



**PROPEL**  
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Public Health Research, Education  
& Development Program

# Building Capacity for Physical Activity and Healthy Eating in Ontario Schools: Recommendations from the School Health Environment Survey

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# School Health Action, Planning & Evaluation System

- School-based data collection system
  - student & environment levels
  - physical activity, healthy eating & tobacco use modules
- Designed to guide development, evaluation, targeting of programs and policies

# Conceptual Model



**School Health  
Assessment**

**Feedback for  
Planning**

**"Local" Strategy  
and Contexts**

**Evaluation and  
Adaptation**

**Action**

**Underlying Research**

# School Health Environment Survey (SHES) 2007-2008

- Rationale: Context influences behaviour
  - School environments can facilitate or deter healthy living
  - Need to understand how they act
- Framework: Foundations for a Healthy School
  - Template for assessing the environment
- Collaboration needed at provincial local level



# SHES: Implementation

- 442 Elementary and Secondary schools participated
- 30 public health units engaged
- Provided data & feedback at multiple levels
  - school, school board and health unit to inform local planning and action
- Report with recommendations for MHP available at [www.shapes.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.shapes.uwaterloo.ca)
- Follow-up work (focus groups, interviews) completed during evaluation phase

# Recommendations:

## Survey Implementation Process



### **1. Link student and school environment data**

- Permits understanding of independent and joint effects

### **2. Engage multiple respondents *(in all phases)***

- Encourage and support schools to involve multiple perspectives
  - e.g. staff, students, parents, other community members such as public health

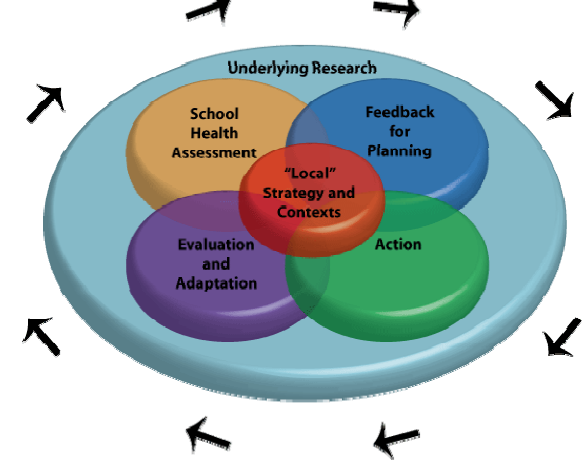
# Recommendations cont'd: Survey Implementation Process



## 3. Improve local and provincial knowledge exchange

- Resources required to facilitate action on survey results at multiple levels (provincial; regional)
- Partnerships between school boards, schools and local public health
  - to develop, implement and evaluate health-related policies and programs
  - e.g. jointly funded positions

# Recommendations cont'd: Survey Implementation Process



- 4. Establish a system to repeat survey every 2-3 years for evidence to action**
  - Consider methods and purposes that align survey with partner priorities
    - e.g. integration with existing public health & education initiatives
  - Adapt survey to new and changed priorities
    - Consider content, format, length
    - Topics must be relevant

# Recommendations: Survey Outcomes

## Healthy Physical Environment

- Encourage policies that consider safe & active transportation, especially in rural and northern settings
- Set provincial food standards, mandate training and establish monitoring and enforcement process (Bill 8)
- Ensure availability of affordable healthy food
- Expand supporting infrastructure for healthy eating & physical activity
- Extend the HSRP website to include place to share informed practices (e.g. lesson learned)

## Supportive Social Environment

- Continue to support *Daily Physical Activity*
- Expand opportunities for physical activity
- Support school health committees
- Include health on school improvement plans
- Encourage collaborative HSRP
- Establish provincial comprehensive school nutrition policy framework
- Provide sensitivity training for educators and public health practitioners

## **High-Quality Instruction & Programs**

- Enhance student nutrition programs
- Modify curriculum to include healthy eating

## **Community Partnerships**

- Expand access to school facilities
- Involve public health in school health committees
- Enhance funding to public health units to enable capacity for school health efforts

# SHES Follow-up Study



Held interviews & focus groups

with Public Health and Educators to explore:

- Factors that enable or prevent participation in surveillance activities like SHES
- How to overcome barriers
- Supports required to facilitate joint-action between public health and education post-survey

# Theme 1: Relationships & Credibility

- Relationships between Public Health & Education facilitate survey response and action on evidence
  - In-depth involvement with schools preferable
  - Implications: capacity, priorities & direction
- Credibility
  - Ideally, process is linked to a broader (e.g., provincial) scale, but implemented locally

# Theme 2: Demands on Education System

- Schools/boards receive many requests
- Things to consider:
  - Survey length (dependent on purpose)
  - Survey format (mixed methods)
  - Incentives
- Sharing results – some schools hesitant due to perceived competition (funding; school closures)

# Theme 3: Support for Public Health to Meet Mandates

- *work with schools/boards*
- *conduct ongoing surveillance of the population*

## Considerations

- Local data and relevant samples
- Survey topics and standardized provincial data collection tool
- Timing of Public Health involvement
- Sharing and facilitating the use of data

# Contact Information

Reports: [www.shapes.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.shapes.uwaterloo.ca)



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