



Healthy Schools

NEWSLETTER

ideas and information for a healthier school community

Winter 2008

Extra, extra, read all about it!

The very first issue of the Healthy Schools Newsletter is here! There are so many great things going on in Healthy Schools across York Region so we decided it was time to share them with you. Along with great ideas from other schools, this newsletter will provide you with practical tips to support you through the Healthy Schools process. This newsletter is brought to you by the School Program at York Region Community and Health Services. If you have any ideas for newsletter articles or success stories you would like to share, speak with your Public Health Nurse or call *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653. We hope that the school year is off to a good start and wish you great success for 2008!

It's Not Gonna Kill You! **Bulletin Board messaging**

The Comprehensive School Health Committee at Highgate P.S. in Markham captured photos of students eating healthy snacks and used them to build an exciting bulletin board display in the school lobby. They chose this theme from the new Government of Ontario and Ontario Ministry of Healthy Promotion campaign: *notgonnakillyou.ca*. This eye-catching campaign promotes getting active and eating right. Not only were the campaign materials already developed, they were free!



Photo compliments of Highgate PS

Making your school's bulletin board fun and interactive can be an effective way to engage students. At Highgate P.S., it's cool for students to get caught and have their picture taken eating healthy food. You can often find students and parents stopping to look at the bulletin board.

As a Healthy School Champion, consider inviting students to plan, design and decorate your school's bulletin board. Help students choose monthly themes that are important to your school community, and then support the students as they create the next eye-catching and informative display!

Inclusion...the first custom of the Tribes process

Building relationships is key to creating a healthy school community (MacDougall, 2004). Tribes activities help increase participation and peer support within your Healthy School committee. The following is a good activity to help new members introduce themselves to each other.

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- Bulletin board messaging
- Inclusion (a Tribes exercise)
- Involving students
- Recruitment strategies
- Conducting effective meetings
- Upcoming health promotion events
- What's new?



Inclusion continued...

Meet Someone Special

Have the committee sit in a circle while you give directions. Each member stands up and mills around, looking for someone they do not know well, then invites that person to be his or her partner. One partner interviews the other one for three to five minutes, listening attentively so he or she will remember unique qualities about the person. At the end of three to five minutes, the partners switch roles. After the stated time, call the pairs back to the circle and ask each member to introduce his or her partner and share the special things he or she learned (Gibbs, J. [2006]. *Reaching All by Creating Tribes Learning Communities*. California: CenterSource Systems).

TRIBES Community Agreements

Attentive listening

Appreciation/no put downs

The right to pass—the right to participate

Mutual respect

Involving Students is Key!

It is important to have students on your Healthy School committee. Student-to-student interaction will enhance the success of your initiatives. Students know what their peers are interested in and what is most likely to work in their school. Make sure you have student participation during the planning, implementation and evaluation of health initiatives in the school.

Student engagement may look very different from school to school. Students may be active committee members involved in the process, decisions and activities of the committee or they may work on Healthy School-related projects planned by the committee. You can also get student input through surveys.

In addition to aligning the needs of the students with the initiatives being implemented, student engagement also demonstrates a commitment to their development. Positive impacts on students include:

- increased ability to understand adults and begin to develop meaningful relationships with adults
- enhanced problem solving skills
- changing attitudes about health
- having a sense of purpose
- increased confidence and knowledge
- learning to take initiative
- increased social competence
- a sense of belonging
- increased creativity



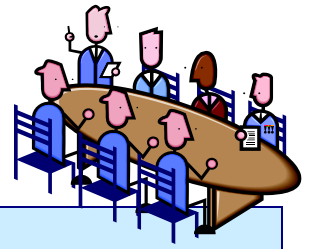
Recruitment Strategies

The key to a successful committee is having a group of dedicated people who are passionate about Healthy Schools. Ideally you will have representation from administration, teachers, parents and students. The following are some strategies you can use to recruit more members to your Healthy School Committee:

- Promote Healthy Schools at a school council or staff meeting, on posters around the school, inserts in the school newsletter and on PA announcements
- Post a sign-up sheet at curriculum night and Meet the Teacher night
- Provide a presentation on Healthy Schools for the whole school community
- Approach parent volunteers already in the school
- Encourage the principal or lead teacher to spread the word - they may have more influence on parents and teachers
- Start with a Healthy Schools logo design contest to raise the committee's profile
- Highlight the successes of the committee
- Recognize Healthy School volunteers in the school newsletter or at an end-of-year celebration
- Consider linking with other committees that may already be established in the school

Conducting Effective Meetings

Use the following checklist to determine if your Healthy School committee meetings are or could become more effective:



Components of effective meetings	
A detailed agenda is created	Agendas should include: a list of topics for discussion, the name of the person who is bringing forward each item, and a timeline for each item.
Each member receives an agenda prior to the meeting	By having the agenda ahead of time, members know the purpose of the meeting, can do their homework and come prepared to contribute and make decisions.
The chairperson emails or calls each member before the meeting	Indicate the meeting start time and end time, location, additional pertinent information (i.e., guests in attendance, food/beverages being served) and request a reply within a specified amount of time.
Meetings start and end on time	
Meetings start with introductions and a review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes	Introductions ensure that everyone knows one another, encourages an environment that is inclusive and promotes interaction. Take care to introduce new members and make them feel welcome.
Roles, such as chairperson, minute taker and timekeeper are assigned	<p>Effective meetings require people to take on defined roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A chairperson (or chair) runs the meeting according to defined rules of order, but also offers opinions and engages in discussion if he/she chooses. • A minute taker takes notes of what is discussed and is also involved in the discussion. • A timekeeper keeps track of time and reminds the group periodically if they are staying within time limits. <p><i>See Healthy Schools (HS) Toolkit Roles of Members of Committee and Sub-Committees (Tool 16)</i></p>
The chairperson is able to manage meeting participation	The chair is responsible for making sure that everyone is part of the discussion, that structure exists for each item, and that there is effective use of decision-making tools to bring closure to all items.
The minute taker keeps concise notes and highlights action items	Minutes are brief, accurate notes of what is discussed, action items, who is responsible for each action item and by when.
A set of group norms is created and followed by all members	<p>Norms are a list of accepted, effective member behaviours that is created by the group (e.g. everyone participates; one person speaks at a time; cell phones are turned off).</p> <p><i>See HS Toolkit Working As a Group Effectively Tip Sheet (Tool 18)</i></p>
Periodic checks are done to make sure progress is being made	<p>The chair periodically stops the discussion and turns the group's attention to how the meeting is going. For example, are problems being solved? Are things moving too quickly? Are members feeling tired? What changes are needed to improve the flow of the meeting?</p> <p><i>See HS Toolkit Progress Summary (Tool 19).</i></p>
An assessment of the effectiveness of the meeting is done at the end of the meeting	Review and evaluate each meeting, including what can be done to improve the next meeting and any feedback for the chair.

Essential Communications (2005). *Conducting Effective Meetings*.

Upcoming Health Promotion Events...

January

Weedless Wednesday (Jan. 23)
www.nns.w.ca

National Non-Smoking Week
(Jan. 20 – 26)
www.nns.w.ca

Family Literacy Day (Jan. 27)
www.abc-canada.org/flid

February

National Heart Month
www.heartandstroke.ca

Eating Disorders Awareness Week
(Feb.4 – 10)
www.nedic.ca

Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness Day (Feb.12)
www.ppfc.ca

National Freedom to Read Week
(Feb.21 – Mar.1)
www.freedomtoread.ca

March

Gr. 7 Hepatitis B immunization
(2nd Dose)
& Gr. 7 Meningitis C immunization
(Mar.– May)

Asthma Month
www.on.lung.ca

Epilepsy Month
www.epilepsy.ca

Nutrition Month
www.dietitians.ca

Red Cross Month
www.redcross.ca

World Water Day (Mar.22)
www.unwater.org/wwd07/flashindex.html

World Tuberculosis Day (Mar.24)
www.who.int/tb/en

What's New?

- ☑ The *Healthy Schools Toolkit* has been revised! This Toolkit provides practical instructions for each step of the Healthy Schools process as well as resources and sample action plans to address health issues comprehensively
- ☑ A *2007/2008 Health Promotion Calendar of Events* is now available
- ☑ Updated York Region School Health Services newsletters and inserts are now available:
 - 2007-2008 monthly inserts for parents
 - Fall 2007 *School Health Connection* newsletter for elementary teachers
 - Fall 2007 *Secondary School Health Matters* newsletter for secondary teachers
- ☑ Introducing the *Safe Winter Fun Newsletter*, brought to you by York Region Community and Health Services. Cold and harsh winter weather can pose a number of health and safety concerns. This newsletter provides useful information to help York Region residents enjoy a safe and healthy winter.



Check out www.york.ca/healthyschools for these and other great resources for parents and staff!

SafeWinterFun

The cold and harsh winter weather can pose a number of health and safety concerns. This newsletter will provide you and your family useful information that will help you to enjoy a safe and healthy winter.

Stay Safe while Staying Active this Winter

Even during winter months, you can enjoy an active and healthy lifestyle by engaging in a number of outdoor activities. Take winter walks in York Region's many parks and trails. Build a consensus on snow conditions with the family. Be aware of activities such as shoveling, snowblowing, ice skating or tobogganing.

Stay active and be safe while having fun this winter. Remember to:

- They wear – wear layers of loose-fitting clothing, a hat, scarf, mitts or gloves, preferably bright-colored and reflective so you are visible to traffic, at all times.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses with UVB and UVA protection. Apply sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 15 or higher. 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every 2 hours. The sun's harmful rays can be reflected by snow and ice, causing sunburn and damage to eyes and skin.
- Wear protective equipment such as a CSA approved helmet during winter activities. Helmets and accessories should not be worn underneath helmets. They are difficult to use and interfere with protection provided by the helmet.
 - Ensure there are no hazards such as pencils, clips or rings, tassels or other attachments before you allow children to wear it.
 - Have children walk up the side of hills to avoid collisions with others.
 - Be cautious of frozen ponds and lakes and the possibility of breaking ice.
- Avoid using playground equipment during the winter. It is not maintained and could be unsafe.
- Avoid building snow forts near roads where cars could hit and emergency vehicles may have trouble clearing it.

York Region

For information contact
Health Connection
1-800-361-5653
 or visit www.york.ca/healthyschools

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