

**ABCs  
OF A  
HEALTHY SCHOOL**

***Eight Steps to Building a  
Healthy School***

*December 2005*



# ABCs OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL

## Getting Started...

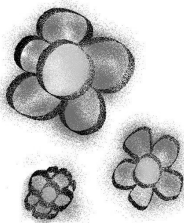
### How to Build and Sustain Healthy Schools in your Community

How do you make your Healthy School come to life...?

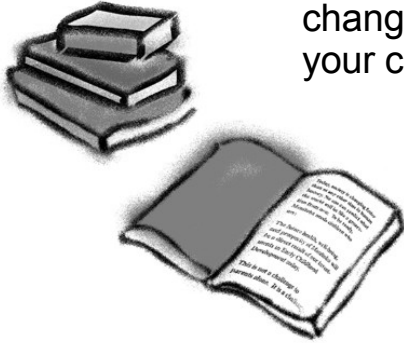
Here are eight steps to get you started on the road to a Healthy School:



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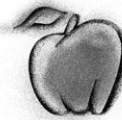
This guide was developed to assist school communities at different starting points, at the system and school level. You may find it useful to change, omit, or adapt some steps to accommodate your community's capacity.



# 1. Bringing People Together

*It takes a village to raise a child...*

## Who should be included?



- Students of all ages
- Parents
- School staff (teachers, counsellors, administrators)
- Public Health
- Local Community Organizations/Agencies

**REMEMBER** that it is important to ensure representation in all areas! These individuals will be responsible for generating ideas, creating direction, and planning program strategies.

## Ways to bring people together

You may want to organize a School Health (or Health Action Planning) Committee/Working Group/Team. By forming a committee, schools can build capacity to take action.



School health committees can be made up of newly formed committees or sub-committees of existing ones.

Bring people together for a meeting or discussion through:

- a. Personal contact
- b. Teachers enlisting student participation
- c. School newsletter notices



d. Recruitment letters/invitations to parents and different groups

If using a preexisting group, hold the discussion in conjunction with the groups' regular meeting.

**Before moving to Step 2...ask:**

Who will be assigned the various roles and responsibilities to carry out the functions of the committee?



- Initiate meetings
- Set up meetings
- Lead meetings
- Record meeting minutes
- Invite additional members
- Monitor activities/achievement of plans
- Reward members

What type of structure will your committee adopt?



Table structure: All members discuss and involved in decision making

Wheel structure: Small groups form spokes of a wheel and work independently. An executive committee at the centre coordinates information and activities

- Combination of table and wheel structure: Primary approach is table, with sub groups who make recommendations to the larger group

What should you call your committee?

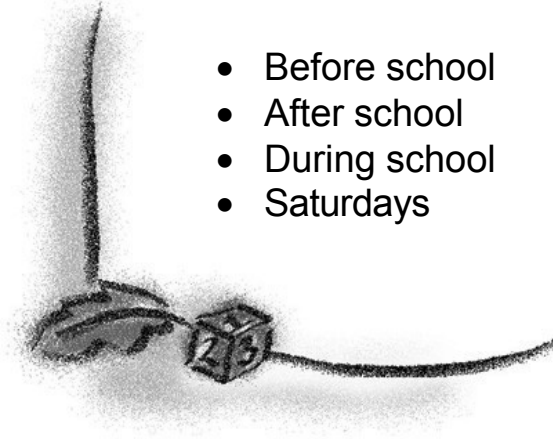


- Care Team
- School Health Advisory Council
- School Health Council
- Health Committee
- Health Task Force

- Care Force

When is the best time to meet? How often?

- Before school
- After school
- During school
- Saturdays



*Once a committee or group has been established...*

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## 2. Assessing Needs

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*What's up...?*



Assessing needs and creating a vision for your Healthy School allows students, parents, staff, and the community to identify issues that affect school health.



Before you can create a vision for your Healthy Schools a detailed inventory of concerns, issues, and needs should be developed. There are several formal and informal ways of gathering information about the health of your school community:

- a. Brainstorming or Informal Discussions
- b. Surveys or Needs Assessments
- c. Drawings or Collages

Other ways of gathering information may also include suggestion boxes, interviews, or focus groups.

**REMEMBER** to include students from different age groups in this process.

### *a. Brainstorming*



A brainstorming session (or informal discussion) can be a useful tool for gathering information about your school community. Try to keep the discussions an open-minded exchange of ideas. When brainstorming with a group...



- Record every idea
- Go for quantity
- Do not discuss, criticize, or evaluate ideas
- Encourage creativity and expression
- Be spontaneous
- Build on each others ideas

Examples of brainstorming questions may include:

- Imagine your school as the “ideal place to be.”  
How does your school look? Feel? Sound?
- What does a Healthy School look like? Feel like? Sound like?
- What are people doing?
- How are people interacting?
- How would the atmosphere be described?

#### *b. Surveys*

A more formal approach to gathering information is to conduct a survey (or needs assessment) to identify students, parents, school staff, and/or community needs. The benefits of conducting a survey/needs assessment include:



- Increases the understanding of the health issues.
- Engages the involvement of all stakeholders.
- Offers a variety of perspectives.
- Raises awareness of school community resources.
- Provides a basis for your planning.
- Helps set priorities.

#### *c. Drawings or Collages*

A way to involve younger students in this process is by using art; art is a great way to help them learn and express themselves. You can use art to help



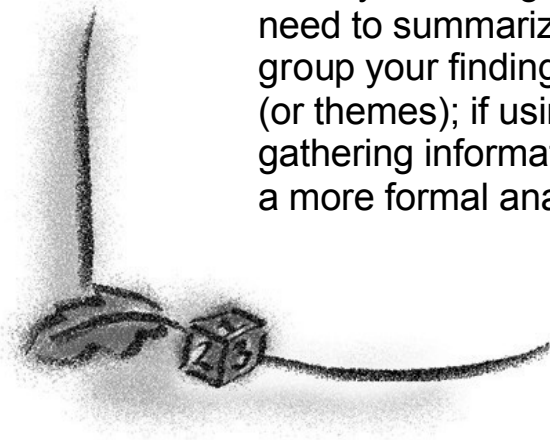
children describe what they think about health. You may want to ask children...

- “What does your school look like?”
- “What does a perfect school look like?”

You can gather important information from the pictures, by asking children to describe what they have created. You can also post the pictures through the school to promote the Healthy School concept.

***REMEMBER*** to gather information from a variety of individuals and sources within your schools' community.

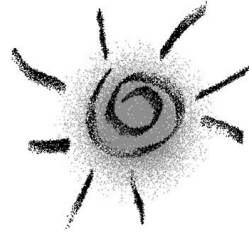
Once you have gathered your information, you will need to summarize your findings. You may want to group your findings together according to similarities (or themes); if using a more formal approach for gathering information, such as a needs assessment, a more formal analysis may be required.



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### 3. Creating a Vision

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*Make a wish...*

Based on your findings from Step 2, the next step is to develop a statement that includes the main themes that you have identified. *This is a task that your committee should help you with! A shared vision, mission, and goal will reflect more accurately what a healthy school community looks like for all involved.* Keep the statement(s) clear, concise, and user-friendly.

Once you have agreed upon a statement, post it on a banner, in your community newspaper, and school newsletter; so the school community can become motivated and encouraged to get involved.

**REMEMBER** to be realistic about what your school community can do to make things better.



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## 4. Prioritizing the Issues

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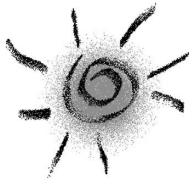
*Get to the point...*



One way to begin to prioritize issues is to review your findings from “Step 2” and identify the most popular issues reported. Look for similarities and common themes in your findings.

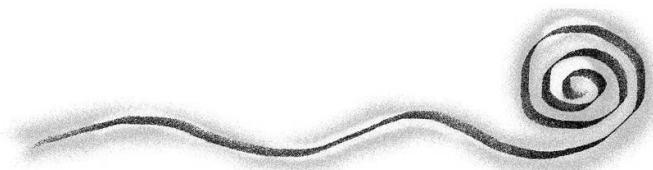
Next, as a group, pick one or two priorities health issues that you want to work on.

### Selecting Priority Issues



- Start slow and small.
- Begin with a plan that is short and can be dealt with quickly.
- Tackle issues that are realistic and specific.
- Select issues that will have an immediate impact on most people.
- Start where you are most likely to succeed. Success helps to build credibility and gives a sense of achievement.

**REMEMBER** *that not everything can be addressed at once.*



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## 5. Developing a Realistic Plan

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*So what are you going to do about it...?*

### Why is planning important?

*If you don't know where you are going, you may end up somewhere else.*

*If you don't know who's doing what it may not get done.*



*If you don't have the help you need you may not be able to help the issue.*

The purpose of developing a plan is to:

- organize activities
- avoid duplication
- minimize conflicting agendas
- provide a communication tool for the actions

Planning gives a sense of direction and accomplishment, and helps to focus your energy.

Using the priority issue(s) you have identified in "Step 4," develop a plan of action.

A brainstorming activity may be a useful way to generate actions. It is important to discuss the potential for success and possible barriers of the ideas generated.



The SMART approach can help when developing a plan:



- Specific:** Is the plan small and concrete?
- Measurable:** How will we know if we have achieved what we set out to achieve?
- Attainable:** Do we have time and resources to make the change we want?
- Realistic:** Is this plan something that truly can be accomplished?
- Time-Limited:** Does the plan have a beginning and an end?



*Once you have decided on a plan...*

You may want to make a list of existing school and community resources, and identify duplications and gaps in service.

Work out what must be done to accomplish the action plan:

- who will do what,
- by when (set timelines for each step in the action plan), and
- how will you know it is done?



Identify what resources the group needs (time, expertise, facilities, publicity, money, etc.) and how these will be obtained.

**REMEMBER** to always refer back to you vision, mission, and goals throughout the planning process.

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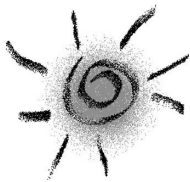
## 6. Putting the Plan into Action

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Ready, set, go...

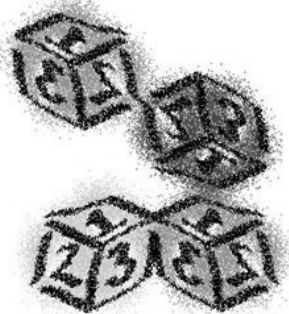


As you move into action, look at different ways of letting people know about what you are doing, both within the school and the community, examples include:



- Promoting the plan in school and community newspapers or newsletters
- Raising awareness on the radio or television
- Developing a mascot
- Preparing balloons, buttons, posters, or banners
- Organizing a kick-off event or launch (e.g. school assembly, announcements)
- Hosting evening information sessions, presentations, or workshops for families and community members

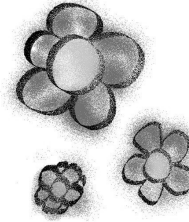
**REMEMBER** to monitor your progress along the way. Don't be surprised if things don't unfold as you expected; be flexible and open to change.



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## 7. Evaluating the Outcomes

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*Tell me what you really think...*

Evaluation is an important piece in this process. It helps to:



- identify what has happened,
- whether your goals have been met, and
- what changes should be made to improve the program.

Evaluation should be ongoing and occur throughout the entire process. Determine the areas you want to evaluate before you begin.

Both formal and informal approaches are important when evaluating the plan.

### Informal evaluation



- Be aware of comments from staff, students, parents, and community.
- Make note of facial expressions and body language.
- Visit and observe the activity/activities that are part of the plan.
- Focus on interactions between individuals.
- Find out how people feel and what they think of the plan.

### Formal evaluation

- Design and distribute a questionnaire or survey.

- Schedule a meeting or group discussion with the people involved in the activity/activities to discuss the process.

Questions to Consider...

*What impact did the process have on:*



- the students, the school, school spirit, staff, and student-teacher relationships?
- those who were involved in planning and getting the project started?
- individuals who participated in the activity/activities?
- your school as a whole?

*How did your school community do in terms of:*



- involving many different students?
- involving a variety of members from the school?
- involving community members and resources?

*In terms of the action plan:*

- Was one part of the plan more beneficial than another? Why?
- Was the plan easy to implement?
- Was the plan well organized?
- Would participants like to do it again?
- Did the plan create a more positive school environment?

*In terms of the impact that the plan had on the school community:*



- Were the goals achieved?
- Was the target group reached?
- What worked well? Why?
- What did not work? Why?



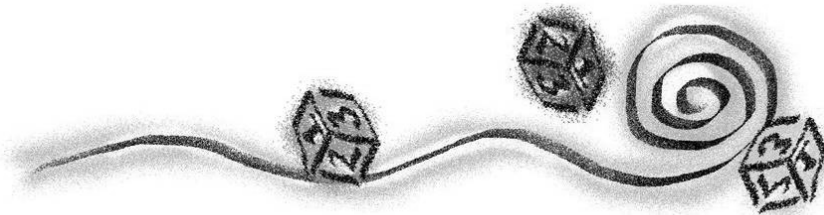


- What would you do differently? What adjustments are necessary?
- What did you learn?
- Did the plan create better relationships between the school and the community?
- What do you need to do now to ensure that Healthy Schools becomes a permanent part of life at your school?

*Were there any unexpected surprises as a result of the activity/activities:*

- at school?
- at home?
- in the community?

**REMEMBER** to evaluate the entire process on an ongoing basis.



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## 8. Celebrating Accomplishments

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*Creating energy for the future...*

Celebrating accomplishments is an important motivational and marketing component.

This is also a wonderful opportunity to promote and publicize your Healthy School by:

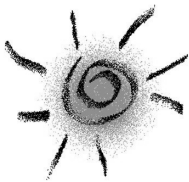


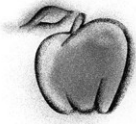
increasing people's understanding of the process  
encouraging the school community to be open to  
any changes in your school  
motivating participation in future activities.

It is a good idea to incorporate your school community in the celebrations by including students, parents, teachers, administration, and others who have contributed to this process.

A few ideas to get you started include:

- Personal words of thanks
- Cards or letters
- Certificates of recognition, participation or achievement
- Small gifts – pencils, pens, key chains, stickers, pins, buttons, badges, ribbons, books, bookmarks, etc.
- Flowers
- Gift certificates
- Names in newsletters or announcements
- Photo display
- Newspaper articles
- Healthy snacks





- Celebration party, dance, or rally
- Luncheon or banquet
- Award ceremonies
- Coupons
- Thank-you banner or bulletin board

***REMEMBER*** that it is important to look at what you have accomplished and to celebrate these successes.

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