health and well-being and built their confidence to seek funding to support HPS work.

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*I think it did help, for us, with the whole grant piece, and being able to see that one through as a relatively big project, that it made us more apt to want to try to look for grants. Whether it be a little 500 dollar grant that someone got the other day, or a bigger grant.*

*...the impacts, our full amount of money is going towards the one project, but the impacts are so much larger because of all of the other information that was brought. We also did the Rising Youth grant, and that's what led to the food hike. We've done a couple of the Positive Noise grants to get different equipment for in the school. Like I said, it's been a bigger learning process that way..*

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Consistently discussed in the focus groups with the staff champions was the knowledge and skills students had gained through UpLift such as how to write a grant, how to engage their peers, skills in information technology, the time and money it takes to do a project and other “life skills” – as one participant noted – *“that life skills piece of it is really beneficial”*.

Student focus group participants demonstrated an awareness and appreciation for HPS (indirectly, through naming what makes a healthy school), as well as knowledge and skills gained through the grant development/implementation process, including interpersonal skills (planning, negotiation, compromise), financial literacy, and understanding of real-world timelines (e.g., for procurement of outdoor structures).

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*Make sure you hear everyone's voices, and you don't just come up with your own ideas. Make sure you ask more than once. Like the school. Like how we did multiple surveys.*

*Well, the usage of money...Money's only limited, and we don't have unlimited money.*

*I feel like it'll be useful, especially the patience one because if you're waiting for a certain thing, if you're waiting for a grant or something, you have to be patient because it takes time.*

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## Outcome

### ***Strengthened student voice through UpLift to influence HPS***

Strengthened student voice through UpLift was demonstrated in a variety of ways during student focus groups including: a student group doing research and writing a letter to persuade the principal as to why their project funding should go toward purchasing infrastructure for plants; students saying they developed their confidence and skills in negotiation and compromise through the UpLift process; and students noting that ideas youth shared while planning the HPS UpLift Student Action Grant, but did not ultimately fund through UpLift, had catalyzed school administrators putting other funds toward bringing these ideas to life. Students often emphasized the importance of considering what was best for the whole school and hearing the voices of many students as part of planning.

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*You have to give your ideas and say, 'this is what I want'. And you have to be willing to take advice, and it can't always be your way. So, you have to sometimes go with the flow.*

*We're able to speak up a little bit more now because we just boosted our confidence. Even if it's just a little bit. I thought I was the exact same, but now I speak up a lot more.*

*This would help you with things in the future. And for the younger kids, it gives them a boost of confidence for when they're in grade six. They get to see this too and be like, oh, I remember this every single year up to this year, and now I get to run it myself.*

*I don't know if anyone else noticed, but when I went into the Zen room, I realized that recently they added all kinds of fidgets and more coloring books and new pencils and markers. And puzzles. So, it's all new stuff! And that all happened after the survey.*

*Student 1: Yes, we talked about that in the survey, and I think the principal listened to the survey and it opened up more. Student 2: You can tell that they have read it and that they know everything and put it into action.*

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In some cases, students said project ideas were pre-determined by adults involved (school staff, YECs). Students helping with these projects normally reported lower levels of engagement (investment, interest, ownership) than projects that were co-developed with students from the beginning.

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*So, it's not something we were like "Oh yes, we should do this", she's the one who put the idea there. The rest of us talked to them about it and then they did the rest.*

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In all focus groups with staff champions it was reported that UpLift had helped to strengthen students' voices to develop the HPS UpLift Student Action Grant and support project implementation. Further, focus group participants discussed how UpLift had strengthened student voice beyond the student action grant to other areas, noting how students felt engaged, empowered, included and saw that their voice mattered.

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*I think they felt very much like there was a vision, they were a part of that process, and they felt good about being a part of something for their own school. I think that was what I would see come from it.*

*I think it was empowering for the kids... We didn't really have any involvement...we just sort of stood back and let them work with [the YEC]. And I think that piece of empowering was really good for them. And they have a sense of ownership now, because they can say, we were part of the group that brought this to [name of school]. And that is a legacy...they're at the high school now, and they can tell other people what they did.*

*...they got to see that their voice counted, and they're getting to see something from beginning to end. And I do, I think that's really impactful in terms of citizenship and ground level engagement.*

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## Outcome

### *Increased meaningful leadership role for youth in HPS*

The adult champions consistently described how students took leadership roles in the UpLift project (e.g., developing the grant, seeking feedback from their peers, supporting grant implementation, etc.) including making decisions and taking ownership for the work. Some adult champions indicated that some students are proactively coming forward with ideas (rather than being asked) and, because of being involved in UpLift, place greater value on initiatives to support student health and well-being (e.g., looking after equipment, ensuring everyone can participate, etc.).

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*I would say the benefits of participating in Uplift...is the student group who worked with [the YEC] on the Uplift proposal. We had an opportunity within that class to work on some leadership skills. We saw several students take a leadership role. The kids were very engaged and interested...they had an opportunity to understand that they, as students, had value in terms of what we wanted to see.*

*They were a part of that process from start to finish. So, they got to see actual equipment being put in, and they were a part of the decisions, where does it go, what kind of equipment do we have? So, they were making real decisions that impacted them. So, I think for us, that was the biggest thing.*

*I think a really big thing in our building was just that our students felt more autonomy on some of the aspects of our various health promoting areas. Especially after the HPS survey that we put through that [the YECs] developed...and that's such a positive thing for kids to see—their autonomy when it comes to their building and their school.*

*...certainly, there're different types of leadership, and certainly we saw lots of different types of leadership from the kids that wanted to speak to classes, to the kids that when [the YEC] was in the room were the most vocal, to kids that in the weeks and months that have followed, keep checking in with [the staff champion]...[asking]... have we heard about the GaGa pit? Did we talk about the colors for the benches, that kind of thing? I see that as leadership. Those are kids who are very invested in this project, and who are waiting for that final bookend to happen.*

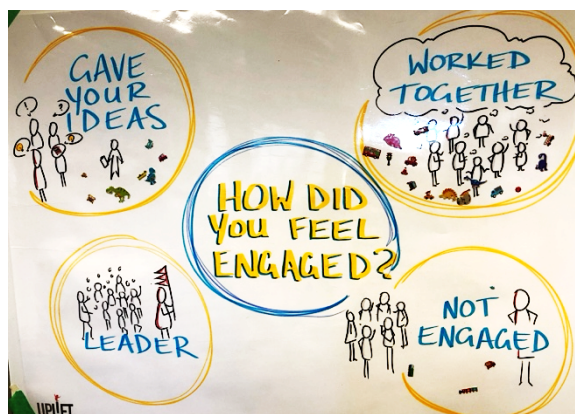
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In the focus groups, students often described collaboration, pride, and ownership of their projects. In exploring leadership, students were asked to place a sticker in one of four categories that best described their level of engagement in UpLift (“gave ideas”, “worked together”, “leader”, or “not engaged”). Table 6 provides the findings of the student reflections on their leadership role, with the majority of students (79%) describing their role as “worked together” and “gave ideas”. When discussing their responses, students indicated that they were reluctant to identify with the term “leader” to describe their role, noting that there was no one person who led the work, but rather they worked together in the development and implementation of the project.

**Table 4: Student Engagement Self Report**

Engagement Category:	Not Engaged	Gave Ideas	Worked Together	Leader
<b>Response Rate (n=231):</b>	10% (n=24)	30% (n=68)	49% (n=114)	11% (n=25)

Note: response rate is more than # of student Focus Group participants (N=215) because responses placed in-between categories were counted twice—once for each category the student identified with.



Students often identified adults who helped to guide the process as leaders, including the YEC and adult champions. It is apparent that many students involved in the UpLift grant process were leaders and decision-makers, as UpLift defines those terms, in spite of the fact that they did not identify as leaders themselves. Other students reported that giving ideas was not enough to make them feel engaged, if they were not involved in project implementation, and some students chose the “not engaged” category because they were absent, not interested in being engaged, or content with observing the process.

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*...we just decided what we thought we would need or what we wanted to make the school better. And then, we cut the non-realistic things and some things we were already doing.*

*I don't think there really was a leader. I think we all worked together as a group, and not anybody taking charge. We all were the leaders.*

*I felt like the leader in a good way, but also, we worked together.*

*We all shared, even the leaders got to share their ideas to find out what would be the best option.*

*I put it in 'not engaged' because... I feel like we really just put the idea there and other people took care of it. We didn't really talk... like everyone mentioned. So, that's why I put it in 'not engaged'.*

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## Outcome

### *Enhanced social and physical environments that support health and learning within schools and communities*

As previously described, the HPS UpLift Student Action Grants have supported enhancement to the social and physical environments; particularly in the areas of physical activity and mental health. The YECs (through the tracking forms and story sharing) and the staff champions describe the grants as catalysts for change and supporting a culture change within schools. Some staff champions discussed the work enabled through the UpLift grants and support from the YECs as legacy projects for their schools.

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*So, our [project] is a cooking club, for example, so that was one of the ideas that the school came up with. And I think that this grant has provided...fuel for those things. Because all of those things are really great ideas, but until you have a team that want to make a difference and do this for the kids and with the kids, so that the kids can use these skills to help themselves, that's what we're working towards.*

*...just connecting with the rest of their classmates, and the rest of the school. Ours was not so much a grant in the sense that kids were out getting exercise. It was more on the mental health side of things, which as it turned out, really became a huge issue for kids who felt isolated when our classes couldn't meet, when they were in cohorts, that kind of thing. It really, really helped with the mental health of everybody in the building.*

*...one of the things that kids were really proud of, is that this is going to be a legacy piece. This is something that they can point to as, I had a hand in that. And because I work with the grade nines, and they're with us for another three years...So, they talk about it in terms of a legacy project, and in terms of we're not done yet.*

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## Outcome

### ***Enhanced leadership for HPS at the local level***

In the focus groups with staff champions, participants discussed student leadership as well as knowledge and skills gained by students through their engagement with UpLift (e.g., planning skills, decision making, financial planning, health and well-being, etc.). The staff champions also discussed that teachers and other school staff have been engaged through the UpLift process, which is helping to build leadership for HPS within the school.

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*...our older students were thinking of things that weren't even going to benefit them. I think it was going to be strictly just for the younger students. But seeing them really take that on and be very selfless and more community [focused], it was awesome. (Staff Champion Focus Group)*

*...And it was really different for me as an educator to really step away from being the voice, to being a back voice or being a fly on the wall, was the best part when the student leaders actually became full leaders in that autonomy that they had. And that's where that legacy piece is another thing. Those kids are going to move through their school and it's their school. That's a really powerful educational experience. (Staff Champion Focus Group)*

*...any time you can be involved in a project of these magnitudes, be the teacher on staff that's doing that... it sets a great example for other teachers. And it shows them what you can do. Uplift is now...everybody in the building knows what Uplift is, and they're always thinking about what the next project might be. (Staff Champion Focus Group)*

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## Outcome

### ***Increased collaboration at the community level to support HPS***

In the focus groups with staff champions, participants were asked if UpLift and the work of the YEC had helped to build new partnerships and/or strengthen their partnership work. It was consistently noted by participants that they already had many community partnerships that they

had built over the years and that UpLift did not help with building new partnerships but did help to strengthen partnership work. Focus group participants described how UpLift and the HPS UpLift Student Action Grant had facilitated bringing family and school members into the school and connected the school and community.

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*I think it's nice to have opportunities to invite the guests in, and work alongside community members, and really like not just work in the school in the curriculum, but how we can expand the curriculum and make those connections. Provide real life experiences for [students].*

*...it will benefit the school for years to come, and also the community itself, because we positioned it in an area close to our soccer field. And so, you have community use of the soccer field or the playground...family could come and have a picnic in that area, and then turn around and use the playground. So, we were really hoping that it would be a real gathering space for multiple community groups.*

*...so we talked to our [Student Advisory Council] our [Parent Teacher Group], and involved them, and sometimes they helped pay for a little bit of stuff as well. Because we wanted the school grounds to be a place that was accessible, and that people wanted to come to before and after school, in the summer, or whatever.*

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In one region, a partnership mapping process was done to further explore collaboration. As previously described, the partnership mapping process included the creation of a regional network of partnerships and relationships followed by a survey with nine network members. The findings help to illustrate that the YECs in this region are central figures with many connections and several strong collaborative relationships. Through the survey, nine regional stakeholders reflected on their role with other members of the regional HPS network and completed their assessment of each working relationship. YECs were named as collaborators more frequently than anyone else in the regional network, indicating that they are key partners in work related to HPS at the regional level.

In addition to extensive relationships at the regional level, YECs connect many school-level partners into the regional map/network. Connecting school-level partners such as school champions for HPS and UpLift to the regional HPS network is a key and unique role of the YECs in supporting collaboration and relationship building within HPS work. The YEC's connections with school champions resulted in an additional 57 members being involved in the regional HPS network. Between school and regional connections, YECs are connected to between 28% (newest YEC) and 82% (original YEC) of the identified contacts within the network. This represents the most robust level of connection when compared to all other members of the network. Table 7 shows that YECs are working with partners from schools, community and regional systems at various relationship levels. The number of connections of the YECs within the network paired with the depth of collaboration at the regional level illustrates the central role that YECs have in supporting knowledge exchange (e.g., building awareness and understanding about HPS and youth engagement) and expanding the reach of HPS within the region.



**Table 5: YEC Network Connections by Type and Relationship Level**

	Networking	Coordinating	Cooperating	Collaborating	Total
School	6	22	20	11	59
Community	5	8	10	2	25
Regional	17	16	13	16	62
Total	28	46	43	29	146

## Outcome

### *HPS embedded in school processes and structures to support student health and well-being*

An outcome of the UpLift Partnership is to further embed HPS within provincial, regional and local processes (e.g., policy, curriculum, planning, student success planning, etc.) and structures (e.g., committees). In the focus groups with adult champions, respondents discussed how UpLift is aligning with other work to support student health and well-being and facilitating the embedding of HPS and youth engagement within the school including:

- Curriculum being enhanced within schools to include HPS (e.g., citizenship nine classes, leadership elective, other classes);
- Linking UpLift and HPS work to Student Success Planning;
- Incorporating youth engagement within school structures and processes (e.g., Student Advisory Council);
- Building and further catalyzing change within the school to support student health and well-being beyond the grant funding; and
- Providing a model to support student engagement and leadership development.

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*I think this has really shown that every teacher could add health aspects into their program...the Nova Scotia Active Smarter Kids, so we've brought them in... and even the outdoor learning...the partnership in the Uplift project has really shown myself and other staff that there are other areas to get to. So, I think it's raised the level of how we do things in our building.*

*...when we heard about Uplift we [discussed how we] could use that in our leadership elective. And so, it just worked perfectly...and that's how you could do that in any other class. You could do that in any other course really.*

*...seeing the teachers get excited about the [name of project] and thinking about the things that they can do...Because then it's not just a phys ed thing...to see the connections they're [teachers] making with science and social studies... to be able to use the things is actually more enjoyable and more fun.*

*...our SSP wellness lens has been really driven with this work, and with the outcomes of the work. So, that's something that will foster change throughout our school for the next X number of years, and potentially shape how we look at things going forward... It's just really, really important from that SSP lens.*

*It's also influenced, for example, how we're using our Student Advisory Council funds now. So, we've made a decision as an SAC that the majority of the funds that we spend all have to come from student proposals on things they'd like to see at the school.*

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The UpLift Partnership's vision is *a healthier Nova Scotia through a youth-engaged Health Promoting Schools approach*. In working towards this vision, a focus of the UpLift Partnership is to align with and enhance work that is currently underway to support the health and well-being of children and youth through effective implementation of the HPS model.

There are two models for student/youth engagement being implemented through UpLift: 1) the Youth Engagement Coordinator (YEC) model where staff are hired through UpLift funding and positioned within existing Health and Education structures; and 2) the HPS Leads model where UpLift resources support existing school staff to increase the number of days they have allocated to HPS work. This evaluation is focused on the YEC model, particularly within two regions that have been underway the longest.

This evaluation of UpLift in 2022 gathered data that describes several aspects of the work, including activities related to: school engagement and action; facilitating youth/student engagement; and building partnerships at the regional and community level. In addition, in two regions the evaluation assessed key outcomes associated with these areas of work. The conclusions are organized by these three components of work and include recommendations.

### School Engagement and Action

#### YEC Role

In September 2019, the UpLift Partnership was launched in two of the seven English language RCEs in Nova Scotia and in January 2021 two more regions were engaged (the provincial CSAP with the YEC model and another RCE with the HPS Lead model). In January 2022, a fifth region (fourth RCE) was engaged with two YECs hired.

Over the past three years, 69% (n=113) of schools in the five regions have been engaged in UpLift through both the YEC and HPS Lead models. The YEC model engagement approach includes a participatory and flexible approach that has been refined over time and includes: a process to help identify school readiness; meetings with and support of various stakeholders in the schools (e.g., administration, teachers and other school staff, students); data collection spearheaded by students to identify school needs and assets; and support for grant/project development and implementation.

The year 1 and year 2 UpLift evaluations suggested a lack of clarity around the role of the YEC among various stakeholders, which was not surprising given the community development and flexible approach to the work – which meant the role has been defined and refined over time.

Through the year 3 evaluation, clarity about the YEC role and key functions of the YEC position has emerged. The YECs work at various levels and have diverse roles as depicted below:



#### YEC Functions:

- Planning
- Communication
- Outreach and connection
- Navigation and problem solving
- Building capacity
- Facilitating student engagement and leadership
- Supporting advocacy

The evaluation findings reveal that the YEC role has enhanced HPS work through strengthening relationships between schools and existing HPS infrastructure as well as facilitating student engagement. Given that the YECs are limited term positions through the UpLift Partnership funding, there would be value in sustaining these positions, or some iteration of them, to continue to enhance HPS and student/youth engagement efforts in a way that is currently not incorporated in other regional positions.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Identify leadership structures and decision makers within the regions and province to share the UpLift evaluation findings with, including articulating the benefit of the YEC position and the value of investing in this role and associated work.
- Bring together key stakeholders supporting HPS within the province to identify strategies to sustain the YEC position and/or the work of the YECs.
- Develop a business case to illustrate the value and imperative of investing in positions to facilitate student/youth engagement within HPS work and student health and well-being; and ensure the business case builds on and aligns with existing government policy.
- When presenting to senior leaders and decision makers and developing the business case, align with government priorities such as goal #6 in the Action Plan for Health and the climate change agenda (e.g., the potential of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions through investment in Active Transportation to and from school).

#### **Staff Champions**

The findings from the HPSAT related to school staff engagement, in both the YEC and HPS Lead models, reveal an opportunity to engage and build capacity within schools to support HPS work

(e.g., providing training/education such as how to deliver physically active lessons, healthy eating education, training about the NS Food and Nutrition Policy; providing resources to promote student physical activity and movement, healthy eating and mental health; engaging teachers in HPS work such as menu planning).

A key element of the role of the YECs is to engage and build capacity of school staff, including teachers and administrators. The YECs have played an important role in connecting staff champions to HPS resources and potential funding opportunities. The YECs have helped to emphasize the importance of student engagement and increased knowledge and skills in this area among staff champions. The ability of the YECs to provide capacity building was limited given their many competing priorities, but the importance of this capacity building is recognized. Critical to supporting staff champions is providing opportunities and mechanisms for them to connect, network, share and learn from one another.

***Recommendations:***

- Explore the creation of communities of practice for HPS staff champions within regions across the province.
- Explore opportunities through Education and Health for a Summer Institute to help prepare HPS staff champions and those working to support student health and well-being in their roles.
- Identify opportunities (through existing mechanisms) to offer professional development about HPS and youth engagement to staff champions and other school staff.
- Continue to promote and highlight HPS and UpLift stories through existing mechanisms (e.g., existing newsletters, social media, etc.) to help inspire schools and other partners working to support student health and well-being.
- Explore the creation of Health Consultant positions within RCEs/CSAP to focus on supporting physical education and health teachers in embedding HPS within curriculum and other processes/infrastructure, with a focus on youth engagement.

## **Supporting Enhancements to the HPS Environment**

The HPSAT helped the YECs and HPS Leads to build an understanding of the current enablers and barriers to health and well-being within the school and to plan the HPS UpLift Student Action Grants. An assessment of the HPS environment in schools through the HPSAT revealed opportunities for improvement in specific HPS areas including: healthy living and practices related to physical activity/active schools; incorporating healthy eating, active schools and mental health within teaching and learning; and marketing of healthy food choices. As of June 30, 2022, \$360,000.00 in funding has been provided to 72 schools through HPS UpLift Student Action Grants to support enhancements to the physical and social environment, particularly in the areas of physical activity and mental health.

The grants were more than simply a funding opportunity and served as an effective catalyst to help schools prioritize student engagement and leadership and support a culture change. The findings reveal that the HPS student engagement model was aligned and/or embedded within curriculum outcomes, student success planning, and school structures such as Student Advisory Councils, which are viewed as key to sustainable and longer-term student health and well-being outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

- Strategize with provincial and regional staff working in Student Success Planning about how to use and potentially embed UpLift tools such as the HPSAT within Student Success Planning goals and strategies and ensure their alignment with existing data collection processes.
- Identify existing opportunities (e.g., professional development) to share strategies such as how to align and embed HPS within existing curriculum (e.g., Citizenship 9 curriculum, leadership electives, other classes such as math and science, etc.).
- Work with DEECD to identify opportunities to reach Citizenship 9 teachers to share learnings from UpLift and strategies for embedding HPS with Citizenship 9 curriculum.
- Work with the DEECD to explore the creation of curriculum guide supplements or other tools about how to embed HPS within existing curriculum to disseminate this work across the province and broaden the reach.
- Explore strategies to enhance capacity to develop and implement Active Transportation initiatives with community partners (e.g., Municipal Physical Activity Leaders (MPALs), municipal recreation departments, Regional Physical Activity Consultants (CCTH)); in town/village schools.
- Share the findings of the HPSAT related to Active Schools and Active Transportation along with the outcome findings with DEECD to help inform the Physical Activity Framework currently under development (e.g., invest in building capacity within schools, and supporting school and community partnerships).
- Explore enhancing funding for schools to support student-led projects to ensure continued engagement of youth in building healthy schools.

## **Youth Engagement**

As previously described, YECs and HPS Leads have played a pivotal role in prioritizing and enhancing student/youth engagement within HPS and other work to support student health and well-being. In exploring the YEC model in two regions it was found that the work of the YECs has helped to strengthen students' voices in HPS work and build student leaders for HPS within schools. This is a critical finding as the HPSAT revealed that there is opportunity to more effectively engage students in the creation of a healthy school (e.g., engaging students as leaders and decision makers in menu planning and healthy eating; engaging students as leaders and decision makers in physical activity and movement initiatives; ensuring students from diverse

backgrounds lead the organization of healthy school initiatives). The findings illustrate that students can and want to be meaningfully engaged in school life beyond conventional curriculum and teaching and learning. The value of engaging students and building student leaders for HPS extends beyond the school with the creation of community leaders who have knowledge, skills and confidence in a range of areas that will last a lifetime.

***Recommendations:***

- At a provincial level, develop a document that describes the model of youth engagement developed through UpLift.
- At a provincial level, use the youth engagement model to develop capacity building tools to support its implementation (e.g., youth engagement modules currently under development, module being developed through the Education Leadership Consortium of Nova Scotia).
- Identify audiences for participation in the youth engagement modules and other capacity building opportunities and promote the opportunities to these audiences (e.g., School Health Promoters from NSH and other staff working with schools, Child and Youth Care Practitioners from SchoolsPlus, Student Success Planning staff from the RCEs, etc.).
- Incorporate the youth/student engagement model developed through UpLift as a criteria/requirement to access funding provided to schools (e.g., funding provided through HPS innovation grants, funding provided through DEECD to support Healthy Schools).
- Explore opportunities to further support youth engagement in HPS work and student health and well-being including Regional Youth Summits that would be supported through Education and Health and other partners (e.g., CCTH).
- Build awareness and capacity among existing school structures such as Home and School Associations and School Advisory Councils about how to effectively engage students/youth.

## Partnerships

In addition to the work they do in schools, the YECs and HPS Leads also support building relationships and partnerships to facilitate system change. The findings reveal that the YECs and HPS Leads are working at various levels to build partnerships and have helped to facilitate schools strengthening their community partnerships. Both the YECs and HPS Leads discussed work to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion. The findings illustrate the work YECs are doing in some regions to connect with RCE/CSAP staff working in this area (e.g., Consultants of Student Equity) to help ensure inclusive approaches to student/youth engagement.

In one region, a partnership mapping process was done to explore the relationship building process and the evaluation findings reveal that the YECs are central figures within the regional HPS network with many connections and strong collaborative relationships. Further, the

partnership mapping findings reveal that YECs play a key and unique role in connecting school-level partners into the regional network and play a central role in knowledge exchange – helping to build capacity for HPS and expand its reach.

### ***Recommendations***

- Recognize the role of the YECs in connecting schools to regional HPS work (which was lacking prior to this position) by sustaining the positions and/or incorporating this role within other positions.
- Continue to support schools to strengthen relationships with community partners to support HPS including municipalities – given that a goal in the provincial Let’s Get Moving Strategy is for municipalities to work with key settings including schools to advance their work in supporting physical activity and movement.
- Continue to build partnerships with and engage RCE staff working to support equity, diversity and inclusion (e.g., Coordinator of African Canadian Education Services, Coordinator of Mi’kmaw Services/Education, Consultant of Student Equity) to help ensure inclusive approaches within UpLift and HPS work.
- Explore using the partnership mapping methodology and tools in other regions as it has been effective in helping to identify new and strengthened partnerships and for supporting planning work.