



# FOCUS ON HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Helping Students Learn, Grow and Succeed



## About Focus on Healthy Schools

Welcome to the third edition of *Focus on Healthy Schools*. This e-bulletin is part of the Ministry of Education’s Healthy Schools and Student Well-being Support and Monitoring Plan.

*Focus on Healthy Schools* provides updates on healthy schools policies, programs and promising practices underway across Ontario.

We hope you enjoy the e-bulletin – don’t hesitate to contact us with feedback or to join our mailing list. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to making schools healthier places for students to learn!

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## Motivating Students to Participate in Physical Activity

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, produced by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP), recommend that children and youth get at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Schools can make a significant contribution to physical activity, both during and outside of instructional time.

There are many benefits for children and youth to being physically active, including social (e.g., building relationship skills), emotional (e.g., improving self-esteem), physical (e.g., strengthening bones, lungs and heart), and cognitive (e.g., increasing concentration) (CSEP).

Research indicates that there is a decline in physical activity beginning at around age 13 and continuing into adulthood. Adolescence is a period of rapid change where thinking and reasoning capacities begin to mature and emotions are more intense ([Stepping Stones](#)). Students become more aware of their physical strengths and limitations and use this awareness to make decisions about their activity level as they enter into adulthood.

As a result, it is important for students to develop skills and strategies to build confidence and competence in a wide range of physical activities. Here are some ways schools can help students actively participate and maintain participation in physical activity:

**Focus on physical literacy** – establish a Health and Physical Education program that emphasizes the development of physical literacy: giving students the skills and ability to enjoy participating actively and with confidence in a variety of physical activities.



**Make activities fun** – plan activities that students enjoy and that include opportunities for positive social interaction.

**Understand student interests and offer choices** – build an understanding of why some students are not participating and include activities they are interested in. Offer a variety of activities to attract and maintain student interest.

**Invite student input/involvement** – provide opportunities for students to have a voice in activities and encourage them to take leadership roles in organizing and implementing activities.



## Check out these new resources!

### School Food and Beverage Online Module for Secondary School Teachers



Secondary Teachers

These modules are intended for secondary teachers. They provide an overview of the requirements of the School Food and Beverage Policy, including the teacher standards, classroom regarding experiences, healthy eating environment and an introduction to food and beverage preparation.

We hope you enjoy your learning experience.



This [online module](#) for secondary school teachers provides an overview of the requirements of the School Food and Beverage Policy. It includes nutrition standards, information about establishing a healthy eating environment and an introduction to food and beverage preparation.

### Serve It Up! Recipes that Meet the School Food and Beverage Policy Nutrition Standards for Ontario Schools.

This resource was developed for teachers in secondary schools where food preparation is part of the instructional program. Teachers and parents who are involved in food



preparation for school-related events at any school may also find *Serve It Up!* to be a handy resource. *Serve It Up!* will be coming to schools this fall.

Find these and other healthy schools resources at: [www.ontario.ca/healthyschools](http://www.ontario.ca/healthyschools).

## Mindful Messages for Healthy Eating:

Educating students about healthy eating translates into healthier citizens, contributing to a reduction in chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. At school, there are many opportunities for students to learn about healthy eating: through classroom instruction, by growing food, through food preparation, discussions and school events.

Learning about healthy eating is vital to a student's well-being; however, educators need to be sensitive to discussions involving eating disorders. Sometimes young people become very preoccupied with food, weight and body image in a way that interferes with their school performance, social life and health. This preoccupation may be a sign of disordered eating (CYMHIN-MAD, 2011).

Research shows that 30% of Canadian girls and 25% of boys aged 10 to 14 engage in restrictive dieting, despite being within a healthy weight range (McVey et al., 2005).

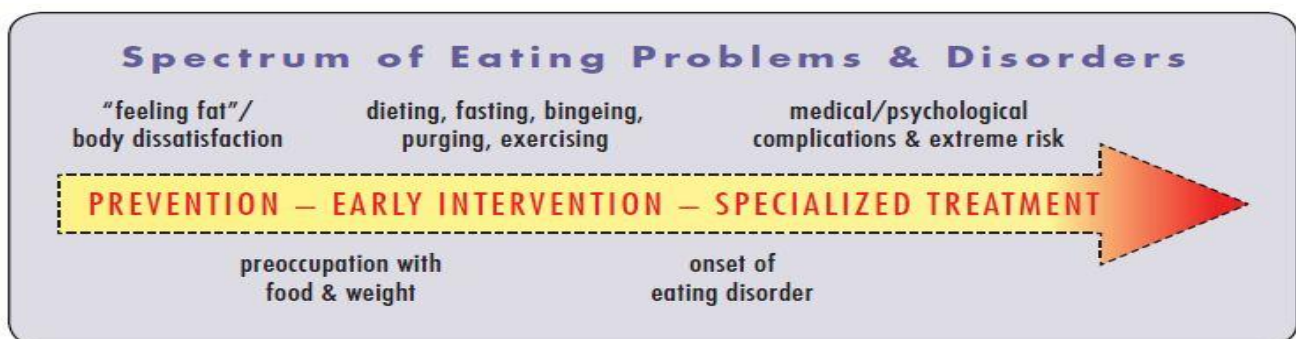
The Ministry of Education recently released [Supporting Minds](#), an educator's guide to promoting mental health and well-being. Section 5 of the guide discusses "Eating and Weight-related problems." It recommends:

- being aware that raising these topics can unintentionally trigger weight and shape preoccupations;
- emphasizing healthy eating and active living for all, instead of focusing on weight;
- ensuring that adolescents of all shapes, sizes and appearance are equally valued and respected;
- discouraging dieting in a non-judgemental way and encouraging and modeling balanced eating from a wide range of foods;
- incorporating activities into the classroom that build self-esteem and confidence for students; and
- introducing students to diverse images of beauty and health. Encouraging discussions about conventional notions of beauty.

### References

CYMHIN-MAD Child and Youth Mental Health Information Network. (2011). *Making a difference – An Educators' Guide to Child and Youth Mental Health Problems*. 4th ed.

McVey, Tweed, & Blackmore. (2005). Correlates of weight loss and muscle-gaining behavior in 10- to 14-year-old males and females. *Preventive Medicine, 40*: 1–9.



Source: Gail McVey, unpublished materials prepared for the Ontario Community Outreach Program for Eating Disorders. Adapted with permission from Friedman, 1999.

## The Ontario Government's Concussion Web Portal

This new concussion web portal has evidence-informed concussion resources for educators, coaches, parents, sports officials, athletes and health care providers. The web portal provides the most up-to-date information about preventing, identifying, and managing concussions.

The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care worked in partnership to develop this resource.

To access the portal, visit [www.ontario.ca/concussions](http://www.ontario.ca/concussions).

## Changes to the Immunization of School Pupils Act

Have you heard? There have been changes to Regulation 645 under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA):

- In addition to clarifying the specific data elements schools/school boards are required to disclose to Public Health Units (PHUs), schools and school boards must now provide Ontario Education Numbers (OENs) to Medical Officers of Health, who will use the OEN to more accurately match immunization records to student records.
- Starting July 1, 2014, proof of vaccination for three new diseases will be needed for students to attend school: meningococcal disease, pertussis and varicella.
- Panorama, an integrated public health information management system, will be rolled out in PHUs and school boards between fall 2013 and August 2014. Panorama is designed to manage, control and respond to infectious disease outbreaks and provide a provincial immunization repository. Eventually, it will replace the paper-based "yellow card" for tracking students' immunization history.

These regulatory amendments will result in better protection of Ontario's students and a safer school environment by reducing the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, reducing the number of school suspension notices and the number of days that students miss from school, and modernizing the public health information management system.

To learn more about these changes, contact your Regional Office.



**"Health and education success are intertwined: schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students are not healthy."**

*Story, Nanney, and Schwartz, 2009<sup>1</sup>.*

## Strategies for Success from the Healthy Schools and Student Well-Being Support and Monitoring Plan

As part of the Healthy Schools and Student Well-Being Support and Monitoring Plan for the 2012-13 school year, Ministry of Education staff conducted 12 school board visits, two per region. These visits provided important insight into the implementation of healthy schools and student well-being policies and programs. Based on the information gathered, school boards and schools identified the following strategies as key to successfully implementing Healthy Schools policies and programs:

1. Develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to student well-being using the Foundations for a Healthy School framework as a guiding resource.
2. Build leadership capacity through a shared sense of responsibility and goals established in their Board Leadership Development Strategy (BLDS).
3. Create regional coordination and community partnerships that support school boards and schools with essential resources and materials.
4. Engage parents and students in the initial planning stages of policy/program implementation, and all stages thereafter.
5. Establish goals and measurable outcomes related to well-being that are well defined and understood by all staff.

For a copy of the full report, write us at [healthy.schools@ontario.ca](mailto:healthy.schools@ontario.ca).

<sup>1</sup> Story, M., Nanney, M.S., & Schwartz, M.B. (2009). Schools and Obesity Prevention: Creating School Environments and Policies to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. *Milbank Quarterly*, 87(1), 71-100.



## In Focus: Leveraging Partnerships to Support Local Champions – The Champlain Declaration and Healthy Schools 2020 Program



One of the keys to making progress on student health and well-being is identifying and leveraging local champions. In the Champlain Region, health and education partners are working

together to establish a healthy learning environment. They are doing so by giving schools tangible supports to increase healthy eating and physical activity among school-aged children.

In 2006, the University of Ottawa Heart Institute founded the [Champlain Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network](#) (CCPN). The CCPN consists of partners from public health, primary care, hospitals, academia, education and the community.

CCPN partners were inspired by a local challenge: the prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Eight in 10 Champlain residents live with one or more CVD risk factors, including smoking, high blood pressure, unhealthy weight, physical inactivity or diabetes. The good news is that many of these risk factors can be addressed. Schools are an important influencing environment that can help to equip children and youth with essential skills to lead healthy adult lives.

In April 2009, nine Directors of Education and four Medical Officers of Health signed the [Champlain Declaration: A Call to Action for Physically Active & Healthy Eating Environments in Schools](#). The Declaration formalized the commitment of health and education partners to take collective action on a shared vision and priorities for the more than 500 schools in the region.

The [Healthy Schools 2020](#) initiative supports the implementation of the Declaration. The program aims to provide tangible tools and resources to help school communities make positive changes in their school environments. Health and school board partners take part in a steering committee that sets priorities for action.

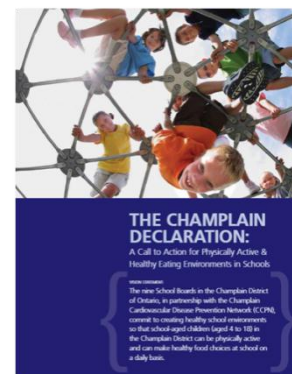
Healthy Schools 2020 is grounded in a whole-school or Comprehensive School Health (CSH) approach, as defined in the Ministry of Education's [Foundations for a Healthy School framework](#). The initiative is also aligned with the recommendations of the [Healthy Kids Panel](#) and [2011 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth](#).

The first phase of Healthy Schools 2020 (2010-2012) focused on improving school nutrition environments with an emphasis on catered lunch programs, fundraising and classroom rewards. A series of school board workshops were co-hosted with public health. As well, resources were tailored to meet local needs to help school communities understand and implement the nutrition priorities, including the Ministry's School Food and Beverage Policy (Policy/Program Memorandum No. 150). To date, more than 1,300 educators and parents have been reached.

**"The emphasis is on the school environment. We are trying to make it easier for everyone to adopt healthy behaviours."**

*Laurie Dojeiji, CCPN Manager, Health Promotion*

Looking ahead, CCPN's 2013-2016 Strategy and Action Plan launches this fall with a renewed commitment to the Healthy Schools 2020 program. In addition to supporting healthy eating, the three-year plan will focus on increasing physical activity opportunities. These include, specifically, School Travel Planning (walking and cycling to and from school) and Active Play (physical activity and play in schools). There will also be a stronger emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, and making the link between physical activity, healthy eating and student success.



For more information, please visit [www.healthyschools2020.ca](http://www.healthyschools2020.ca) or contact Laurie Dojeiji at [ldojeiji@ottawaheart.ca](mailto:ldojeiji@ottawaheart.ca).

### Do you have a story to share?

We always want to hear about promising practices – whether school-based or a board-wide project, a partner-led campaign or another innovative approach.

If you have an idea for a future *Focus on Healthy Schools* article, please email [healthy.schools@ontario.ca](mailto:healthy.schools@ontario.ca).