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Overview

With the release of Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario in April 2014, child and student well-being has been elevated to one of four goals for the education system. Over the past three years, the Healthy Schools Support and Monitoring Plan school board visits have demonstrated a commitment to well-being at all levels of the system. As the Ministry of Education (EDU) moves forward with its partners in education – as well as health, children and youth services, and others – to implement the renewed vision, we look forward to continuing to learn more about, and work together to enhance the policies, programs and initiatives underway that promote well-being in schools.

The Healthy Schools Support and Monitoring Plan provides an opportunity for EDU to work with school boards on continued implementation and improved sustainability of healthy schools policies and programs. The purpose of the plan is to:

1. gain insight into school board implementation of healthy schools policies;
2. increase school board knowledge and awareness of healthy schools policies and programs and available implementation supports; and
3. establish a greater understanding of alignment and integration of healthy schools policies and programs with other priorities intended to promote well-being.

As part of the 2013-14 Support and Monitoring Plan, EDU staff visited 17 school boards (see Appendix A). During each visit, EDU staff met with designated school board representative(s) to discuss the overall implementation, monitoring and coordination of healthy schools policies. As part of each school board visit, EDU staff also visited one elementary and one secondary school to observe and discuss policy implementation with school staff.

We greatly appreciate the time and contributions of the many school board and school staff who participated in the 2013-14 visits. Based on our observations and discussions during the 2013-14 visits, this report summarizes and highlights:

A. policy implementation and monitoring status;
B. strategies to promote successful implementation;
C. examples of innovative programs designed to enhance implementation; and
D. approaches to address commonly identified challenges.
Section A: Implementation of Ministry of Education Healthy Schools Policies

School boards were at various stages of implementation. A range of processes and practices were identified to assist with implementation and tracking progress.

1. Daily Physical Activity (DPA):

   Few school boards demonstrated a process for monitoring implementation and many school boards relied on informal methods of communication (e.g., principal’s meeting, staff meeting) to outline policy expectations and to determine status of implementation. Promising practices included:
   • conducting a board-wide survey of principals and teachers about the level of implementation;
   • identifying champions in schools to lead implementation and provide staff updates and training;
   • engaging and providing ongoing support for student leaders to lead activities as well as to provide advice on activities to participate in; and,
   • working in partnership with public health units, university programs and/or other community partners to provide expertise and support for implementation in schools.

2. School Food and Beverage Policy (SFBP):

   Most school boards had a monitoring process to help ensure schools were meeting the policy requirements. Promising practices included:
   • requesting that special event day templates be completed by schools in order to track the number of special event days occurring at each school throughout the year;
   • collaborating with public health units in working with food service providers (e.g., lunch programs, community businesses) to help ensure food and beverages offered for sale meet the nutrition standards; and,
   • integrating curriculum-linked learning into the classroom to help reinforce and support the healthy eating messages in the policy and to promote changes in the food culture of schools.

3. Anaphylaxis – Sabrina’s Law:

   All school boards had an up-to-date school board anaphylaxis policy, as well as a monitoring process to help ensure schools were meeting school board policy requirements related to staff training. Promising practices included:
   • using an online training/tracking system to monitor staff training;
   • having principals document and/or teachers sign off that they have received training; and,
• collaborating with public health units and other community partners to maintain and update the school board’s anaphylaxis policy and to assist with elements of policy implementation (i.e., staff training).

Section B: Strategies that Promote Successful Policy Implementation

The following strategies were identified as key factors in contributing to successful implementation.

1. Including healthy schools policies within a broader, system-wide approach. This was demonstrated through:
   - including implementation of healthy schools policies within the school board’s multi-year plans and/or Board Improvement Planning process (BIPSA); and,
   - establishing processes for school board leaders to meet with leaders from the community (e.g., Medical Officer of Health) on a regular basis to discuss key issues and identify opportunities for ongoing alignment.

2. Making connections between healthy schools policies and other EDU/school board policies and priorities. This was demonstrated through:
   - expanding the scope of the school climate survey and the mandate of school-level committees to focus more broadly on other areas related to student well-being (e.g., safe and accepting schools, mental health); and,
   - identifying opportunities to integrate and align key messages (where appropriate) from safe and accepting schools, mental health and healthy schools in student learning materials, staff training and collaborative inquiry projects.

3. Taking a comprehensive (whole-school) approach to implementation. This was demonstrated through:
   - using the Foundations for a Healthy School resource as a guide in helping to articulate a more integrated and holistic approach to the implementation of policies and create alignment with other healthy schools related programs; and,
   - engaging a wide range of community partners to support the planning, implementation, review and monitoring of healthy schools policies (e.g., all school boards visited identified the importance of a partnership with public health unit(s) and other partners).

4. Identifying and supporting system and school level champions/leaders. This was demonstrated through:
   - identifying system leaders to be responsible and accountable for implementing and monitoring healthy schools policies – these individuals were responsible for communicating the policy requirements, making connections and alignment where appropriate, and providing ongoing support for school principals and school staff; and,
• encouraging innovative practices within the context of policy implementation – many of the exciting and innovative approaches identified were focused on addressing specific challenges with policy implementation at the board, school and classroom level.

5. Engaging parents and students in all stages of implementation. This was demonstrated through:
• including parents and students from the initial planning stages to full implementation of new initiatives – students and parents were engaged at the school board, school and classroom level including many examples of leadership in the redesign of outdoor space; and,
• ongoing opportunities for student and parent engagement (e.g., networking/collaboration opportunities within the school and within the community/board) and opportunities for authentic leadership opportunities.
Section C: Healthy Schools Programs and Initiatives

The school boards visits provided examples of system-wide and/or school-based programs designed to enhance implementation of specific health-related topics. These innovative programs often took a comprehensive (whole school) approach to extending the learning beyond the classroom and providing students with opportunities to build the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy choices and make a positive impact on the culture of the school.

1. Additional programs and initiatives identified to enhance the healthy eating culture in the school board/school included:
   - ensuring all students had access to a snack and/or meal program during the school day – many of the programs in secondary schools involved growing food in a school garden and engaging students in organizing, preparing and serving food;
   - working in collaboration with parents and community partners to expand opportunities for students to become more familiar with healthy eating and food preparation (e.g., cooking clubs for elementary students, fresh fruit Fridays for secondary students); and
   - using healthy options for fundraising – many school boards and schools highlighted the benefits of this approach and the positive response from the community (e.g., Fresh From the Farm).

2. Additional programs and initiatives identified to enhance the physical activity culture in the school board/school included:
   - coordinating opportunities for parents to be active participants and learn more about physical activity opportunities at the school (e.g., family fitness nights, encouraging active transportation);
   - encouraging increased opportunities for activity during instructional time (e.g., addition of stationary bikes in the classroom for students to use throughout the day, integration of physical activity into subject areas like mathematics and science); and,
   - providing increased opportunities for students to be active outside of instructional time (e.g., no cut sports teams, increased intramural activities, providing physical activity equipment to encourage more activity outdoors, maximizing use of community facilities).

3. Additional programs and initiatives identified to enhance the culture of safety mindedness in the school board/school included:
   - establishing processes for the return to learn and return to physical activity of students following a diagnosed concussion;
   - developing and implementing policies to support students with prevalent medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, asthma, epilepsy/seizure disorders) – several school boards had policies and most schools had processes in place to address the specific needs of students with these medical conditions that were similar to the requirements outlined in Sabrina’s Law; and,
• using Ophea’s Safety Guidelines to help plan safe physical activity in physical education, intramurals and interschool activities.

Section D: Advancing Healthy Schools Policy Implementation

Below are examples of common challenges identified by school boards and approaches for consideration in addressing the challenges.

1. Challenge: Establishing an ongoing monitoring system for each healthy schools policy, and more specifically, knowing if DPA was being implemented each day in every elementary classroom.

Moving forward school boards could:

• examine pre-established processes for monitoring healthy schools policies to determine if there are opportunities to coordinate monitoring of all healthy schools policies and align with other monitoring processes (e.g., include questions in system level reporting structures);
• use school health related data that is already collected, or include questions on system/school level data collection tools, to help inform the focus and approach of ongoing work to support and promote student health; and,
• use preexisting Ministry of Education resources as a starting point for monitoring and tracking policy implementation (e.g., see Appendix B for Resources to Support Policy Implementation).

2. Challenge: Prioritizing the implementation of healthy schools policy requirements with other ministry and school board priorities (e.g., finding time during the instructional day to include 20 minutes of physical activity, working with food service providers to help ensure compliance).

Moving forward school boards could:

• identify and share research and local data with principals, teachers, to support the importance of implementing healthy schools related policies within the school setting and during instructional time (e.g., data linking healthy eating and physical activity to academic achievement and well-being);
• provide regular and ongoing communication to school staff, parents, students and community partners regarding the policy requirements, the connection to studentwell-being and academic achievement and the school board’s strategies and supports for implementation; and,
• build policy implementation and monitoring into existing board structures (e.g., new teacher inservices, principals’ meetings/communication, professional learning opportunities).

3. Challenge: Addressing challenges as a result of implementation (e.g., decrease in profits in secondary school cafeteria sales, limited space for physical activity in elementary schools, and decreased participation in physical activity in secondary schools).

Moving forward school boards could:
• encourage and promote opportunities for schools to explore and share innovative, evidence-informed practices with other schools;
• engage students, parents and community partners in the implementation process (e.g., involve students in the development of cafeteria menus or changes to the cafeteria space, work with community partners to provide professional learning for staff and/or resources to support implementation of DPA); and,
• participate in the Ministry of Education’s Adobe Connect sessions and share innovative solutions to challenges with school boards and public health units across the province.
Appendix A: List of Participating School Boards for 2013-14

1. Barrie Region:
   - Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board
   - Simcoe County District School Board
   - Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

2. London Region:
   - Thames Valley District School Board
   - Waterloo Catholic District School Board
   - Waterloo Region District School Board

3. North Bay / Sudbury Region:
   - Algoma District School Board
   - CSD Catholique Franco-Nord
   - Huron Superior Catholic District School Board

4. Ottawa Region:
   - Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario
   - CSD Catholique de l'Est Ontarien
   - Limestone District School Board

5. Thunder Bay Region:
   - Keewatin-Patricia District School Board
   - Kenora Catholic District School Board

6. Toronto Region:
   - Halton District School Board
   - Toronto Catholic District School Board
   - Upper Grand District School Board
## Appendix B: Resources to Support Policy Implementation

<table>
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<th>Area of Focus</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Resources to Support Policy Implementation</th>
<th>Additional EDU Supported Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity</td>
<td>PPM 138: Daily Physical Activity in Elementary Schools, Grades 1-8</td>
<td>• DPA in Schools, Grades 1 to 3&lt;br&gt;• DPA in Schools, Grades 4 to 6&lt;br&gt;• DPA in Schools, Grades 7 and 8&lt;br&gt;• DPA in Schools: Guide for School Boards&lt;br&gt;• DPA in Schools: Guide for School Principals&lt;br&gt;• E-Learning Module – DPA: Active today, Active for life!</td>
<td>• Pan/Parapan Am Kids&lt;br&gt;• Physical Activity in Secondary Schools Grants&lt;br&gt;• Try Day&lt;br&gt;• Raise the Bar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Safety and Injury Prevention</td>
<td>Sabrina’s Law – An Act to Protect Anaphylactic Pupils&lt;br&gt;PPM 158: Concussion Policies in School Boards</td>
<td>• E-Learning Module - Prevention First: For the Protection of Pupils With Life-Threatening Allergies&lt;br&gt;• Anaphylaxis Resource Kit – Distributed to all schools&lt;br&gt;• Government of Ontario Concussion Web-Portal&lt;br&gt;• Dr. Mike Evans Concussion 101 Video</td>
<td>• Life Saving Society’s Swim to Survive Program&lt;br&gt;• Ontario Safety Guidelines – Ophea</td>
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