



# Quality School Health

Promoting  
**HEALTHY  
LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENTS**  
for all  
Canadian  
children  
and youth.



The **Quality School Health (QSH)** initiative was developed by the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) to promote healthy, active lifestyles in Canadian children and youth. **QSH:**

- Is ongoing and involves participation and collaboration from the entire school community - students, parents, school staff and community partners;
- Focuses on the health issues specific to the needs and concerns of each school community;
- Uses a *comprehensive approach* to school health that concentrates on the specific needs and concerns of the school community, including the school curriculum, the physical school environment, and the opportunities to involve community support and school services.

## The QSH Vision

Healthy learning environments where all children and youth are supported by the school community to make healthy lifestyle choices.

## Why Promote Health in Schools?

There is a natural relationship between health and learning. Healthy students learn better because they:

- Get their basic needs met;
- Attend school more regularly;
- Feel better about themselves; and
- Get along better with their peers, teachers and parents.

Successful learners are healthier because they:

- Develop the foundations for healthy physical, social and emotional development;
- Acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy lifestyle choices; and
- Develop the resiliency needed to face life's challenges.

Research shows that a comprehensive approach to school health:

- Has significant behaviour benefits, especially with risk behaviours that include poor nutrition, physical inactivity, smoking, unprotected sexual behaviour, and alcohol and drug use.
- Is a cost-effective form of prevention of health problems, to their eventual treatment.

## Getting Started -

### Bringing QSH to your School Community

#### 1 Bring Key Players Together - Students, Principals, Teachers, Parents, Public Health Professionals, and Other Community Service Professionals

- Organize a school health committee of interested people from relevant organizations. Ensure that this committee is inclusive and representative of your school community.

**TIP!** Start with already existing groups, such as student councils, parent councils and school councils; rally support from the local/regional health unit and other key community agencies, such as municipal recreation departments and service clubs.



#### 2 Gain Commitment

- Explain the general needs of a school community and the importance of school health planning. Make the case for Quality School Health.

**TIP!** Visit [www.cahperd.ca](http://www.cahperd.ca) to download ready-to-use QSH online tools and fact sheets.

#### 3 Develop a School Health Profile

- Look at the people that make up the school community. What cultures are present? What languages are spoken? What is the socioeconomic makeup?
- Determine your school community's strengths and weaknesses, as well as possible barriers and opportunities that may affect your school health planning.
- Find out about the specific needs, concerns and issues of your school community (for example high incidences of smoking, the need for breakfast programs, or safety issues).
- Draft the profile.

**TIP!** Conduct an environmental scan or needs assessment.

This includes reviewing school records (health, attendance, disciplinary); reading your local newspapers for issues affecting the school community (poverty, family violence, obesity, physical inactivity); and surveying the school community (written questionnaire, random interviews, invitation to submit feedback). Be sure to include all members of the school community (culture, socioeconomic factors, language).

#### 4 Create a Vision

- What does a healthy school community look like? How would students, teachers, parents and other members describe it? What programs and services would be in place?

**TIP!** Hold focus groups, retreats, or brainstorming sessions. Be inclusive and ensure that the vision is reflective of the views of all sectors of the school community.

#### 5 Develop a School Health Plan

- Identify priority areas and set short and long term goals. Be realistic, pick one or two school health issues as a start.
- Check these priorities and issues with other members of the school community. Are people willing to work together on these issues?
- Form partnerships with all sectors of the school community.
- Assign tasks.

**TIP!** When setting goals, use the SMART approach. Ensure that they are **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-limited (SMART)**.

#### 6 Take Action

- Launch the plan.
- Promote it to the entire school community. Use news releases, hold school assemblies, and make presentations to parent and community groups.
- Monitor progress and make adjustments as needed. Build some flexibility into your plan so that you can do this.
- Pay attention to opportunities for spin-off programs.

**TIP!** Celebrate your successes and milestones. This is one of the best ways to maintain motivation and cooperation. Consider Pep Rallies, school assemblies, dances, or play days.



#### 7 Measure Up!

- Assign an individual or team to take the lead on the evaluation.
- Define the indicators of *success*. What does it look like? Try to incorporate both subjective (e.g., personal testimonies) and objective (e.g., school records) measures. Look at how well your plan is being carried out (process), as well as its impact on the school community (outcome).
- Determine how you will gather subjective feedback (questionnaires, interviews, other methods).

**TIP!** Monitor your school health profile for changes in the school community. Have any new issues or needs developed since the initial assessment? Has there been a change in cultural makeup or special populations?

#### 8 Review and Adjust

- Conduct annual reviews. What did your evaluations report? How successful have your activities been? Are there better ways to deliver your programs? Have your priorities changed?
- Renew commitment and membership. Are members still committed to the purpose and objectives of the school health plan? Are there other members that can join the committee?

**TIP!** Review the entire school health plan every three years. Adjust the plan to account for any changes in the school health profile. Celebrate your accomplishments and acknowledge key participants.

**CAHPERD**  **ACSEPLD**

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE  
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