

Peel Public Health: Healthy Schools Approach

Pilot Project Evaluation Findings

In 2010, Peel Public Health's School Health program initiated a two-year pilot evaluation of the Healthy Schools Approach (HSA). The HSA is a comprehensive model which supports schools in the development and sustainability of positive, healthy learning environments. Perspectives of teachers, school and school board administrators, and Peel Public Health staff were gathered through surveys, focus group sessions and key informant interviews. A total of 22 schools across both Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel District School Board were represented. This summary outlines key findings and next steps from the evaluation report.

What the Findings Tell Us:

Benefits and positive impacts of the HSA were identified along with barriers by teachers and administrators.

Key benefits and positive impacts identified include:

- *Expanded community partnerships.* Participants saw an expansion in community partnerships, which also contributed to their school's success.
- *Increased motivation and participation of students.* Increased student awareness of healthy eating and physical activity behaviours, as well as higher student engagement in health promoting activities and programs were identified.
- *Decreased incidence of bullying.* A decrease in bullying behaviour and more inclusive school environments promoting mental health and wellness were reported.

- *Public health nurse support and useful resources.* Participants highlighted the supportive role of public health nurses as being a key benefit, while also essential to their school's success in transitioning through the HSA. Planning and evaluation resources provided were considered useful tools for school planning.

Key barriers identified include:

- *Complexity of the toolkit.* The need for a more streamlined and easier-to-use toolkit to guide schools through the process was noted.
- *Lack of staff and resources.* This includes engagement and availability of staff, and school financial resources.
- *Need for more involvement and commitment among key stakeholders.* Student, staff, parent, school board and ministry support and commitment were identified as being important factors in successful implementation of the HSA.

What is Next?

Peel Public Health is using these evaluation findings to inform continuous improvement of the HSA.

These include:

- Making the toolkit easier for schools to use (it is now available online at schoolhealth101.ca).
- Continuing to provide public health nurse support for engaged schools.
- Continuing to work with school board partners in Peel to engage and support school communities in the HSA.
- Continuing to gather feedback to improve the process.

For more information on the Healthy Schools Approach or the pilot project evaluation findings, please call 905-799-7700 or visit the Healthy Schools Planner and toolkit, available on Peel Public Health's schoolhealth101.ca website.