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Message from the Executive Director

You will notice a fresh new appearance to our newsletter this month, consistent with our recently updated web site. We have also changed the newsletter from a monthly to a bi-monthly publication with two supplementary special editions each year to highlight work being done by the Consortium in our priority topic areas.

We are very pleased to publish this first special edition which focuses on developments in school health promotion at the global level. It is particularly fitting to feature this topic following our involvement in two very important international events held recently in Canada.

From June 5th to 8th the Consortium welcomed more than 100 international delegates to Vancouver for the **World Health Organization's (WHO) Technical Meeting on Building School Partnerships for Health, Education Achievements and Development**. The meeting, co-hosted by the Consortium and the World Health Organization, presented a rare opportunity to learn from the experiences of other school health professionals from over 30 different countries and United Nations agencies. Many delegates expressed great interest in learning more about Canada's unique approach to addressing comprehensive school health through our systemic change efforts.

The outcome of the technical meeting is a **Closing Statement and Call to Action** that provides global direction for those working in the field of school health promotion and their respec-

tive governments. For us in Canada, it validates much of what we are already doing and broadens the potential for creative synergies at the global level with our expanded network of international contacts.

Directly following the WHO meeting, the Joint Consortium once again had an opportunity to share our distinctive model with the international community at the **19th World Conference of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education**, June 10th- 15th. The full **power point presentation** can be viewed on our web site and highlights from it are featured on pages 2 through 4 of this special edition.

While we are bolstered by the international interest and feedback we received in Vancouver, there is still a great deal of work ahead of us. It is easy for us as individuals who are passionately committed to comprehensive school health to demonstrate that we are working collaboratively with our like-minded counterparts in other ministries and disciplines. It is a very different matter to make this shift at a systemic level. And this is the key mission of the Consortium: *to act as a catalyst in building the capacity of health and education systems to work together to promote the health of children and youth in the school setting.*

Each step we take moves us closer to achieving that capacity here in Canada, and to strengthening the school health promotion movement worldwide.

-Claire Avison

What is Comprehensive School Health?

Comprehensive School Health (CSH) is an integrated approach to health promotion. It recognizes that many different factors affect the health and well-being of students, including the physical condition of the home, school and community; the availability and quality of

health services; economic and social conditions; and the quality and impact of health promotion. The Comprehensive School Health framework combines four main elements: instruction; support services; social support; and a healthy environment.

The framework encourages and depends on active partnership between everyone who can and should contribute to the well-being of students, including teachers, parents, peers, health professionals and the community.

Excerpted from the Public Health Agency of Canada website.



The Global Context for Comprehensive School Health

United Nations Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, 191 countries adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which led to the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs). The MDGs are a set of specific targets for poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships to be reached by 2015.

UNESCO Education for All

The *World Conference on Education for All* held in Thailand in 1990 established a global commitment to significantly reduce illiteracy by ensuring that quality primary education is accessible to all children. A second conference held in 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, reaffirmed this commitment to achieving *Education for All* by the year 2015 as a significant contribution to the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was mandated as the lead agency.

World Health Organization (WHO) Global School Health Initiative

The World Health Organization is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. In 1995, WHO convened an Expert Committee on Comprehensive School Health to recommend policy measures and actions that would encourage educational and

health institutions to coordinate their efforts to promote health through schools. As a result, the *Global School Health Initiative* was launched in 1995, to mobilize health promotion and education activities at the local, national, regional and global levels through four key strategies:

1. Research to improve school health programs:

Evaluation research and expert opinion is analyzed and consolidated to describe the nature and effectiveness of school health programs.

2. Building capacity to advocate for improved school health programs:

Technical documents are generated that consolidate research and expert opinion about the nature, scope and effectiveness of school health programs and provide guidance on integrating key health issues into successful school-based programs.

3. Strengthening national capacities:

Collaboration between health and education agencies is fostered and assistance is given to countries to develop strategies and programs to improve health through schools.

4. Creating networks and alliances for the development of health-promoting schools:

Various regional networks for the development of Health-Promoting Schools have been established as well as a global alliance which includes Education International, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Education Development Center, UNESCO, and others.

Comprehensive School Health in Canada

Healthy Living Strategy

In 2003 Health Ministers from the federal, provincial and territorial governments developed an Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy aimed at improving the health of Canadians by supporting them in making positive health choices. It is an umbrella framework

under which a number of specific health issues are being addressed such as healthy eating, physical activity and their relationship to healthy weights.

Joint Consortium for School Health

In response to the Healthy Living Strategy, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada proposed an intergovernmental partnership and action plan to address a variety of health, social and learning related problems of school-aged children and youth. From this proposal, the Joint Consortium for School Health was formed in 2005.

Consortium members include the federal government (represented by the Public Health Agency of Canada) and all provinces and territories except Alberta and Quebec, with BC acting as the lead province by providing direction and overseeing the Consortium's Secretariat.

The Consortium facilitates collaboration at the provincial, territorial and federal government levels and encourages and supports collaboration on the front lines by providing political and financial support from decision-makers and sharing data to mobilize effective interventions.

Each participating jurisdiction is represented by senior level members from both the health and education sectors to create the sense of joint ownership, political support and credibility. The impact of the provincial / territorial structures filters into the front lines via school districts and schools, regional health authorities and local health departments, to principals, public health nurses and students.

Here are some examples of successful partnerships at the provincial/territorial level.

New Brunswick

The province has built on the platform of the *Healthy Learners in Schools Program* to support system integration and alignment including leveraging new resources. The Comprehensive School Health model has acted as a common framework to plan, fund

and implement initiatives from the Ministries of Wellness and Education and non-government agencies at the provincial, regional and local levels.

Prince Edward Island

To support the work of the provincial *Strategy for Healthy Living*, which is focused on healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco reduction, an intergovernmental committee representing the Departments of Health, Education, Community and Cultural Affairs, and Social Services and Seniors has been formed. This committee supports collaboration and communication between departments in relation to the Strategy, and has great potential to support a variety of school health efforts across the province.

Ontario

The Joint Consortium for School Health provided the impetus for high-level systems change that is establishing a culture of collaboration between the health and education sectors, including the introduction of the *Healthy Schools Recognition Program*. This new initiative challenges schools to commit to health and recognizes all schools that introduce new healthy activities. The program was developed through consultation with a newly created, government-led working table that brings together stakeholders in Health and Education for the first time.

Manitoba

The *Healthy Schools* initiative is a partnership between Manitoba Health/Healthy Living, Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth, and Healthy Child Manitoba (which is a partnership of all departments connected to children). Overall direction is provided by the Healthy Schools Advisory Committee made up of approximately 30 representatives of government and non-government organizations. Through an extensive provincial consultation process the province developed a *Healthy Schools Framework* to guide educa-





tors, health professionals, parent councils and others as they work towards comprehensive school health in their communities.

Saskatchewan

New work to enhance comprehensive school health is building on two existing policy frameworks which are both supported by Saskatchewan Health and Saskatchewan Learning. *SchoolPlus* is about creating a shared responsibility for the well-being and education of children and youth to give them what they need to be successful in school and in life. *Healthier Places to Live, Work and Play: A Population Health Promotion Strategy for Saskatchewan* outlines the vision, framework and priority issues for population health promotion work in the province. Health regions develop intersectoral action plans which address all ages, with the strongest focus being on children and youth.

Northwest Territories

In a jurisdiction with limited resources, a small population and a high proportion of aboriginal citizens, three departments (Education, Culture and Employment, Health and Social Services, and Municipal and Community Affairs) collaborate under the banner of the Healthy Choices Framework on a coordinated healthy eating and physical activity initiative and its incorporation into schools.

Yukon

Attendance at the School Health Conference in June, 2006 was a landmark event for school health in Yukon. The Yukon delegation included many representatives from both government

and non-government organizations in the education and health fields. Jurisdictional strategy sessions at the conference resulted in the formation of the *Yukon School Health Advisory Committee* (YSHAC) made up of health professionals, educators and administrators representing both government and non government organizations. The mandate of the committee is to "help create the environments where Yukon school communities can maximize opportunities for student health and learning."

British Columbia

The *Healthy Schools* initiative, jointly mandated, funded and staffed by the Ministries of Health and Education, has made great strides toward integrating health promotion into the education sector. It has created the Network of Healthy Schools, an education driven Network of Performance Based Schools linking schools across BC in the use of performance based assessment strategies. BC's Healthy Schools Network partners with the Directorate of Agencies for School Health to connect schools to local services and resources that contribute to student health and well being. BC's Healthy Schools Network recently piloted the Ministry of Education's *Creating Health Futures*, BC's Healthy Schools Network Assessment Tool, and is currently developing healthy living performance standards focused on enhancing health literacy through classroom teaching.

Portions of this article were excerpted from the Joint Consortium's presentation to the 19th World Conference of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education in June, 2007.

International Resources for Advocacy, Monitoring and Assessment

WHO Information Series on School Health

Each document in this series provides arguments that can be used to gain support for addressing important health issues in schools. The documents illustrate how selected health issues can serve as entry points in planning, implementing, and evaluating health interventions as part of the development of a Health-Promoting School. [Click here](http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/resources/information_series/en/index.html) (http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/resources/information_series/en/index.html) to view the full list of documents in the series.

WHO School Health Expert Committee Reports

The WHO *School Health Expert Committee Reports* are aimed at strengthening international, national and local efforts that increase support for school- and youth-focused prevention programs. They also provide advocates with guidance about specific actions that can be taken to improve such programs.

WHO Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS)

The *Global School-based Student Health Survey* uses a self-administered questionnaire to obtain data on young people's health behaviour and protective factors. The survey allows countries to monitor trends and to plan, develop and implement appropriate policy and program responses to

address their critical health needs.

WHO/EDA Rapid Assessment and Action Planning Process (RAAPP)

The *Rapid Assessment and Action Planning Process* (RAAPP) is an evidence-based method that equips ministries of education and health and other national organizations to assess and improve their capacity to promote health through schools. It includes methods, instruments and professional development activities to prepare in-country teams to collect their own data and engage in a customized action planning process.

FRESH Toolkit

FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health) is a basic framework for comprehensive school health programming built around the collective expertise of UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, and numerous other international agencies. Partnerships between education and health, along with community partnerships and student involvement in program development and evaluation are all fundamental strategies of the framework. The *FRESH Toolkit* consists of educational materials such as lesson plans and checklists, all drawn from the existing resource materials of partner agencies.

