
TO:	Board of Health
MEETING DATE:	November 1, 2017
PREPARED BY:	Melissa Potwarka, Acting Manager, Healthy Communities and Public Policy
APPROVED BY:	Rita Sethi, Director, Community Health and Wellness
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Key Points

- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health's (WDGPH) school health portfolio was restructured to prioritize the development of health promotion strategies at a school board level.
- The vision of the school health promotion portfolio is to support the Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph (WDG) school sector in creating environments that promote optimal health and well-being for children and youth.
- WDGPH partnered with five local libraries to transfer ownership of WDGPH's school resource collection to make them more accessible to schools and community groups.
- WDGPH supported seven Healthy Schools during the 2016-2017 school year: four Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) schools and three Wellington-Catholic District School Board schools (WCDSB).
- Happy Healthy Families (HHF) is a community project, supported by WDGPH that engages all sectors of the community to improve the health and well-being of Wellington North residents.
- WDGPH is working with the Mental Health Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention (MHSMAP) working group of the Dufferin Coalition for Kids (DuCK) to develop and pilot test a universal substance misuse prevention and mental health promotion program for schools.

Strategic Directions & Goals

Building Healthy Communities - We will work with communities to support the health and well-being of everyone.

- We will enhance our understanding of the local needs and priorities of the communities we serve and develop programs and services in response to those needs.
- We will promote healthy environments that support physical and mental health and well-being.

Service Centred Approach - We are committed to providing excellent service to anyone interacting with public health.

- We will improve access to public health programs and services while enhancing the client experience.

Operational Plan Objectives

The board of health shall work with school boards and/or staff of elementary, secondary and post-secondary educational settings using a comprehensive health promotion approach, to influence the development and implementation of healthy policies, and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments to address the following topics: healthy eating, healthy weights, comprehensive tobacco control, physical activity, alcohol use and exposure to UV radiation. This is operationalized by:

- Addressing risk factors for chronic diseases through curriculum supports, addressing requests for information or resources, advocating for healthy policies, and supporting Healthy Schools.
- Supporting youth and young adult engagement for tobacco prevention strategies, and tobacco school grants.
- Supporting schools/school boards in healthy eating nutrition policy development and collaborating with schools to distribute parent education materials regarding healthy nutrition
- Supporting Active and Safe Routes to Schools regionally through the development of school transportation plans and policy development/built environment changes to the school environment.

Summary of OPHS Program Requirements

OPHS Program: Chronic Disease Prevention

Goals:

- To reduce the burden of preventable chronic diseases of public health importance.
- To enable all children to attain and sustain optimal health and developmental potential.
- To enable individuals and families to achieve optimal preconception health, experience a healthy pregnancy, have the healthiest newborn(s) possible, and be prepared for parenthood.

Strategy:

- Health Promotion and Policy Development
- Research and Knowledge Exchange
- Population Health Assessment

Requirements:

N/A

Accountability Indicators:

N/A

Performance variance or discrepancy identified:

- No

Highlights

In the spring of 2016, WDGPH's school health portfolio was restructured to prioritize the development of health promotion strategies at a school board level. This change was in response to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's changing priorities for school based programs and by the findings of a review of WDGPH's school health program.¹ Prior to this change, school health was under the Vaccine Preventable Disease team, formerly known as the School Health Team, where public health nurses were assigned to every elementary school to provide immunization and health promotion support. In 2016, the school health promotion portfolio was transferred to the Healthy Communities and Public Policy (HCPP) team, while the school immunization program remained with the Vaccine Preventable Disease team.

The vision of the school health promotion portfolio is to support the WDG school sector in creating environments that promote optimal health and well-being for children and youth. This includes providing health promotion supports to teachers and staff at the school-level and collaborating with school boards to develop comprehensive board-level health promotion strategies and interventions as part of a population approach. The following outlines a summary of the HCPP team's new school health promotion model and the resulting projects implemented between June 2016 and June 2017.

Summary of School-Level Work

School Health Curriculum Resource Line

The School Health Curriculum Resource Line was developed to respond to school health promotion requests. The purpose of the intake line is to provide school staff with credible information and resources to support their instruction of the 2015 Health and Physical Education (H&PE) curriculum and planning school health initiatives. The resource line was launched in August 2016. As of June 2017, the resource line received 123 requests. The majority of requests were from elementary schools (85.4%) and teachers (65.0%). The most commonly requested topics were healthy eating (24.4%), personal safety (19.5%) and sexual health (15.4%). The most common type of request was for resources (e.g., sample activities and kits) (54.5%), followed by event requests (19.5%). This information will serve as baseline data for future school years.

A process evaluation was conducted with HCPP team members, who are responsible for responding to resource line requests. The evaluation assessed the strengths and challenges of implementing this new service. Staff felt the resource line was successfully implemented and responding to requests was manageable with existing workloads. An evaluation to collect school staff feedback on the resource line is planned for the spring of 2018.

Curriculum resources and library collections

The HCPP team conducts an annual review of all school resources, including electronic sources, DVDs and kits, to ensure they align with the H&PE curriculum and current evidence. Interactive kits and DVDs are loaned to schools to supplement health curricula instruction and school health initiatives.

In the spring of 2016, WDGPH partnered with five local libraries to transfer ownership of WDGPH's school resource collection to make them more accessible to schools and community groups. A collection of eleven interactive kits and six DVDs were transferred to the following libraries as part of a two year partnership agreement: Guelph Public Library, Wellington County Library, Orangeville Public Library, Shelburne Public Library, and the UGDSB Terry James Resource Centre. The Wellington County Library only took possession of the DVDs for the 2016-2017 school year, as they assessed their capacity to manage a new format (i.e., kits) for the future. Kits were temporarily distributed to Wellington County schools from WDGPH's Fergus office to offer an equitable level of service. The Wellington County Library has agreed to take ownership of the full collection for the 2017-2018 school year.

Libraries were contacted twice during the 2016-2017 school year to assess their acquisition of these resources and provided positive feedback. Circulation of the school collection varied widely by library. The loaning of resources was lowest among the smaller libraries: Orangeville and Shelburne, which is attributed to smaller populations and fewer schools in those areas. Additional efforts to promote the library collection will be made during the 2017-2018 school year to increase community awareness and usage. An evaluation to collect school staff feedback on the collection is planned for the spring of 2018.

Communications strategy

The school communications strategy incorporates the development and delivery of print and electronic materials to increase schools' access to credible health information and public health services. Materials developed for schools include: postcards of key public health services, a new school section on WDGPH's website with updated health curriculum information, and the School Calendar: a printed resource highlighting recommended health resources to support elementary teachers' H&PE curriculum instruction. A teacher evaluation of the School Calendar is planned for the spring of 2018.

Printed information is also sent to parents through the school boards' Junior Kindergarten Registration Packages every winter, which includes the student immunization form, health information to prepare students for school and a list of key public health services. Two new communication tools will launch in September 2017: health information inserts for school newsletters to parents, and a monthly teacher e-bulletin, featuring curriculum and school health resources.

Healthy Schools Initiative

The Healthy Schools initiative is a process that engages the whole school community to take action on health topics that are important to them, and aligns with the best practice Comprehensive School Health (CSH) model and the Ministry of Education's Foundations for a Healthy School Framework.^{2,3} WDGPH has supported this initiative since 2010. The Healthy Schools initiative was revised for the 2016-2017 school year based on the school health promotion portfolio's transition. WDGPH supports interested schools to complete the Healthy School process by providing a variety of support based on individual school needs. This can include providing consultation, sharing local data, and recommending evidence-based activities and strategies. The intention is to guide schools through the process while encouraging them to lead the initiative independently through student and school community engagement. WDGPH also encourages Healthy Schools to register with OPHEA (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association) to receive additional resources, certification and recognition.

WDGPH supported seven Healthy Schools during the 2016-2017 school year: four UGDSB schools and three WCDSB. Schools' priority health topics included mental health, healthy eating and physical activity. For the 2017-2018 school year, WDGPH will continue to support these seven schools as needed, and will also recruit additional schools that have greater

socioeconomic and health needs as identified by their school board. The aim was to recruit one higher need school in each county and in the City of Guelph. To date, WDGPH has consulted and recruited one higher need school in Wellington and Dufferin Counties, respectively, and two higher need schools in the City of Guelph for the 2017-2018 school year.

Happy Healthy Families

Happy Healthy Families (HHF) is a community project, supported by WDGPH that engages all sectors of the community to improve the health and well-being of Wellington North residents. As part of its healthy eating theme, HHF collaborated with six schools in the Township of Wellington North through a variety of activities to increase children's consumption of vegetables and fruit (i.e., two WCDSB schools and four UGDSB schools). Activities included: supporting one school to alter its school lunch and recess policy to improve student eating habits, conducting a student food skills workshop, attending school events to promote healthy eating tips and recipes, and planning a class fieldtrip to the opening of a local grocery store's Healthy Checkout Lane event. More information will be provided in an upcoming HHF program/service information report in February 2018.

Summary of School Board-level Work

Since the spring of 2016, WDGPH has strengthened its partnerships with the UGDSB and WCDSB, including building new relationships with key board staff: superintendents, elementary and secondary H&PE curriculum consultants and Mental Health Leads. WDGPH has also become a core member of the UGDSB's internal Healthy Schools Committee. WDGPH has established communication with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board who has three elementary schools in the County of Dufferin. The HPS school health liaison's emphasis on building relationships and addressing emerging board-level health promotion needs has strengthened the coordination and collaboration of public health efforts with these school boards. The liaison continues to advance evidence informed planning with schools boards, and will be conducting a needs assessment with WCDSB educators during the 2017-2018 school year. Below is a summary of board-level health promotion interventions that were developed or advanced between June 2016 and June 2017 by the HCPP team:

Active and Safe Routes to School

As co-chair of the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Active and Safe Routes to School committee (WDG ASRTS), built environment staff from the HCPP team work collaboratively with local stakeholders to increase the number of school-aged children actively traveling to and from school by promoting active travel and facilitating safety improvements to the built environment around schools. To date, sixteen local schools have completed school travel planning. During this process, school specific data about travel behaviour and existing barriers are collected, and an action plan is implemented based on the findings. In the past school year, Walk to School Day in October and Winter Walk to School Day in February were widely celebrated amongst local schools, involving active travel challenges, walking school buses, and school celebrations, with the support and encouragement from the WDG ASRTS committee. The UGDSB had 27 schools register and implement Walk to School events in October 2016, which was more schools than any board in Ontario.

E-cigarette resource and policy development

Through consultations with H&PE curriculum consultants, secondary teachers and administrators at UGDSB and WCDSB, student e-cigarette use was identified as an emerging issue. Secondary school staff reported an increasing number of students using e-cigarettes,

including use on school property. E-cigarettes are also included in the H&PE curriculum under the Substance Use, Addictions and Related Behaviours expectations. However, H&PE teachers reported challenges with teaching students about the health risks of e-cigarettes, due to a lack of current available evidence and curriculum resources. In partnership with both school boards, WDGPH conducted student focus groups at all four WCDSB secondary schools and at four of the eleven UGDSB secondary schools. Focus groups were conducted in the spring of 2017 with over 680 students. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain a better understanding of students' knowledge and perceptions of e-cigarettes to support the development of tailored curriculum resources. Through this research, many staff and students reported being unaware of or experiencing challenges with their school board's e-cigarette policy. As a next step, WDGPH will partner with the school boards to address any policy-related concerns and to improve staff and student awareness of school board e-cigarette policies and procedures. WDGPH is preparing reports for each school and school board, respectively and will share the findings with the curriculum consultants prior to pursuing policy supports and resource development.

[Mental health week campaign](#)

In 2017, WDGPH partnered with the UGDSB on their annual mental health week campaign, which runs the first week of May each year. WDGPH contributed to the development of a staff toolkit that included activities and resources to increase student awareness and build capacity for maintaining good mental health. The toolkit specifically focused on building student protective factors including: social connections, emotional self-reflection, physical health, empowerment and resilience. A social media challenge was held to promote school participation and increase parent awareness of school mental health activities. A school administrator survey was conducted to evaluate the campaign's resources. Campaign feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and administrators reported that the campaign had a perceived positive impact on improving student and staff awareness, knowledge and skills to maintain good mental health.

[Physical literacy workshop](#)

WDGPH and elementary H&PE curriculum consultants from UGDSB and WCDSB have partnered to create a two-part physical literacy capacity building series for elementary teachers. Physical literacy is highlighted in the H&PE curriculum within the Active Living and Movement Competence strands and is fundamental to lifelong participation in physical activity and well-being. Using data from a 2016 UGDSB teacher survey, the workshops will focus on supporting teachers with the knowledge and skills to develop physical literacy in their students for both physical and mental outcomes. Planning for the workshops is underway, and they will take place in fall 2017 and winter 2018.

[Substance misuse and mental health promotion program](#)

WDGPH is working with the Mental Health Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention (MHSMAP) working group of the Dufferin Coalition for Kids (DuCK) to develop and pilot test a universal substance misuse prevention and mental health promotion program for schools. Currently, the type of education and skill building that students receive about substance and mental health varies greatly within and across the different school boards in our area, and it is not always based on best practice. WDG have high rates of youth alcohol use, and mental health has been identified by schools and teachers as an area requiring further support⁴. As such, a need for a consistent, comprehensive and evidence-based program was identified.

This program will be based on best-practice literature and will involve the creation of materials for teachers and students, and eventually parents and community leaders, to support knowledge and skill building around mental health and substance misuse. The program will

directly support and enhance the delivery of the H&PE curriculum for students in grade 7, with a booster session in grade 9. The MHSMAP group has just completed its research and needs assessment phase and is moving into the program development phase. The group is currently seeking funding to support this work. The intention is to pilot test the program between January and June of 2018.

Summary of Internal Work

WDGPH School Health Committee

The internal School Health Committee was reinstated in the spring of 2016. Membership consists of a representative from each WDGPH team or program area that supports the school sector, and is chaired by the Healthy Communities and Public Policy team's school health liaison. The purpose of the committee is to strengthen Public Health's impact in the school sector through improved communication, collaboration and coordination among internal programs. To date the committee has collaborated on the development of multiple school communication materials, coordinated efforts for attending school events and increased member knowledge of WDGPH's work across the school sector.

References:

1. Immunization 2020: modernizing Ontario's publicly funded immunization program [Internet]. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. 2015 [cited 2017 July 27]. Available from: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/immunization_2020/immunization_2020_report.pdf
2. Comprehensive school health: an approach for building healthy school communities [Internet]. Alberta Health Services. 2014 [cited 2017 July 27]. Available from: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/Infofor/SchoolsTeachers/if-sch-csh-comprehensive-school-health-an-approach-for-building-healthy-school-communities.pdf>
3. Foundations for a healthy school: promoting well-being is part of Ontario's *achieving excellence* vision [Internet]. Ontario Ministry of Education. 2014 [cited 2017 July 27]. Available from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/resourceF4HS.pdf>
4. Wellington Dufferin Guelph Coalition for Report Cards on the Well-Being of Children [Internet]. Data Portal. 2016 July 26 [cited 2017 August 31]. Available from: <http://www.wdgreportcard.com/en/data-portal/data-portal.aspx> Healthy Eating Projects and Initiatives

Related Reports

N/A