

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2014 May 15

STUDENT WELLBEING AND LEARNING: FOUNDATIONS FOR A HEALTHY SCHOOL FRAMEWORK

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1) *Report No. 033-14 re Student Wellbeing and Learning: Foundations for a Healthy School Framework be received for information; and*
- 2) *Letters be sent from the Board of Health to the Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health & Long-Term Care, and the Honourable Liz Sandals, Minister of Education, commending the Ministers on their collaborative efforts to ensure students' wellbeing in schools.*

Key Points

- Student wellbeing is an important goal in a new report launched from the Ministry of Education.
- Health Unit staff collaborated with Thames Valley District School Board staff on a provincial webinar and highlighted the collaborative efforts on student wellbeing in our local schools.
- The “Foundations for a Healthy School Framework” is an evidence based document that guides the work of education and health to address student wellbeing. It was distributed at the National Ontario Healthy Schools Conference hosted by the Health Unit in April 2014.

Background

In the fall 2013 the Ministry of Education held regional consultations across the province for the purpose of collecting thoughts and ideas for a renewed vision for the provincial education system. The Health Unit Child and Youth Program Team managers participated in the consultations along with parents, students, teachers, support staff and school and system leaders. In addition, input from individuals and groups outside the education sector, including a number of sessions with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (OMHLTC) businesses and non-profit organizations, was reviewed. *Achieving Excellence*, a new Ministry Report, is the result of their feedback and was launched in April 2014.

The Ministry report builds on the education system's current priorities and encompasses new goals. One important goal of this report focuses on student wellbeing and ensuring that all children and youth will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices. The revised “[Foundations for a Healthy School Framework](#)” ([Appendix A](#)) is an evidence based document that provides guidance to educators and community partners to help address student wellbeing in schools. It outlines how school boards together with public health can develop a healthy school. This document was released at the recent National Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition Conference held in April and hosted by the Health Unit.

The Importance of Student Wellbeing and the Healthy Schools Framework

Key to a healthy school is an integrated approach to address a range of health related topics which will result in a positive healthy school climate. Schools are increasingly recognized as critical social systems with the potential to enhance the health of their populations. Healthy students are healthy learners and healthy schools are an important part of healthy communities.

The Ministry of Education and OMHLTC care are partnering on many initiatives to forward their goal of student wellbeing. On April 30, 2014 they collaborated to host a provincial webinar session, titled “Collaborating on Student Well-Being: An Information Exchange on Education – Health Partnerships”. The agenda included opportunities to learn about provincial level health and education collaboration, share examples of regional and local-level health and education collaboration and discuss strategies that support successful collaboration. Staff from the Child and Youth Program Team partnered with Thames Valley District School Board to showcase their shared examples of local collaborative health-educational projects. The two local collaborative projects which were presented were our Outdoors: The Ultimate Playground and Healthy Living Champions.

Conclusion/Next Steps

Education and health for children and youth are intricately intertwined. The recent collaborative focus on student wellbeing between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care is a positive step to address health behaviours among our children and youth in school settings. Health Unit staff member have developed positive and strong relationships with area school boards and will continue to work with them to address student wellbeing by utilizing the Foundations for a Healthy Schools Framework.

This report was prepared by Ms. Christine Preece, Manager, Young Adult Team, and Ms. Suzanne Vandervoort, Manager, Child Health Team.



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This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards:
Family Health – Child Health Program and Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention.