

Health Promoting Schools

Working together to foster healthy, inclusive, and vibrant school communities that enable everyone to learn, grow, thrive, and succeed.

Health Promoting Schools (HPS) is an evidence-based, whole school approach to health promotion that engages partners across the school community in planning, processes and actions on factors to improve student health and learning outcomes.

Health Promoting Schools seeks to continuously enhance the climate, culture, policies, practices and physical design of the school community to support all students to reach their full health and learning potential.

Health Promoting Schools encompasses all Public Health’s work in schools and school communities, and includes many Public Health staff across the province working collaboratively with our partners.

What we know:

- Health, well-being and education outcomes are intertwined.
- Children and youth have a greater capacity to learn and succeed in safe, supportive school communities where their physical, social, and emotional needs are met.
- Access to education and academic outcomes are strong predictors of population health at all stages of life.
- School communities are key settings that shape and influence the health and learning of young people.
- HPS creates a sustainable system for health and learning.
- HPS is not a singular program or intervention. It is a system of health promotion that is continually responsive to the needs of students, schools and communities.
- Investment in HPS has immediate and long term benefits to students.



What are the Public Health Standards for HPS and why are they needed?

Public Health Standards draws on emerging public health research and best practice to inform broad evidence-based outcome statements, key indicators of success, and articulation of the specific requirements and unique contributions of Nova Scotia Health, Public Health.

The Public Health Standards are an internal tool that helps define the scope of work we are doing. These are specific statements of the expected actions and requirements of our program and people, identifying how we can work across our teams and with partners to advance HPS in Nova Scotia.

These statements support a coordinated and consistent approach to HPS across Zone and Provincial Public Health teams and provide guidance and direction to our system on what we do. They also guide our accountability as a program (e.g., DHW) - supporting monitoring evaluation and ongoing reporting processes.



Why is Public Health using a Health Promoting Schools framework?

- HPS is an evidence-based and international (World Health Organization) framework and approach.
- HPS is a formal commitment across health and education in Nova Scotia to work collaboratively on shared interests and responsibilities.
- Aligned with the Public Health standards and protocols, HPS guides our work further upstream to address characteristics of the school community that impact health.
- Establishes a common approach and vision across our program.
- Public Health administers and monitors provincial funding for HPS.
- Aligns with current funding and partnership structures with RCE/CSAP.
- Brings youth health as a component of the work we do under the HPS umbrella, not as a separate entity.
- Supports moving forward key Public Health action areas using a comprehensive approach with education (e.g., healthy food, healthy relationships and sexual health, physical activity, substance use prevention, health equity, youth engagement, safety and inclusion and positive school climate).

Public Health Framework for Health Promoting Schools

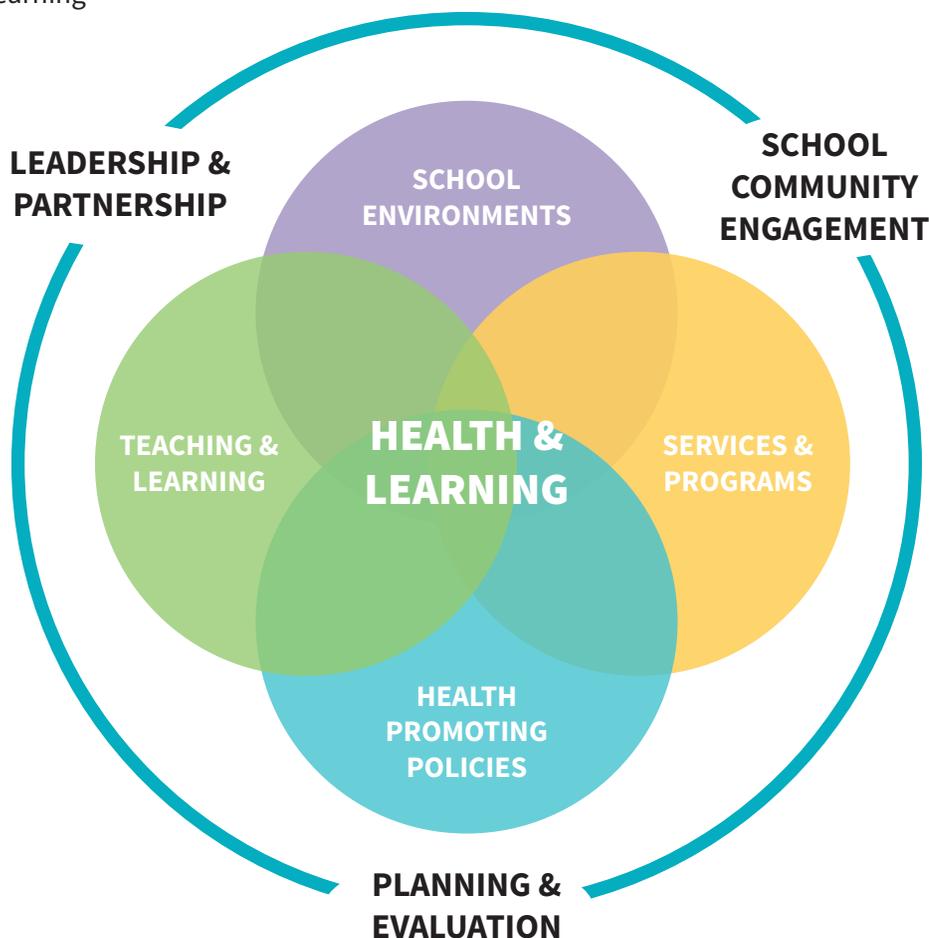
The following framework aligns with existing models for HPS in Nova Scotia, but intentionally separates:

The key characteristics of school communities that are demonstrated through evidence to strongly impact health and learning:

- School Environments
- Health Promoting Policies
- Services & Programs
- Teaching & Learning

The processes that are fundamental to the success and sustainability of HPS work and are foundational to a Public Health approach:

- Leadership & Partnerships
- School Community Engagement
- Planning & Evaluation



The characteristics of school communities that strongly impact health and learning:



What do we mean by school environments?

School environments are the physical design, infrastructure and natural surroundings of a school, along with the norms, values, histories and relationships of the individuals and groups who live, learn and work in the school community.

GOAL: Students feel safe, connected and valued and the conditions for health and learning are fostered.

Key Characteristics:



Examples of the contributions of Public Health:

- Strive to influence and enhance school environments by establishing and maintaining provincial partnerships and collaborative work with relevant departments in DEECD (e.g., the Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools, physical activity framework, student well-being, student success planning, inclusive education policy, etc.).
- Engage in and promote collaborative planning to identify action areas to enhance school environments.
- Work with the individual school community to identify wellness goals that consider school environments.

HEALTH PROMOTING POLICIES

What do we mean by health promoting policies?

All policies that shape and influence school, learning and community environments and impact the health and learning potential of students.

GOAL: Policies that optimize health and learning environments by addressing the systems, structures, processes and norms that shape them.

Key Characteristics:



Substance-free Environments



Healthy Food Environments



Active Schools



Marketing & Sponsorship



Safety & Inclusion



Health & Well-Being

Examples of the contributions of Public Health:

- Encourage the review, development and implementation of provincial health promoting policies related to substance use (tobacco, vaping, cannabis, alcohol, etc.); food environments; school climate; equity; and active school communities.
- Assess the implications of policy options as they apply to the determinants of health and health equity.
- Provide strategic policy advice to provincial and regional partners.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

What do we mean by teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning as part of HPS has traditionally focused on the development and delivery of health and physical education curriculum. As the connections between health and academic achievement are further realized, there has been a shift towards greater integration of health concepts across all subject areas in schools.

GOAL: A practice that fosters healthy development and engages students as positive change agents.

Key Characteristics:



Culturally Responsive Pedagogy



Teaching Practices



Training & Professional Development



Curriculum

Examples of the contributions of Public Health:

- Support the development of evidence-based provincial health curriculum and curriculum supplement resources as required (e.g., sexual health resources).
- Support DEECD to establish evidence-based health and HPS in-servicing.
- Work with partners to ensure that teaching and learning is integrated and informed by a HPS approach.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

What do we mean by services and programs?

Health promoting services and programs that are accessible, inclusive and delivered in safe and welcoming spaces.

GOAL: Students receive equitable, timely and youth-centered services and programs that meet their physical, mental, and sexual health needs.

Key Characteristics:



Collaborative Service Planning



Access & Core Services



Cultural Humility



Youth-Centered



Assessment & Referral



Navigation



Quality



Integration

Examples of the contributions of Public Health:

- Assist students in accessing resources, services and community supports.
- Provide navigation to youth services in a non-judgmental, confidential, and safe manner.
- Provide non-clinical supports to students such as the provision of condoms and pregnancy tests and resiliency/coping supports.
- Provides meaningful, inclusive youth participation opportunities and gathers diverse perspectives across the student population.