GUIDELINE

Health promotion in schools

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scope (Staff):</th>
<th>School Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scope (Area):</td>
<td>CACH, WACHS</td>
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This document should be read in conjunction with this DISCLAIMER

Background

It has been well documented that childhood sets the foundation for future health and wellbeing.\(^1,2\) Given the substantial time children and young people spend at school, it is realistic to assume that schools play a major role in determining health behaviours.

As well as the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, the school years are a crucial time for social and emotional development, social participation and importantly, a critical time for establishing good health behaviours. Academic achievement and good health behaviours are interdependent. When student and staff health and wellbeing are optimal, learning is optimal. Making a strong commitment to promoting health will therefore help schools not only to achieve educational goals but also to improve the general health and wellbeing of their school community.\(^3,4\)

Schools have an existing infrastructure incorporating educational opportunities, staff trained in the provision of education, environmental services, various structures and supports that can reinforce health messages, and existing links to community based agencies and support services. Health promotion can therefore be cost effectively incorporated into this pre-existing structure.\(^3\)

Schools have links to several influences on children’s health, including family, peers, and the local community. With this central role in children’s lives schools can work in partnership with a range of stakeholders inside and outside the school to collectively influence children and young people’s health behaviours and create environments supportive of health. Schools provide an opportunity to reach all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, ethnicity or geography.\(^3,5\)

General principle

This resource guides the practice of Community Health Staff employed by the Department of Health WA, for delivering school-based health promotion activities. School health promotion priorities and strategies are identified in school Service Level Agreements or other local plans as negotiated between regional Health and Education providers.
Health Promoting Schools Framework

The purpose of a health promoting schools approach is to enhance educational outcomes, and maximising learning outcomes is the core business of a school. Students who are healthy and happy learn better. Therefore, by supporting the development of health promoting behaviours within the school community, learning outcomes can be improved.

The health promoting schools approach involves people from across the whole school community working together and using the Health Promoting Schools Framework to plan and deliver positive and comprehensive health promoting action within school systems, environments, programs and activities.

The Health Promoting Schools Framework is one which considers the broad health needs of all school community members. These health needs are addressed collaboratively using a combination of strategies linked to the three interrelated components of the framework which is illustrated below:

Education: curriculum, teaching, learning, professional development
Environment: physical, cultural, policies, procedures
Partnerships: students, families, staff, professionals and agencies, community

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1 Adapted from WA Health Promoting Schools Association
Evidence for the Health Promoting Schools Approach

There is a wealth of research evidence which supports the effects of health on educational outcomes. Additionally, some evidence suggests both education and health outcomes are improved if the school uses the Health Promoting Schools approach in addressing health issues in an education context.\cite{4,7} Evidence suggests the following strategies are effective when implemented by the whole school community:

**Education**
- Implementing a diversity of learning and teaching strategies.
- Providing adequate time for class-based activities, organisation and coordination, and out-of-class activities.
- Exploring health issues within the context of the students’ lives and community.
- Providing resources that complement the fundamental role of the teacher and which have a sound theoretical and factual base.
- Using a whole-school approach rather than primarily a classroom learning approach.

**Environment**
- Developing and maintaining a democratic and participatory school community.
- Ensuring students and parents feel they have some sense of ownership in the life of the school.
- Creating a social environment which fosters open and honest relationships within the school community.
- Ensuring a consistency of approach across the school and between the school, home, and wider community.
- Creating a climate where there are high expectations of students in their social interactions and educational attainments.
- Developing both a sense of direction in the goals of the school and clear and unambiguous leadership and administrative support.

**Partnerships**
- Developing partnerships between the policy makers of both the education and health sectors.
- Providing ongoing capacity-building opportunities for teachers and associated staff.\cite{4}
Benefits of using the Health Promoting Schools Framework

By using a *health promoting schools* approach a school can expect these benefits:

- Better learning outcomes for students
- Better health and well-being for students and staff
- More effective teaching and learning
- A strategy for embedding classroom-based learning experiences into real life projects
- Improved use of human and financial resources
- An approach that meets the school’s unique and individual needs
- Marketing opportunities for the school
- An enhanced approach to school-based management
- A more cooperative and friendly school.

Role of Community Health Staff

In practice, Community Health Nurses (CHNs) should work collaboratively with school staff and staff from other government or non-government agencies as part of a collaborative approach to developing health promoting behaviours. Whilst CHNs are not solely responsible for health promotion in schools, it is acknowledged that school staff frequently turn to the CHN for guidance and advice on effective school health promotion approaches.

CHNs are encouraged to use the *Health Promoting Schools Framework* when supporting schools to plan, implement and evaluate school-based health promotion programs.

CHNs can promote their role as a health professional in child and adolescent community health in the school community by:

- being knowledgeable about the universal health and wellbeing needs of children and young people
- being informed about local or school specific health and wellbeing needs
- advocating for whole-of-school approaches to health
- explaining their clinical role with regard to health assessment and referral
- being knowledgeable about prevalence data and evidence-based health promoting action
- collaborating with student services teams and being a key resource to school-based health and wellbeing committees
- being knowledgeable about relevant community, government and non-government services and programs
- advocating for best practice in the delivery of health services to children and young people
- supporting the engagement of children, young people and their families in the design, delivery and evaluation of health and wellbeing services and programs.
Examples of how to use the Health Promoting Schools Framework as a CHN in schools

| Education                      | • Actively seek to be informed about and support curriculum in learning outcome areas.  
|                               | • Facilitate access to health related resources and information to assist teachers in delivery of teaching and learning.  
|                               | • Collaborate with school staff and others to provide evidence-based growth and development education to students  
|                               | • Provide professional health-related development sessions for staff  
| Education curriculum, teaching, learning, professional development |  
| Environment                   | • Advocate for the development of health promoting policies within the school community.  
| physical, cultural, policies, procedures | • Advocate for health promoting changes to the physical and social environment of the school  
|                               | • Strive for respectful and supportive relationships with school staff and students  
|                               | • Encourage participation and engagement of students and staff in health promotion action  
| Environment physical, cultural, policies, procedures |  
| Partnerships                   | • Be informed about external services, programs and resources which can add value to the health and wellbeing of students, staff and the broader school community and build their capacity to sustain health promoting action  
| students, families, staff, professionals and agencies, community | • Assist the school to engage and involve parents in the life of the school community  
|                               | • Assist the school to build partnerships with external stakeholders  
|                               | • Promote a coordinated and holistic approach to health related issues.  
| Partnerships students, families, staff, professionals and agencies, community |  

Significant Issues for Children and Young People

The following topics have been covered in resources for Community Health Nurses working in schools. These resources look at these topics from a Health Promoting Schools Framework approach. They include; evidence-based resources, curriculum support materials and professional support materials in each topic area.

- Alcohol and other drugs
- Asthma
- Controlling infections in the school setting
- Healthy eating
- Injury prevention
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- Mental health and resilience
- Physical activity
- Relationships and sexuality
- Sun protection
- Tobacco use prevention

These resources can be accessed from the ‘Health Promotion in Schools’ page on the CACH Information Hub here.

Using the resources to suit your work need

The information provided in the resource documents is intended as a guide to support information delivery for this various topics. When approaching these topics with individuals or groups, it is important to consider the specific needs of the target audience. This may include:

- **Age appropriate** - some aspects of these topics may not be relevant to all ages. Consider what content may best suit your audience adapt the topic to reflect this.
- **Literacy levels** - Approaching the topic in a manner that is suitable for students with low literacy or for whom English is not their first language is important. This may also include resources, written activities and videos that may be used as part of your work.
- **Cultural consideration** - Ensuring that content, examples, resources etc. are culturally inclusive and appropriate. This may require some prior investigation around the cultural background of your audience.

Facilitating dialogue between the health and education sectors

Successful dialogue between the health and education has been identified as a key component of effective school health promotion and education. Useful tips for achieving an effective partnership with the education sector can be found here: http://www.regione.sardegna.it/scuolaesalute/sites/default/files/FacilitatingDialogueH%26E_EN_WEB_0.pdf. This information may be helpful for managers and clinical staff to keep in mind as they negotiate relationships with school Principals and other staff.
Resources

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<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy Together Victoria Achievement Program</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Queensland Health Department - Health Promoting School 'Toolbox'</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Australian Health Promoting Schools Association</strong> - The association advocates and supports a whole school and community approach to health and wellbeing. Provides resources and links to organisations and programs that work with schools to promote health and wellbeing.</td>
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<td><strong>The International Union for Health Promotion and Education</strong> (IUHPE) – IUHPE provides information and evidence-base reference documents for health promotion in schools. There are also links to resources and international examples of Health Promoting Schools.</td>
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<td><strong>WA Health Promoting Schools Association</strong> – WAHPSA is an advocacy group which provides state, national and international resources; discussion forums and website links to organisations and resources.</td>
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<td><strong>The Role of Community Health Nurses in Schools</strong> – Resources to support nurses working in schools. There are also newsletter items to include in the school newsletters on a variety of topics including the role of the Community Health Nurse.</td>
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<td><strong>CACH Presentation Template - Note</strong>: this template should be used for all presentations delivered by CACH staff in schools to insure consistency of information delivery.</td>
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Related policies, procedures and guidelines

*Child and Adolescent Community Health (Western Australia)* available via HealthPoint or the Internet.

School Health Service Policy

School Health Service Rationale

Confidentiality and adolescents

*Department of Education (Western Australia)*

Duty of Care for Students (Department of Education)

Student Health Care Policy
References


