

# Partnership Initiatives 2014-2015



Summary Report of Partnership Initiatives between  
the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, School  
Boards and Schools in Simcoe Muskoka



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# INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit produces a summary report to describe the initiatives undertaken in partnership between the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) and local School Boards/schools during the previous school year. This report is intended to provide a brief overview of the many health-related initiatives that took place during the 2014-2015 school year as a result of the ongoing collaboration and partnership between SMDHU and these local School Boards/schools.

The initiatives described in this report have been listed in accordance with six curriculum-linked, health-related topics: physical activity, healthy eating, personal safety and injury prevention, growth and development, mental health, and substance use, addictions and related behaviours. Under each health topic, the initiatives have been further categorized into five key areas that contribute to a Healthy School, as listed in the newly released Ministry of Education: Foundations for a Healthy School framework (2014). The following legend can be used as a guide in interpreting the various sections of this report:

## **CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND LEARNING**

## **SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP**

## **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

## **SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS**

## **HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

We hope that you will find the information contained in this report informative and inspiring!

To access additional information about the initiatives described, please consult the SMDHU website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org) or contact the Healthy Schools Program Manager, Cathy Thomson at 705-721-7520, ext. 7469 or [cathy.thomson@smdhu.org](mailto:cathy.thomson@smdhu.org).

# HEALTHY SCHOOLS

## The Healthy Schools Approach

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit works with elementary and high schools, School Boards and community partners in Simcoe Muskoka to enhance the physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual health of the whole school community.



Our focus is on health for all to support academic achievement and student well-being. This work complements School Improvement Planning, Safe and Accepting Schools and the Ministry of Education's Foundations for a Healthy School resource.

**Healthy Schools public health nurses** work directly with school administrators, teachers, students, families and community partners. There are six Healthy Schools public health nurses assigned geographically to schools from multiple School Boards across Simcoe Muskoka. They offer outreach, one on one meetings and ongoing support throughout the school year such as:

- Opportunities to discuss school health-related strengths, needs and issues
- Support for creating an action plan to address identified issues
- Sharing resources, tips and ideas to support your school's health-related goals
- Assisting with linkages to health unit and community programs and services
- Assisting with applications for funding to support health-related activities.

A summary of the Healthy Schools nurses' involvement with each school was provided to the respective School Board at the end of the 2014-2015 school year. Initiatives described in this report were offered in addition to school specific health initiatives.

**School Board liaison public health nurses work directly with School Boards** to facilitate a streamlined and collaborative approach to meet common goals. They do this by assisting with accessing information, services and supports from the health unit to support the development of healthy and safe school communities. School Board liaison coordination helps to meet several goals including:

- The health unit's mandate to meet the Ontario Public Health Standards as they relate to the school population.
- Supports the School Board in addressing curriculum expectations, Ministry of Education mandates and School Board strategic directions and priorities.

The SMDHU appreciates the generosity of two of its School Board partners in providing desk space, phone and internet supports, which significantly enhances the abilities of the liaison PHNs to build relationships, provide timely support to School Board staff and schools and facilitate access to health unit and community services.

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

*Children and youth spend more time within schools than any other setting. The health unit works with schools and School Boards to promote health by encouraging daily opportunities to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour.*

## HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A [School Travel Planning Pilot](#) was coordinated by a subgroup of the City of Barrie Active Transportation Working Group, with representation from SMDHU, SCDSB and SMCDSD.

Three elementary schools in Barrie participated in the pilot. One elementary school also participated in a bike rodeo as part of the STP pilot in Barrie; Public Health Nurses provided safety education and helmet fittings for students who took part.

School Travel Planning is recognized as a best practice approach to support active school travel.

Outcomes from the Barrie pilot and recommendations will be shared in a report from the subgroup at a future date.

**The Healthy Kids Community Challenge** delivers local programs and activities that support children to be more active and healthy. Collingwood was chosen as one of 45 communities across Ontario to participate in the strategy.

The project planning committee has representation from the municipality, the health unit, local schools, and community partners.

Funding has been received and planning is underway.

**A Child & Youth Situational Assessment** was conducted by the health unit to learn about what programs, strategies and interventions are being implemented by School Boards and other community partners to prevent chronic disease and promote healthy weights in children and youth aged 0-17 years. School Board contacts participated in key informant interviews as part of the environmental scan. A summary of the results of the assessments is pending.



# HEALTHY EATING

*Healthy Eating is important for children's growth and development and helps them learn and perform better. Schools, together with the health unit, played an important role in promoting healthy food choices, food safety, and the importance of good oral health for students and families.*

## CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

**School and Classroom Food Safety inspections** were provided to schools on 64 occasions. Food safety consultation, training and education was provided as needed.



**The Proton Food Handler** training was completed by 430 students and school staff in 2014-2015. This program is designed to help persons qualify for a Food Handler Training Certificate. Proton emphasizes H.A.C.C.P. (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) concepts which are an integral component of the food service industry. There are several advantages of becoming a certified food handler, including employment in the food industry.

← **Alex the Alligator (pictured here) Visited Elementary Schools across Simcoe-Muskoka** along with his friends from public health to teach students about the importance of oral hygiene. Alex brought storybooks, activities and his very own toothbrush along too!

## SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

**The SMDHU works with School Boards to support healthy school nutrition environments.**

Staff from the health unit provided support to one School Board for revising procedures related to the provincial **School Food and Beverage Policy**. Throughout the year, relevant updates were also provided to School Boards that supported work related to healthy school nutrition.



**Nutrition Tools for Schools (NTS)** [online toolkit is available to support](#) schools to create healthier nutrition environments. Support was provided to four schools across Simcoe-Muskoka in 2014-2015.

Nutrition Tools for Schools has announced that the program will be relaunching soon as "Bright Bites".

**Toothbrushes for Students in Need** are available through the health unit.

Toothbrushes were provided to whole classes when dental screening revealed high prevalence of dental decay, or to the office to be discretely shared with families in need.

## HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**School Food and Beverage Policy Compliance** is supported by health unit Registered Dietitians in partnership with School Boards.

In 2014-2015, health unit dietitians reviewed applications and offered support and resources to food vendors seeking to offer food for sale in schools.

**Student Nutrition Programs** provide nutritious breakfasts, snacks and lunches in schools based on nutrition guidelines outlined by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services.

Health unit Registered Dietitians participated on the **Eat Well to Excel** (Simcoe) and **Student Nutrition Program Muskoka** community partnerships steering committees in 2014-2015. The dietitians also consulted with schools, by request, to support understanding and implementation of the program nutrition guidelines.

**Dental Screening Was Offered in All Elementary Schools** for students in JK, SK, Grades 2 and 8. Students from Grades 4 and 6 were also screened in schools with higher rates of dental decay. Students from any grade may be screened upon parent/guardian request.

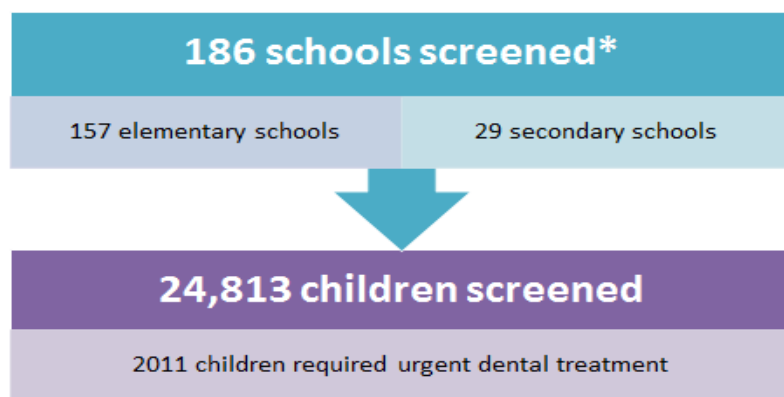
**Dental Screening Program was also offered in 29 Secondary Schools.**

**Students in Need of Urgent Dental Treatment** at the time of screening receive follow up from the health unit to ensure that they get care through their family dental provider or publicly funded programs such as Children in Need of Treatment ([CINOT](#)) and Healthy Smiles Ontario ([HSO](#)).

**Poster Campaign Launched to Raise Awareness of Dental Screening Services for Teens.** A series of four posters was shared with secondary schools and students were encouraged to start a

conversation on twitter using #checkmyteeth.

**Preventive Dental Services are Offered at Elementary Schools** able to accommodate space and equipment needs, or at local health unit offices.



\*Includes SMCDSB, SCDSB, TLDSB, Near North District School Board, Conseil scolaire Viamonde, Le conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud, Penetanguishine Protestant Separate School Board (Burkevale) and Mnjikaning Kendaaswin

# PERSONAL SAFETY AND INJURY PREVENTION

*The health unit, School Boards and schools shared in the responsibility for helping to reduce childhood injuries, managing serious student medical conditions and illnesses, and keeping students safe from physical danger and environmental hazards.*

## CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

### **Infection Prevention and Control Awareness Training for Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)**



was offered for students participating in a Health and Wellness program at four secondary schools.

This training has previously been offered every two years; however, an increased need has generated yearly offerings by the health unit's Infection Prevention and Control Coordinator.

## SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

**A Review of One Board's Pandemic Plan** occurred in consultation with the health unit's Infection Prevention and Control Coordinator provided to inform revisions.

**Bill 20, Ryan's Law** was passed in May 2015. This law required all School Boards in Ontario put policies or procedures in place to address asthma in schools. The health unit provided consultation and support to two School Boards in reviewing and revising current policies and procedures for managing student medical conditions and health care. This review included revisions to ensure that policies and procedures reflected new requirements, under Ryan's Law.

## HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Infection Prevention and Control Consultations** occurred by phone with School Board staff, principals, parents and teachers from Simcoe Muskoka. A total of 158 calls were received. Common topics of consultation included information on Reportable and Non Reportable Diseases, reporting requirements, cleaning and disinfection, and hand hygiene to reduce the spread of infections. Occupational Health and Safety concerns were also discussed.

**Outbreak Consultations** were provided to schools reporting clusters of students ill with the same signs and symptoms. Outbreaks and disease clusters can take days, weeks or months to control. The health unit supported a total of six schools to manage outbreaks of illness by discussing policies and procedures and sharing recommendations for cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and exclusion periods for ill students.

**Schools are encouraged to contact the health unit for assistance** when creating communications that pertain to public health issues, informing of a possible health risk, (e.g. communicable disease) and sharing recommendations to protect the health of the school community.

**Bike and Helmet Safety Assemblies and Rodeos** were hosted by six elementary schools in one



School Board in 2014-2015 in partnership with the SMDHU, OPP, local police departments and other community partners. New, properly fitted helmets were provided to students in the Collingwood area, courtesy of Collingwood OPP.

Two Barrie schools also participated in the annual Helmets for Kids assembly, sponsored by Rastin and Associates law firm and other community partners, where all primary students received a new helmet in addition to receiving helmet safety information.

**Safe Kids Week promotion** was supported by schools in May by sharing information from the health unit and Parachute Canada about safe cycling.

**A new Heat Notification Process** was created by the Ontario Heat Health Team. This means School Boards will be notified by the health unit early in the event of extreme heat warnings.

# GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

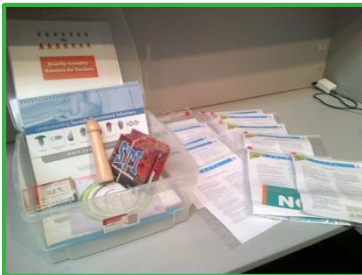
*The promotion of healthy growth and development contributes to students' health. The health unit partnered with schools to promote healthy messaging related to parenting, human development, sexual health and immunization.*

## CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

**FASD Lesson Plans** and related resources were presented to Social Sciences and Humanities teacher leads at one School Board.

**The SMDHU Breastfeeding Lesson Plan** was presented to the Social Sciences and Humanities teacher leads at one School Board.

**Healthy Choices Teaching Kits (pictured here)** are available through the SMDHU to support educators with delivering the human growth and development strand of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum.



**Sexual Health Nurse Offered Classroom Presentations** at three Muskoka area schools to discuss healthy relationships and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Four presentations were offered, with a total of 34 students in attendance.

## SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

**Safe Prom Event Hosted at One Local High School:** Health unit staff from the Sexual Health and Injury and Substance Misuse Prevention Programs hosted interactive displays to provide information on being safe at parties, substance use, sexual health services and safer sex.

## HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Triple P** is an evidence-based program that helps parents work together with their children and teenagers to improve behaviour over time. Several schools across Simcoe Muskoka worked in collaboration with the health unit and other community partners to offer Triple P workshops and/or promote Triple P messaging.



**Health Unit Staff Attended Ready for Kindergarten in Muskoka**, along with over 20 community agencies, to share information about health unit programs and services with families, including:

- Injury prevention
- Oral hygiene, dental visits, and funding for care
- Physical activity and sedentary behaviour
- Children and screen time
- Parenting supports and resources
- On-site dental screening was also provided.

Events were held in Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Huntsville for families from 21 SMCDsB and TLDSB schools. Transportation was provided to families from rural areas. Over 190 families attended.

**Midland Health Unit offered Students a Tour** where Grade 9 students from two local secondary schools learned about the range of services and clinics available.

**Sexual Health Nurses Visited Secondary School Classes** at six secondary schools, alternative schools, and adult education centres to share information regarding sexual health services and how to access the nurse.

**A Sexual Health PHN facilitated four Interactive Sessions at a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Conference** using a “sexpert” game to engage Grade 7-12 students from elementary and secondary schools in talking about a range of sexual health topics.

**A New School Immunization History Form** was created to reflect changes to the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA). Schools provide [this form](#) to all new registrants, and forward completed forms to the health unit.

**A New Provincial Immunization Database “Panorama”** was introduced in Ontario. In June 2014 SMDHU began using the new data in all schools.

SMDHU Elementary School Immunization Program, 2014-2015

	Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine  (3 dose series for grade 8 girls)	Hepatitis B vaccine  (2 dose series for all grade 7's)	Meningitis vaccine  (1 dose for all grade 7's)
# Schools	154	160	159
# School Clinics/Visits	483	441	307
# Doses Administered	5940	7960	4910
# Children vaccinated	2200	4520	4910

Data Source: Panorama. Note that doses administered and children vaccinated are rounded to the nearest 10

**The Immunization Record Review Remains in progress;** however, student suspensions were deferred in the 2014-2015 school year. School Boards provided student import data to the SMDHU in October 2014. Student records were transferred into the Panorama database and reviewed to eliminate duplicate student records. During this transition, suspensions were not issued to students with incomplete immunization records.

**Elementary School Immunization Program** provided vaccination to all consenting Grade 7 students for Hepatitis B (2 doses) and Meningococcal Conjugate ACYW (1 dose), and to Grade 8 female students for Human Papillomavirus (HPV, 3 doses) at three clinics per school over the 2014-2015 school year .

**Secondary School Immunization Catch-up Clinics were not offered** as student immunization records were being transferred into Panorama and then processed to insure accurate records prior to beginning the next suspension process.

# MENTAL HEALTH

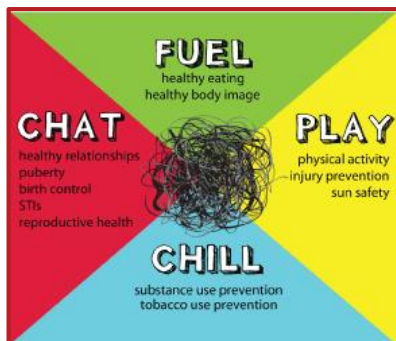
*Schools have been acknowledged as a significant setting for promoting positive mental health among children and youth. The health unit partnered with School Boards and schools to offer programs focused on building positive mental health and resiliency, and reducing stigma and stereotypes among students.*

## CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

Nine public health nurses delivered [Roots of Empathy](#) in local elementary schools. This evidence-based program has been shown to dramatically decrease levels of bullying and aggression while raising social emotional competence and increasing empathy among children who participate. The School Board Liaison Public Health nurse partnered with SCDSB to coordinate programming and instructor training, and also provided oversight to the programs at TLDSB.

## SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

The **Can You Feel It? Stress Workshop** provides Grade 6-12 students with the opportunity to think about stressors and the ways they react to, and manage their stress. Students learn life skills and healthy coping strategies (Fuel, Chill, Chat, and Play).



The workshop is available as two 75-minute lesson plans. Health unit staff have been building capacity with teachers to deliver the program.

At a whole school level, Healthy Schools Committees can plan and implement a variety of positive mental health promotion initiatives, integrating the four key elements of CYFI?. The program has been implemented with a variety of elementary and secondary audiences.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The **Playground Activity Leaders in Schools - P.A.L.S./Healthy P.A.L.S. Program** engages youth in peer-led opportunities that increase physical activity and student leadership opportunities while decreasing conflict and playground bullying. Public Health Nurses support participating schools by request.

Quarterly P.A.L.S. newsletters are created by the health unit and shared with teacher supervisors to support strong engagement in the program over the school year.

In 2014-2015, a public health nurse facilitated teacher supervisor training in collaboration with SMCDsb.

## HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**A Mental Health Symposium** daylong conference was held for Grade 10 students across Muskoka with support from a wide range of community partners. The SMDHU facilitated two separate workshops (three times each) on topics of stress and resilience, as well as substance use and addictions.

# SUBSTANCE USE, ADDICTIONS AND RELATED BEHAVIOURS

*Attitudes about drugs and alcohol are initially formed in the home, and are later strongly influenced by teachers and peers. The health unit worked with School Boards and schools to promote tobacco-free living, prevent substance misuse, and encourage healthy alternatives to harmful substances.*

## CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND LEARNING



**R.A.C.E. Against Drugs** events use the sport of auto racing, rotating students through a series of interactive and curriculum based “pit stops”, to provide substance misuse prevention education and build skills to support students in living drug, alcohol and tobacco-free.

Events were held in six communities across Simcoe County and Muskoka with participation from approximately 4018 Grade 5 students from 110 SCDSB, SMCDSB and TLDSB schools.

**Cycles** lessons from University of British Columbia were piloted by the Health Unit and Collingwood Collegiate Institute. The partnership encouraged Grade 9 and 10 Health and Physical Education classes to talk openly and honestly about cannabis. [Cycles](#) includes a video, facilitator's guide, student handouts and quick facts about cannabis. Staff received excellent feedback from students and the resource is now available online for all secondary schools to access.

**A Drug and Alcohol Harm Reduction** class was offered to an Alternative school by SMDHU in partnership with CMHA. The class included dispelling myths, examining reasons for substance use and information on the teen brain.

## SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

**School Boards Encouraged to Develop Tobacco-Free Policies** and health unit support was provided for the creation of these policies and procedures. Currently two local School Boards have approved policies which include a ban on use of all tobacco and tobacco-related products, including e-cigarettes on School Board property. One additional School Board has developed a draft policy and procedure which is pending approval.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**Four schools completed Year 2 of Ophea Smoke Free Schools Pilot Project.** With support from public health nurses, Byng Public School, Harriett Todd, Holly Meadows and Twin Lakes Secondary School implemented a number of tobacco prevention initiatives using a healthy schools approach and strong youth engagement.

## SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

**Tobacco Enforcement Officers Monitored for 100% Smoke Free School Grounds** through annual inspections to assess and support all secondary schools for compliance with the Smoke Free Ontario Act. Alternative learning and adult education centres were also inspected. Elementary schools are visited on a case-by-case basis, as needs arise.



All School Boards were highly compliant with SFOA for the 2014-2015 school year.

## HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Truth and Consequences** is an interactive alcohol and drug awareness conference. In 2014-2015 conferences were hosted at a total of six schools with participation from over 840 students.

Staff from the Injury and Substance Misuse Prevention Team in collaboration with OPP and CMHA offered a presentation on substance use at two secondary schools in Muskoka from two School Boards.

**A Health Fair** supported by one local elementary school and public health nurses showcased displays related to drugs & alcohol and refusal skills, as well as provided handouts to families.

**A Drug and Alcohol Conference** was offered at a local secondary school with support from public health nurses and community agencies. 150 Grade 9 students attended.

**Driven to Quit** is an annual quit smoking contest hosted by the Canadian Cancer Society for adults (19+). The health unit promoted this contest with school staff and adult learners, with the support of the School Boards.

The contest had 759 local Simcoe Muskoka registrants and 8,585 Ontario registrants in 2015.

# HEALTH CONNECTION

**Health Connection is the health unit's free confidential health information and advice service.** Schools, families and students can contact Health Connection, Monday to Friday by phone, email, Facebook, and Twitter, to access health information and resources. A telephone interpretation service is available in 170 languages.

In addition to ongoing communication with Healthy Schools nurses, schools in Simcoe County and Muskoka contacted Health Connection 84 times throughout 2014-2015. Information and resources were provided to support schools with questions on a wide range of topics such as communicable disease, sexual health and sexuality, infection prevention and control, and healthy eating and nutrition. Health Connection also supported schools to connect with their assigned Healthy Schools nurse, or staff from other health unit programs where additional support was being requested.



# CONCLUSION

This report summarizes the collaborative work completed during the 2014-2015 school year between the health unit and School Boards. This work is essential in supporting optimal health and learning for all students, staff and school communities. The health unit acknowledges the commitment to health, and recognizes the value placed on this partnership through the time and dedication of the staff involved.

We look forward to continuing our work together in the 2015-2016 school year!