

## Purpose

To provide information about the findings of the Health Unit's school-based screening program from the last school year: September 2014 to June 2015.

## Methodology

Publicly funded elementary schools and three private schools participated in the school-based screening program. Students in Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten, and Grade 2 at publicly funded schools were screened in accordance with the [Oral Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol](#) of the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Based on the screening results of the Grade 2 students at each school, the school was categorized into the following levels of screening intensity: "Low", "Medium", or "High", as per the Protocol. Increased screening intensity level requires that additional grades be screened.

The parents of the students in these grades who decline to have their children screened advise their school administrators who then pass this information on to Health Unit staff. Children whose parents have consented to screening but who are absent on the day of screening may be screened on a subsequent screening day.

Student level data was collected by five Registered Dental Hygienists employed by the Health Unit. The need for and urgency of dental care was recorded and the parents advised of the required follow-up. As well, indicators of previous dental caries were recorded. Data was collected and stored in accordance with the Oral Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Oral Health Information Support System was used to generate summary statistics from the student level data. Historical aggregate data was accessed from archived Health Unit spreadsheets. These data were further analysed using Microsoft Excel.

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### Key Findings

**Participation.** Of the 19,535 students who were offered dental screening at the schools that participated in the school-based dental screening program, 16,171 or 83% were screened (Figure 1). For the 2014-2015 school year, the Health Unit did not have parental consent to screen 2,190 (11%) students, and 1,211 (6%) were absent on the day(s) that staff were screening at their schools. The percentage of excluded students is higher than the previous year's percentage, but the percentage of absent students is similar.

**Screening intensity.** Among the 128 elementary schools with Grade 2 in the Health Units jurisdiction, 99 (77%) were categorized as Low intensity, 15 (12%) as Medium intensity, and 14 (11%) as High intensity as per the Oral Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol which is described in the sidebar (Figure 2).

**Dental caries.** The percentages of Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten, and Grade 2 students screened who were caries-free, (i.e. have never had tooth decay or the removal or filling of a tooth because of caries) were 78%, 71%, and 59%, respectively (Figure 3). This demonstrated a decrease in percentage for the Junior Kindergarten students from the previous school year which was 80%; and an increase for the Senior Kindergarten and Grade 2 students which were 70% and 59% respectively. Slightly more than 5% of Grade 2 students screened had two or more teeth with tooth decay (Figure 4).

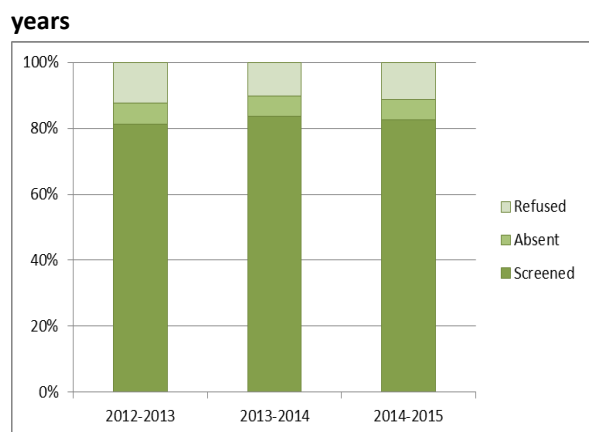
**Urgent dental needs.** Six hundred and fifty-four (654) students or 4% of those screened were found to have Urgent dental needs which deem them clinically eligible to receive Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) funding for their dental care (Figure 5). Six hundred and thirty (630) students or 96% of those found to have Urgent dental needs were referred to and accepted at local dental offices for treatment. The percentage of students found to have Urgent dental needs is similar to the previous school year. The percentage of those students who were referred to and accepted at dental offices is higher than the 92% from the previous school year.

### Next Steps

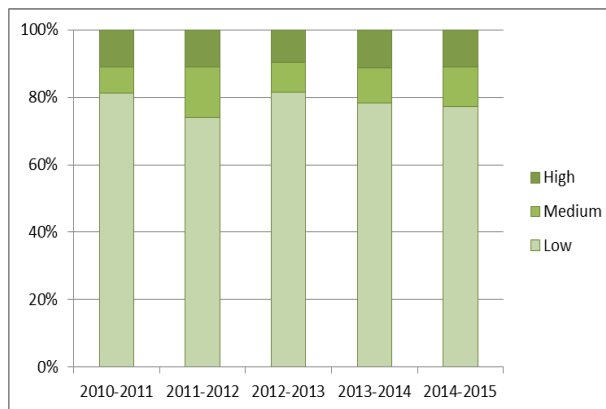
- The Health Unit will continue to work on strategies such as the school-based fluoride varnish program to address the percentages of Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten, and Grade 2 students who are caries-free.
- The Health Unit is currently working with selected schools to increase awareness about how to identify students experiencing dental discomfort.
- The Health Unit continues to work with schools that require active consents to develop strategies to improve participation in the program.

**Results**

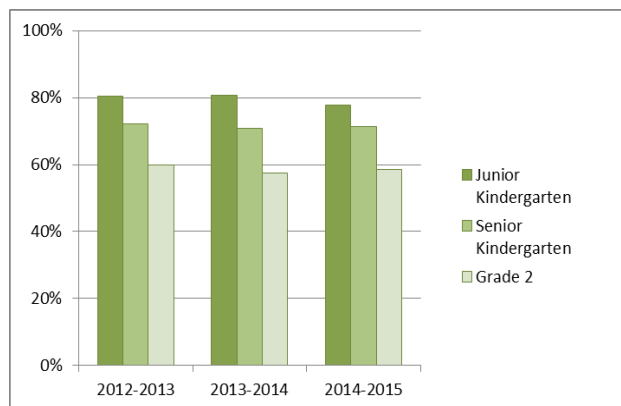
**Figure 1. Percentages of students screened, absent and refused for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years**



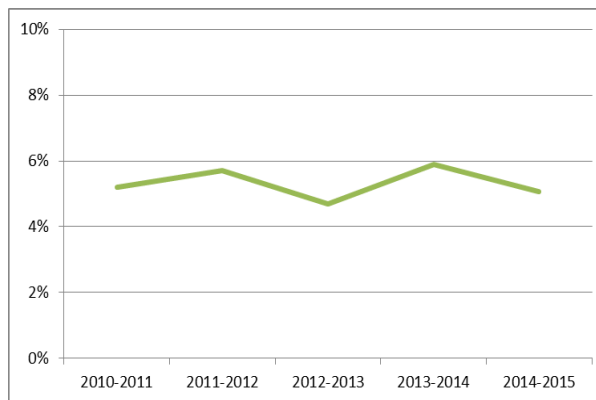
**Figure 2. Screening intensity of schools by school year**



**Figure 3. Percentage of students screened who were caries-free by grade for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years**



**Figure 4. Percentage of Grade 2 students screened with two or more teeth affected by caries (decay, removals, or fillings) by school year**



**Figure 5. Percentage of students screened with Urgent dental needs by school year**

