



The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) and the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) have been working with their partners since 2005 to support the adoption of a health promoting schools (HPS) approach in school communities all across Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's HPS approach includes healthy eating, physical activity, sexual health, tobacco reduction, addiction, mental health, injury prevention, and a range of other health issues within the school setting.

Leadership

- After eight years of encouraging a health promoting schools approach, the provincial Health Promoting Schools co-chair committee, with representatives from Health and Education, gathered to consider an updated vision and strategic plan for comprehensive school health in NS. The new vision is: Children and youth thrive in healthy school communities.
- In June 2012, the provincial government announced Thrive! a plan for a healthier Nova Scotia. This strategy uses policy to create environments that support healthier choices with a focus on good nutrition and physical activity. Although the scope of HPS is broader than this plan, many of the actions within Thrive! are supported by the work of HPS. To view some video clips which capture aspects of a health promoting school environment, go to <https://thrive.novascotia.ca/stories>
- The Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools was launched September 2006 with a three year implementation schedule. This policy is intended to increase access to and enjoyment of health promoting, safe, and affordable food and beverages served and sold in all Nova Scotia schools. EECD and DHW review the policy and food and beverage standards biennially. The policy is currently under review and the revised Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools will be ready for release in the late 2013-14 school year.

Knowledge Development and Exchange

- During the 2012-13 academic year, HPS schools from the Tri-Country Regional School Board (TCRSB) participated in a data collection process to identify priorities. School based teams create goals specific to their school's needs with complementary action plans that assist schools in achieving their goals in a supportive environment. As a result schools have identified nutrition, physical activity, mental health, safety at school, student engagement, leadership, and healthy fundraising as priorities or areas of concern.
- In an effort to address each area TCRSB HPS, in conjunction with their community partners, has assisted in the development of HPS Student Action Team Workshops. During these workshops students attended various sessions that relate to comprehensive school health and are related to their school's action plan. Sessions included personal hygiene, bullying, nutrition, relationship building, physical activity and "what's in your community" programming.

- The creation of the TCRSB Substance Abuse policy was the result of further partnership work that again brought health, education and the community together to support the health and welfare of students, staff and community. HPS in conjunction with Southwest Health District Health Authority Addiction Services Division and the Tri County Women's Centre worked tirelessly to construct a policy that is based in current research and best practice.

Capacity Building

- Nourish Nova Scotia was established as a registered society in 2012 by community stakeholders, with support from EECD and DHW. It was created to facilitate support and collaboration for food and nutrition programming, and to attract funding sources beyond government. The motivation behind the organization is pure and simple: children and youth who eat well-balanced and healthy meals have better health and education outcomes. For more information, www.nourishns.ca
- SchoolsPlus believes schools are the hubs of their communities offering convenient and welcoming places for services to be delivered to students and families. As part of the NS Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, 12.5 mental health clinicians have been funded to work in SchoolsPlus sites. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development worked with Dr. Stan Kutcher to offer a mental health curriculum and GoTo training in all schools. GoTo educators can identify students who have high probability of having a mental health disorder, link students to supports and provide on-going help. For more information, <http://schoolsplus.ednet.ns.ca>
- The Halifax Regional School Board and Capital District Health Authority have expanded Youth Health Centres by supporting the creation of Centres in junior highs. Mental health intervention and promotion has been key work, encompassing teacher professional development and GoTo training with teachers, and the creation of a website to provide school support. The Youth Project - providing support and services to youth regarding sexual orientation and gender identity - worked with guidance counsellors to support students who have identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, or questioning.