

Health Promoting Schools

Working together to foster healthy, inclusive, and vibrant school communities that enable everyone to learn, grow, thrive, and succeed.

These key messages were developed in collaboration with representatives from the UpLift Partnership, hosted at Dalhousie University Healthy Populations Institute; Nova Scotia Health; Conseil scolaire acadienne provinciale; the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. The purpose of this document is to create shared, consistent language around Health Promoting Schools (HPS).



What is HPS?

HPS is an evidence-based approach aimed at creating and sustaining supportive school environments that foster student health, learning, and well-being.

- HPS is not a singular program, but a health promotion approach that responds to the changing needs of students and school communities.
- HPS fosters healthy, accessible, inclusive, equitable, and vibrant school communities that support students, families, and staff.
- HPS focuses on the importance of students' overall well-being and its impact on academic achievement. HPS is also referred to as *Comprehensive School Health and Healthy School Communities*.

History of HPS

HPS is an evidence-based, internationally recognized approach that relies on a formal partnership between Public Health and Education to support students' education and health.

- HPS has been implemented in Nova Scotia for nearly 20 years [1].
- HPS has been globally championed for decades by the World Health Organization and is based on national standards [2]. Research shows that children and youth have a greater capacity to meet optimal health and learning outcomes in supportive school environments where their physical, social, and emotional needs are met.



How HPS is Implemented

HPS shapes conditions in the school environment to support student learning and health in an equitable, holistic, and integrated way.

- HPS utilizes data and best practices to support an evidence-informed approach for creating goals that address identified gaps.
- HPS is accomplished through various actions including partnership development, collaboration, youth engagement, and policy change.
- HPS approaches are built into policies and processes at multiple levels, including overarching standards for curriculum and inclusive education, as well as operational practices developed by school staff and students to support student wellbeing, inclusive and equitable classrooms, use of outdoor space, food menu planning, active transportation, etc.
- HPS includes access to youth-centered and culturally appropriate programs, services, and supports.



Benefits of HPS



HPS seeks to continuously enhance the climate, culture, policies, practices, and physical design of the school environment to support all students in achieving their optimal health and learning potential.

- HPS draws on existing school assets, addresses local issues, and identifies common solutions to support health and learning outcomes that are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.
- An HPS approach supports improvements in educational and health outcomes including academic achievement, quality of life, physical activity, healthy eating, and mental health [3].
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of HPS supports accountability, reflection, and evolution as needs and context change.

Collaboration in HPS

Collaboration and engagement are central components of HPS.

- HPS applies a “whole school approach”, engaging students, teachers, school administrators and staff, families, communities, and governments in planning, processes, and actions to foster healthy, accessible, inclusive, equitable, and vibrant school communities.
- HPS creates opportunities for students to identify and implement innovative solutions that support meaningful change in their school community.
- HPS provides a vision and a path for working together to create sustainable change benefitting school communities now and into the future.
- HPS is an ongoing process that requires ongoing, commitment, collaboration, and collective action among health, government, school, and community partners.



References:

1. Kontak, J., Caldwell, H., Quann, E., Hancock Friesen, C., Machat, S., Barkhouse, K., Kirk, S.F.L. Health Promoting Schools in Nova Scotia: Past, Present, and Future. *Physical & Health Education Journal*. Retrieved March 30th, 2024, from: [Health Promoting Schools in Nova Scotia: Past, Present, and Future | PHE Journal \(phec.ca\)](https://phec.ca/Health-Promoting-Schools-in-Nova-Scotia-Past-Present-and-Future-PHE-Journal).
2. Veugelers PJ, Maximova K, Dabravolskaj J, Honorato C. Canadian Standards & Indicators for Health Promoting Schools. Summerside, PEI: Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health; 2023.
3. Klassen D, Champion C, Montemurro G, Flynn J, Raine K, Storey K. It takes a community: exploring APPLE Schools' impact within and beyond school walls in Canada. *Health Promot Int*. 2023 Jun 1;38(3):daac050. doi: 10.1093/heapro/daac050. PMID: 35486099.

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