

CHAPTER III

Stage 3 Conducting the Needs Assessment

Objective: Conduct the needs assessment in a manner that will get the maximum response rate from as wide a spectrum of the school population as possible.

Goal: To gain a better understanding of school and student needs through a comprehensive Needs Assessment Questionnaire.

3.1 Purpose of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire

The Needs Assessment Questionnaire allows students of all ages, grades, and abilities to identify the conditions and issues that have an influence on their health and their school's health. Students' answers will be entered into a specially-designed web-based program that will, once the data entry is completed, produce a report that outlines the situation in your school (The School Health Profile). It may be helpful for you to review **Stage 4** to understand what will be done with the results of the questionnaires. The School Health Committee will use this 'Profile' to develop and implement the necessary health policies and programs to meet the needs and preferences of students and the school.

A Window of Opportunity

By asking your students to fill out the Needs Assessment Questionnaire, you are opening the school to many possibilities. Your school will have the opportunity to learn about what your students need and want in their school lives. And, in order to obtain an accurate picture of your school, your focus here must be on getting the best possible response rate. In other words, it is important to get as many students and as wide a range of students as possible to fill out the Needs Assessment Questionnaire. If your School Health Committee chooses to not ask all students to respond, then it's best to have a wide cross-section of students to ensure that all student groups are represented. This will be further addressed later in this chapter.

3.2 Background of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire

The **Needs Assessment Questionnaire** was developed to gain a better understanding of student needs within the school setting. The roots of the questionnaire originate in the guiding principles and paths to school and student health and well-being that are part of *Voices and Choices: Planning for School Health*. Many of the questions have been drawn from an international study, *Health Behaviours in School-Aged Children (HBSC)*. This World Health Organization (WHO) collaborative study involves 32 countries. Data is collected every four years from a school-based sample of 11, 13, and 15 year-old students using a self-report paper and pencil questionnaire. Canada has participated in 4 cycles of the study: 1989/90, 1993/94, 1997/98 and 2001/02 (see the Health Canada web site: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/childhood-youth/spsc/research/e_research03.html for an overview, the questionnaires, data tables and report resulting from the study). Since these questions have been validated and focus-tested by teams of researchers and academics, they are considered to be appropriately replicable for use within the Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire. The other questions were developed based on literature about the interaction of school and the health of students, and the Needs Assessment Questionnaire of the Workplace Health System (WHS). They were then focus and pilot tested with Canadian schools. The Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire was also reviewed by many national education organizations. The data from the pilot tests were analysed, and the *Voices and Choices* paths were statistically tested to validate the questions and verify their reliability.

This chapter contains three parts:

- Part A Preparing for the Needs Assessment,
- Part B Promoting the Needs Assessment,
- Part C Administering the Needs Assessment Questionnaire

3.3 Part A - Preparing for the Needs Assessment

During the preparation for the Needs Assessment, the School Health Committee:

- ◆ prepares an overview of the school structure (Appendix 3 - B),
- ◆ chooses how the Needs Assessment Questionnaire will be administered,
- ◆ obtains agreement of all the key players to the Letter of Agreement (Appendix 3 - D),
- ◆ has the Principal sign the Letter of Agreement, completes the School Demographics Questionnaire (Appendix 3 - C) and obtains the school login and password,
- ◆ downloads the Needs Assessment Questionnaire and software and installs the software on the computers to be used by students for completing the questionnaire or by a third party for data entry (see 3.3.2, Choice #2), and
- ◆ prints the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (if needed).

3.3.1 School Overview

Establishing a point of reference before the needs assessment process begins will provide useful information with which to compare future findings.

A School Overview gives your committee a picture of the school as it stands before the implementation of any programs. In addition, this data will enable you to compare future findings in Stage 7 (Reviewing, Evaluating, and Celebrating).

The School Overview might include the following descriptive information:

A. About the School (Organization and Student Body):

- ✓ number of students,*
- ✓ number of grades in the school,*
- ✓ number of students in each grade,
- ✓ special programs and number of students taking them,*
- ✓ absentee rate,
- ✓ number and types of disciplinary actions,
- ✓ level of demand for non-academic help from guidance and counselling,
- ✓ level of demand for academic help from guidance and counselling, and
- ✓ number of extra curricular programs (this could include arts, dramatic arts, sports, clubs, teams, peer helper programs, and others) and numbers of students participating.

B. About the School Community:

- ✓ type of community* (large urban centre, smaller urban centre, sub-urban, rural, smaller urban centre serving rural area, etc.),
- ✓ size of the community served,*
- ✓ socio-economic level of the community,
- ✓ education level of the community,
- ✓ ethnic/cultural background of the community,
- ✓ predominant first languages of the community, and
- ✓ stability of the community (turnover rates).

* Denotes information needed in order to obtain a school login and password to access the on-line database, and later to compare your school with other similar schools.

Much of this information will be available from a school profile that may exist on a school web page or may have been prepared by the administration and the parent council. The rest of the information will be available from the office/school principal.

3.3.2 How Will the Needs Assessment Questionnaire Be Administered?

Your School Health Committee has two choices to make regarding the administration of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire.

Choice # 1 Census or Sample?

Will the needs assessment be conducted with 100% of the students (a **census**), or with a part of the student population (a **sample**)? Or will completing the needs assessment be a completely voluntary activity?

It is recommended that schools, to the extent possible, conduct the Needs Assessment as a census.

Census

- ◆ A census provides better data which is representative of the entire school population.
- ◆ A census is much easier to administer. Your school can choose one class, such as Religion in a Catholic system or Teacher Advisor Group (TAG), or any other period that all students have. Then every student in a given week will complete the Needs Assessment Questionnaire during the first period of that week for that class. Or, your school can schedule an assembly day when all students will complete the Needs Assessment Questionnaire at the same time. In both cases, arrangements need to be made for students who are absent at that time to complete the questionnaire when they return to school.
- ◆ While the census method is easier to administer than the sampling method, there will be more data from the Needs Assessment Questionnaire to enter into the system. Therefore, data entry will take longer and require more effort.

Sample

- ◆ A sample is much more difficult to administer, especially to ensure that all parts of the school community are represented. The sampled students would need to be withdrawn from their regular classes to complete the Needs Assessment Questionnaire. This leaves the sampled students feeling 'different' and singled out and the non-sampled students feeling, 'Why wasn't I chosen?' This also adds to the issue of confidentiality and the risk of identification of students.
- ◆ On the other hand, conducting the needs assessment with a sample of the students will create fewer questionnaires to enter into the program, requiring less time.
- ◆ One major issue is the need to sample all classes in all programs to ensure that all sub-groups of students are represented in the sample. This means that the sample cannot be drawn by class. This will create a sampling bias that may skew the information in the School Health Profile.
- ◆ The minimum sample size for a school should be 100 students per grade level or 10% of the school population, whichever is greater. This sample should also be "stratified" or drawn proportional to the size of the student population within each grade (see table below).
- ◆ **Note:** In a small school, where the population is less than 100 students per grade level across most grades, the Needs Assessment should be administered as a census (i.e. 100% student participation).

Examples	Total Number of Students	Sample Size (Stratified)
School A	800	Minimum 400 (100 per grade)
◆ Grade 9 / Sec. 3	315	$100 + 315/800 \times 100 \approx 139$
◆ Grade 10 / Sec. 4	250	$100 + 250/800 \times 100 \approx 131$
◆ Grade 11 / Sec. 5	150	$100 + 150/800 \times 100 \approx 119$
◆ Grade 12 / CEGEP 1	85	85
School B	1000	Minimum 400 (100 per grade)
◆ Grade 9 / Sec. 3	400	$100 + 400/1000 \times 100 = 140$
◆ Grade 10 / Sec. 4	300	$100 + 300/1000 \times 100 = 130$
◆ Grade 11 / Sec. 5	200	$100 + 200/1000 \times 100 = 120$
◆ Grade 12 / CEGEP 1	100	100
School C	1500	Minimum 600 (150 per grade)
◆ Grade 9 / Sec. 3	500	$150 + 500/1500 \times 150 = 200$
◆ Grade 10 / Sec. 4	500	$150 + 500/1500 \times 150 = 200$
◆ Grade 11 / Sec. 5	250	150
◆ Grade 12 / CEGEP 1	250	150

- ◆ The sample should be random. One way to conduct a random sample that will both protect students' anonymity and prevent against anyone feeling 'different' or left out is to first administer the Needs Assessment to all students as a census and then draw your sample from the completed questionnaires. Questionnaires should first be organized by grade (not class) and gender within each grade. To make the sample random, simply select every 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th questionnaire from the pile until you have gone all the way through the questionnaires. To determine this "sampling interval", you will need to know the sample size and total number of students for each grade (see above table). Therefore, for a school with 1000 students and a sample size of 400, divide 1000 by 400 for a sampling interval of 2.5. In this case, the school would alternate between every 2nd and 3rd questionnaire in the pile to adjust for the fraction.
- ◆ If you have any questions about sampling, you may want to consult the Head of your Math Department. This person should be knowledgeable on statistical methods.
- ◆ **Note:** Using too small of a sample size with a large student population will render the results in your School Health Profile meaningless. Some sub-groups of the student population may become over-represented, others under-represented, and still others left out completely. The situation becomes even worse when the results are broken down by grade and gender.

** In general, the sample method is not a desirable method for the following reasons: logistical complexities, possible risks in breaches of confidentiality, and the possibility of an incomplete picture.*

Voluntary

- ◆ A school may decide that this activity will be completely voluntary and only make the Needs Assessment Questionnaire available outside of class time.
- ◆ Administering the Needs Assessment Questionnaire in this manner requires a more intensive promotional effort in order to achieve an acceptable response rate.
- ◆ In order to ensure the results will be as useful as possible and appropriately represented, at least 65% of students from all grade levels should complete the questionnaire.
- ◆ This method of administering the Needs Assessment Questionnaire requires a more complex system for guaranteeing or ensuring privacy and anonymity. Students will need a private area to complete the Needs Assessment Questionnaire before school, during lunch, or after school. Also, students who have completed the needs assessment will tend to discuss it among themselves, and this may influence the responses of those who have not yet completed it.

The major drawback of this method of administration is that the data and the School Health Profile (Stage 4) resulting from the data will be biased. Only the students who are interested in the issues or who have a complaint will tend to take the time to complete the Needs Assessment Questionnaire. This does not provide a complete picture of the school population. This method tends to exclude the hard to reach students and those who may have difficulty with the questionnaire. Additionally, because of the tendency of this method to create bias in the data, a greater participation rate is necessary.

** This method is the least desirable and is not recommended.*

Choice # 2 *Paper or Electronic?*

Will the needs assessment be administered directly on computers or using a paper and pencil format where the data would then be entered later using the Voices and Choices software?

Paper and Pencil

- ◆ The Needs Assessment Questionnaire can be downloaded in Portable Document File (PDF) format, printed and copied for all students. Students would then complete the Needs Assessment Questionnaire on paper. A person, or persons, responsible for the needs assessment (perhaps from the School Health Committee or other volunteers) would then enter these responses into a data file using the Voices and Choices software and up-load the data file into the on-line database producing the School Health Profile.

On Computer

- ◆ The Needs Assessment Questionnaire can be completed directly into the software program. The software has been created to look like an electronic version of the paper questionnaire, not unlike the PDF version, in order to make data entry more user-friendly. However, it differs from a simple PDF, in that it is also dynamic and has been programmed to collect student responses and store the data as a record (one per student) in an automatically generated data file. This software can be installed on computers in the student computer lab(s). Students would then be rotated through the lab(s) to complete the needs assessment, entering their responses directly into the program to be accumulated for up-loading into the on-line database.

Note: See Appendix 3 - I for important instructions on the administration of the Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire (by paper and pencil or on computers).

3.3.3 Letter of Agreement and School Demographics Questionnaire

To document your school's commitment to the link between health and education, as well as student involvement and democracy, as demonstrated in the Voices and Choices planning process, a *Letter of Agreement* has been prepared (see Appendix 3 - D). The Letter of Agreement also contains an Acceptable Use Policy for accessing the on-line database. It would be best if all parties agreed to the terms of the letter, including student representatives, the school administration, the parent advisory council, teachers and anyone else who has become involved in this project. However, only the Principal is required to sign it.

The Letter of Agreement must be signed and the *School Demographics Questionnaire* (see Appendix 3 - C) completed in order to obtain access to the on-line database. The School Demographics Questionnaire collects information about your school (e.g., school contact, school size, province, etc) to be used to set up a description in the on-line database. This information is kept confidential. Once your school has done this, it will receive a login and password that can be used to access the software, the School Health Profile, and compare your school's data with the results from other schools of similar type.

Only your school will be able to access the details of its own data. When you compare your school's data with the data from other schools, these schools will not be identified by name. When other schools compare their data with your school, your school will also not be identified by name.

3.3.4 Understanding the Process

It is important to become familiar with all seven stages of Voices and Choices: Planning for School Health. Before proceeding with the needs assessment, familiarize yourself with all seven stages so you can communicate clearly, not only the purpose of the needs assessment, but also the purpose and principles of the planning process.

Identifying student needs will allow your committee to consider:

- ✓ needs, preferences and attitudes of students,
- ✓ what the school can do to help students become healthier and ready to learn,
- ✓ what the school can do to help students acquire the health-related knowledge and skills they need and practice them in a safe supportive setting,
- ✓ programs and intervention strategies for all students regardless of their current level of health,
- ✓ how an individual's lifestyle is made up of an interdependent set of health practices,
- ✓ environmental issues that could support the creation of a more health promoting school, and
- ✓ issues important to the development of a health promoting school.

3.3.5 Communication to Students

Students must understand that this is their chance to have a voice. An integral part of this project is everyone's involvement, helping to improve their school climate, and in turn, having healthier learners. It is directly connected to the sense of empowerment and control that students feel. A crucial part of this concept is that participation in the Needs Assessment Questionnaire is completely voluntary, just like participation on the School Health Committee. Therefore, the success of Voices and Choices and the Needs Assessment Questionnaire is dependent on your students' perception of this project.

An important goal for your committee is to get the best possible number of students to agree to answer the questionnaire. The initial announcement about the questionnaire and its intended purpose should come from a team that includes representation from the highest level of school administration - the principal or other senior administrator - as well as students, a teacher, and a parent.

The success of the Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire is dependent on how important it is perceived to be by the participants.

3.4 Part B - Promoting the Needs Assessment Questionnaire

If the students are informed appropriately about Voices and Choices before the distribution of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire, the Questionnaire should send a powerful message to students: that everyone (school administration, parents, teachers, and the School Health Committee) is concerned about their needs and preferences and is committed to taking action. This section includes a number of suggestions on how to promote the questionnaire to ensure a high response rate.

During this phase of Stage 3 the School Health Committee:

- ✓ promotes the Needs Assessment process to obtain maximum, meaningful (serious) participation;
- ✓ prepares a letter to be sent home to parents to inform them of the project (Appendix 3 - E) with a parent consent form (Appendix 3 - F); and
- ✓ ensures that the Needs Assessment questionnaire is administered effectively.

Since the questionnaire is in written form, it is important that the School Health Committee keep in mind special groups such as:

- ✓ students for whom English is not the mother tongue;
- ✓ students in special education classes; and
- ✓ parents of students who may have difficulty reading in English.

3.4.1 The Snowball Effect: Gathering Strength

Consider how you can promote the Needs Assessment Questionnaire. How can your committee inform the students about this project and the questionnaire? Wherever possible use an existing means of communication (newsletters, announcements).

If your school has an art, drama, business marketing or communications section, bring them into discussions to develop a promotional strategy. It is a good idea to have a person from these sections with expertise in promotion on your School Health Committee.

A school newsletter can contain information on the needs assessment process. Announcements, posters, and assemblies can also be useful. Interviews with key people from the student body, school administration, teachers, public health, and parents to discuss the project. Interviews with these individuals may reinforce the importance of each student's input and the importance of the support and commitment of these groups.

Suggestions on how to promote the Needs Assessment Questionnaire include the following (Appendix 3-H):

- ✓ place posters on bulletin boards to ensure visibility of the information and encourage student response to the questionnaire;
- ✓ school newsletters, including articles on the planning process as well as interviews with key players reinforcing the support from school administration, students, parents, and teachers;
- ✓ recruit students to help in the distribution, collection, and promotion process; and
- ✓ use a name or slogan for the program that will remain the theme throughout.

** Experience has shown that when the School Health Committee explains the purpose and promotes the Needs Assessment Questionnaire before distributing it to students, there is a much greater and more accurate response rate.*

3.4.2 Guarantee of Confidentiality

Due to the personal nature of the information, students must feel confident that their anonymity is being respected and protected. It is natural for many students and parents to have concerns about the personal nature of the information that is being asked in the Needs Assessment Questionnaire. They will be particularly concerned about the questions related to stress at school, stress at home, drug and alcohol use, as well as other health risk practices.

Take the time to inform parents and students how their identity and privacy is being protected. The School Health Committee can prepare a letter to explain Voices and Choices, its process, details of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire, and the method used to ensure the confidentiality of the information (Appendix 3 - E). Not only does your committee want students to agree to participate, but it also wants students to feel comfortable to answer truthfully!

Plan for a system that suits your school. Perhaps when students have completed the Needs Assessment Questionnaire, they should seal it in an envelope to ensure anonymity. All of the questionnaires can be combined together. Publicize your chosen system to reinforce students' trust in the process.

3.4.3 The Right to Privacy

Students have expressed concern about the need for privacy when filling out the Needs Assessment Questionnaire. Privacy increases the likelihood that students will trust enough to respond to questions truthfully, particularly the ones they perceive to be more personal and/or intrusive. Your committee can address this by looking at issues that students raise as being potential barriers to revealing their true feelings through the questionnaire. Changes in seating arrangements, such as rearranged desks and the reduced proximity of desks or tables may be helpful. Students have stated that they would rather not provide an answer than risk having someone see their answer, even with the, seemingly, less sensitive questions. Be creative in your seating arrangements. Does your school have different tables similar to polling booths? Can you move desks a greater distance from each other?

What can make your students feel more comfortable about answering the questions honestly? Be creative! Your school's health depends on it.

Students have expressed that they feel more safe when they insert their completed questionnaire into a sealed, unmarked envelope themselves. Students have expressed the fear of the possibility that someone might identify their envelope as they add it to the stack of others (particularly if they are the first or last). Your committee could think of ways to address this concern as well.

3.4.4 Approval and Consent

In Stage 1, the committee and the person introducing *Voices and Choices* to your school attempted to build commitment with all the key players in the school community. It is now a good time to ensure that all parents are informed about what is happening.

You may wish to send a letter to every student's home explaining the **Voices and Choices** planning process. You may also wish to accompany it with a consent form (Appendix 3 - F). If *Voices and Choices* has been presented to the Parent Council, the superintendent, and/or the school trustees, a note of support from any of these individuals in the school newsletter or the Parent Council minutes may be effective.

3.5 Part C - Administering the Needs Assessment Questionnaire

3.5.1 Distribution of the Questionnaire

Planning to complete the Needs Assessment Questionnaire as early as possible in the school year will be helpful in ensuring that the School Health Profile is returned in enough time to complete the School Health Plan (Stage 5) and start developing and implementing several health-related, shorter-term programs (Stage 6) during the school year.

Some schools in the earlier pilot tests chose to conduct the Needs Assessment in January when students are familiar with the school, with the aim to have the School Health Plan developed in March, and a few short term programs in place before the end of the school year. At the end of the school year, they begin to plan for the next year with programs starting in September.

Planning a convenient time for all students to complete the questionnaire during the school day will encourage greater, more honest participation. The Questionnaire takes 50 to 75 minutes to complete. It should be distributed and completed in a time frame that provides ample time for the students to complete it during one sitting. For maximum response, ensure the time and place for completing the questionnaire is convenient for the students.

Your committee will need to address how the questionnaire will be handled after completion. The method should ensure that students are confident that their identity is protected.

Methods of distribution and completion include:

- ✓ designating one period when the whole student population completes the questionnaire at the same time;
- ✓ designating a period that allows all students to complete the questionnaire over a period of several days or a week (the specific class will vary from school to school);
- ✓ having a designated time and place when the students who are part of the sample are withdrawn from class to complete the questionnaire; and
- ✓ having an area set up where students can come on their own time (lunch, before school, during a spare, or after school) to complete the questionnaire in private.

When you are ready to administer the questionnaire, you may want to begin administration with a short preamble introducing the Needs Assessment, its purpose and instructions for completing the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 - I). By this time, students should have a good understanding of the Needs Assessment process through your promotion efforts (see 3.4). However, it may be a good idea to explain the purpose of this assessment to ensure that the students understand the importance of their voice.

It is important to identify and to address groups of people whose participation in the questionnaire cannot be met through normal means. This may include students who are on field trips, or are absent on short-term or long-term illness. Particular attention may be required for students who are typically left out of school-based health programs. These groups of students include socially or culturally isolated students who may have literacy or language problems that prevent them from participating in the process. Alternative ways of collecting information should be explored in advance, and should include methods that are confidential and non-threatening.

** REMINDER: Be sure to include all groups of students within your school. Completion of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire MUST be voluntary.*

3.5.2 Entering the Needs Assessment Data

The accuracy of the data entry and verification is important in producing a true and useful School Health Profile.

During the data entry stage the School Health Committee will:

- ✓ coordinate a team of people entering the data using the software,
- ✓ up-load the data into the database, and
- ✓ keep the school community informed of the progress.

3.5.3 Data Entry

This step will not be necessary if your school used the computer-based method of completing the Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire with the data accumulating directly into the data file. However, it will be necessary if your school used the paper and pencil method.

Your School Health Committee needs to build a Project Team that can enter the responses to the Needs Assessment Questionnaire into the data file on the computer using the software. This will prepare the data for up-loading into the database. The team can consist of parent, student, or teacher volunteers, or a combination of these individuals, and can be split into smaller teams of 3 to 4 with a team leader. The team leader will be responsible for verifying the accuracy of the data entry.

Arrangements will have to be made to use the computer labs, or classrooms, and to have the software installed on to these computers. The team entering the data should be trained and understand the importance of accuracy and efficiency. The quality with which they complete their task will contribute to the quality and usefulness of the School Health Profile. They are also responsible for protecting the privacy and anonymity of the students and the school.

Due to the nature of the information, you may wish to consider having each member of this project team sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix 3 - G). If, for unforeseeable reasons, identifying information is revealed (i.e. a student may mistakenly place their name on the questionnaire, or the person entering the data may recognize patterns and may identify someone), the individual will have acknowledged the importance ensuring confidentiality.

3.5.4 Data Verification

Team leaders should be available to their teams to answer questions regarding confusion or uncertainty in a response, and to verify or spot check the accuracy of the data entry.

3.5.5 Data Up-loading

Once the data have been entered, you will need to collect the data files from all of the computers used in the data entry process. You can then proceed to the Voices and Choices web site (<http://www.HealthCanada.ca/VoicesandChoices>), and using your school login and password, up-load the data files into the database following the instructions on the on-line system. The total number of records (summed across data files) should equal the total number of Needs Assessment Questionnaires submitted/entered. Once the data files have been up-loaded, you can request that the database generate your School Health Profile report. After you have received your profile, all of the questionnaires should be shredded and discarded.

3.6 Evaluation

There are several aspects to consider when evaluating this stage in the process.

1. Preparing for the Needs Assessment

How did your school decide to conduct the Needs Assessment? What were the reasons for this choice? It is important to record these decisions and the process by which they were arrived at for future reference and use. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages and these in turn have an impact on the outcome of the project. They need to be considered when conducting a process evaluation of the **Voices and Choices** planning process within your school.

2. Promoting the Needs Assessment

What steps did your committee take to ensure that the students and all other key people and groups were informed and felt comfortable with the process? What steps did your committee take to ensure confidentiality of the data and privacy of the individuals? What steps did your committee take to ensure that the Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire was administered under optimal conditions in order to get the best data possible?

3. Administering the Needs Assessment Questionnaire

How did your school conduct the data entry? What steps did your committee take to verify the data entry? What steps did your committee take to protect the confidentiality of the data and the privacy of the individuals?

All of these questions need to be recorded and considered in any evaluation of the process of implementation of Voices and Choices. These are important factors in building the success of the initiative within your school.

Stage 3 - Conducting the Needs Assessment

- Have we completed the School Overview?
- Have we decided how to administer the Needs Assessment Questionnaire?
- Are special measures being taken to ensure that all students, or a representative sample of students, will receive a questionnaire?
- Do teachers, parents, students, school administration, and other stakeholders seem to understand and support the Needs Assessment Questionnaire?
- Has the Letter of Agreement been signed by the Principal and the School Demographics Questionnaire completed?
- Have we promoted the Needs Assessment Questionnaire?
- Are students willing to fill out the Questionnaire, and/or excited about having a voice?
- Have we shared our plan to respect students' privacy while they are filling out the questionnaire?
- Are students, parents and school administration confident that the students' answers are confidential?
- Have we customized the Needs Assessment Questionnaire with our school name, and our name, or title for the project?
- Will the timing of the distribution and completion conflict with other major events, holidays, etc.?
- Have we identified communication methods for all students (i.e. students whose first language is not English or French, those not attending school every day due to a co-op program, illness, or other commitments)?
- Have we sent home a letter explaining the project?
- Have we sent home a consent form?
- Does the questionnaire include a letter of support from school administration, parents and teachers?
- Have we paid particular attention to developing strategies that will help students feel more secure about telling the truth in the questionnaire?
- Have we addressed issues around the students right to privacy? Have we looked at seating arrangements?
- Have we chosen someone appropriate to enter the students' responses into the database?
- Have we asked each member of the Data Entry Project Team to sign a confidentiality agreement?

Our School: A Snapshot Overview

Number of students	
Number of grades in the school	
Type of school	
Number of students in each grade	
Special programs / number of student participants	
Absentee rates	
Discipline issues	
Disciplinary rates	
Level of demand for non-academic help from guidance and counselling	
Level of demand for academic help from guidance and counselling	
Type of community the school serves	
Size of the community	
Socio-economic level of the community	
Education level of the community	
Predominant first languages of the community	



School Demographics Questionnaire

Name or School: _____

Name of School Contact: _____

Name of Principal: _____

Mailing or Street Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

1. What province or territory is your school in?

- Newfoundland
- Nova Scotia
- Prince Edward Island
- New Brunswick
- Quebec
- Ontario
- Manitoba
- Saskatchewan
- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Yukon
- Northwest Territories
- Nunavut

2. How large is your school?

- 300 students or less
- 301 to 500 students
- 501 to 800 students
- 801 to 1,000 students
- 1,001 to 1,500 or more students

3. Your school consists of which grades?

Grade			Grade (Quebec)		
1.	_____	Grade 9	6.	_____	Secondary 3
2.	_____	Grade 10	7.	_____	Secondary 4
3.	_____	Grade 11	8.	_____	Secondary 5
4.	_____	Grade 12	9.	_____	CEGEP 1
5.	_____	OAC	10.	_____	CEGEP 2

4. What programs does your school offer?

Mark all that apply.

- General
- Advanced
- Vocational
- Special Education
- Gifted
- English as a Second Language/French as a Second Language
- French Immersion

5. What type of community does your school serve?

- largely rural
- smaller urban centre
- medium urban centre
- sub-urban area
- large urban centre

6. How will the Needs Assessment be conducted?

- Census
- Sample
- Voluntary

7. Within the grades that will be involved in the needs assessment, what is the total number of students that **could** possibly participate? This is the total number of students, regardless of whether or not they are asked to complete a questionnaire. This number will be used to calculate your school's response rate. For example, if you will only be administering the questionnaire to students in grades 9/Secondary 3, 10/Secondary 4, and 11/Secondary 5, the number requested here is the **total number** of students in these grades.



Letter of Agreement

We, at _____ understand that we can access the
(name of school)

resources for **Voices and Choices: Planning for School Health** located on the Health Canada web site (<http://www.HealthCanada.ca/VoicesandChoices>) provided that we undertake to:

- ✓ address the school and student needs identified through the *Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire*,
- ✓ follow the eight Guiding Principles and five Paths to school and student health and well-being, and
- ✓ implement, to the best of our ability, the **Voices and Choices needs assessment and planning process** as described in the *Guide to Implementation*.

Further, we understand that we are committing to follow the seven stage process of the initiative and to abide by the philosophy and principles outlined in the introductory materials. We agree to commit the time and resources, within the school's capabilities, to respond to the identified needs of the students along all five *Voices and Choices* paths.

In order to carry out the implementation of the *Voices and Choices* planning process, we agree to:

- ✓ seek the commitment and involvement of the principal, school administration, staff, parent council and students,
- ✓ form a committee representative of the student body and the school community,
- ✓ conduct the school needs assessment using the *Student Needs Assessment Questionnaire*,
- ✓ analyse and interpret the *School Health Profile* for health-related needs identified by the student population,
- ✓ develop a health plan for the school with short, medium, and long term goals and objectives,
- ✓ plan programs/activities to assist in meeting the health needs of the students which fit within the plan and meet school and student needs, and
- ✓ evaluate all programs and the health plan on a regular basis and report back to the students, staff, parent council, and school administration.

We understand that the completed Needs Assessment Questionnaires and the resulting data are confidential and are required to be protected as such under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Privacy Act. Therefore, we undertake to treat these data in a secure and confidential manner and ensure that no individual student will be identified.

We understand that although only our school will be able to link our school's data with our school's name, we can choose to self-identify by contributing case study descriptions, questions, suggested solutions, evaluation results, or other communications. Further, we understand that we may be contacted by the *Voices and Choices* initiative to contribute in such ways, but that we are in no way obligated to participate.

We understand that from time to time the aggregated data, with no school identified by name, may be used for research purposes by Health Canada and researchers commissioned by them.

We understand that the *Voices and Choices* database is a Health Canada resource, and as such, is protected by Health Canada in accordance with the laws of Canada and the policies and procedures of the Government of Canada. Further, we understand that as a user of the *Voices and Choices* database, we

are also bound by these laws, policies and procedures.

In order to access and use the *Voices and Choices* database, we agree to the following Acceptable Use Policy (AUP):

- ✓ We will not use the *Voices and Choices* database, the software and data resources (i.e. reports) for illegal purposes or for the furtherance of illegal activity.
- ✓ We will not use the *Voices and Choices* database for any activity that could be construed as being or supporting a commercial enterprise, or in a manner that interferes with the ability of other users to legitimately use this resource.
- ✓ We will abide by the copyright agreements of the software and documents downloaded from the *Voices and Choices* database and web site.
- ✓ We are responsible for the use and confidentiality of our logins and passwords, and will exercise due diligence in selecting, managing and monitoring people given access to the *Voices and Choices* database. This access includes two levels: 1) a school administrative login and password permitting access to the on-line reports, software downloading and data uploading privileges; and 2) a school visitor login and password permitting access to the on-line reports only.
- ✓ We are responsible for providing the correct school information to be used in setting up our school description on the *Voices and Choices* database.
- ✓ We are responsible for ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of our data before uploading into the database, and understand that only after uploading does the security of our data become the responsibility of Health Canada.
- ✓ We understand that we share in the responsibility for the security of our data by ensuring that only authorized people in our school are viewing the data resources on-line and in print.
- ✓ We understand that we are entitled to access the data resources for our school only, and may not access information about other schools, except in the form of anonymous comparisons to aggregated data as specified in the *Voices and Choices* initiative. Further, we understand this to be true for other schools participating in this initiative.
- ✓ We are responsible for preparing and maintaining back-up copies of our data file(s), and understand that although regular back-ups of our data will be done on the *Voices and Choices* database as part of normal procedure, this practice by us will further protect our data. We understand this to be a recommended best practice by Health Canada.
- ✓ We are responsible for maintaining our computer workstations free from viruses and will scan our data file(s) for viruses before uploading into the *Voices and Choices* database. If a virus is found that may have affected the integrity of our data file(s), we will report the incident to Health Canada's Division of Childhood and Adolescence.
- ✓ We understand that all use of the Health Canada *Voices and Choices* database may be monitored by authorized individuals for the purpose of security, audit and compliance with this AUP, Government of Canada regulations and Canadian law.
- ✓ We understand that violating the intent of this AUP could result in the invocation of sanctions, resulting in the loss of privilege to use the *Voices and Choices* database and/or legal action, depending on the severity of the violation.

We have read and understood this Letter of Agreement, including the Acceptable Use Policy for the *Voices and Choices* database, and agree to its terms.

Principal

Date

Appendix 3 - E Parent Letter

(Tip: Use your Voices and Choices logo as a watermark for all papers you send home.)

Parent Letter

School Health Committee:

Your School Name:

Your Address:

Your Phone Number:

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you may know, our school is currently undertaking an exciting project called **Voices and Choices: Planning for School Health**. Our School Health Committee is made up of students, teachers, the public health nurse, administrators, and parents just like you. Our goal is to make our school a more safe and healthy place to be in order to enable all students to better learn and develop.

An important part of this project is for our school to find out what students need and want for their school. Soon, we will be asking them to respond directly through a 'Needs Assessment Questionnaire'. The school board, administration, teachers and students have approved the questions asked in the Needs Assessment Questionnaire. The topics cover many areas, such as: background information (grade, gender, etc.), personal health practices (physical activity, television, etc.), social interaction, health risks, and many others. It should take each student approximately 50-75 minutes to complete. *No one will be able to identify any individual respondent, within or outside the school. All results are completely confidential.*

With the feedback we will receive from students via the questionnaire, our school will be able to develop plans to address their needs. The process is completely voluntary and anyone wishing not to participate will be respected. However, in order to obtain a clear snapshot of our school, we hope that you will help us to encourage as many people as possible to contribute and participate.

If your child is under the age of consent, please sign the attached Consent Form and return it to the school tomorrow. By doing so, you are playing a role in helping us make our school a better place to learn!

You are invited to attend an information session on Voices and Choices: Planning for School Health and the Needs Assessment Questionnaire on _____ .
(Date)

If you would like more information, please contact:

(Name of Committee Representative) (Title) (Phone Number)

We look forward to seeing you at the information session! Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

The School Health Committee

Voices and Choices: Planning for School Health Consent Form

Within the Voices and Choices planning process, the School Health Committee will be asking students at _____ to fill out a Needs Assessment

(School Name)

Questionnaire on _____.

(Date)

The purpose of this Questionnaire is to ask students about their needs and preferences. *No one will be able to identify which student said what, within or outside the school. All results are completely confidential.*

I, _____, hereby give permission to let _____

(Name of parent/guardian, first and last)

(Name of school)

ask my child, _____, to complete the Voices and Choices Needs

(Name of child, first and last)

Assessment Questionnaire.

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)

(Date)

Please return this form to _____ by _____.

(Name of School Personnel)

(Date)

Confidentiality Agreement

I, _____, understand the importance of my role as part of the Data
(Name, first and last)

Entry Project Team. I understand that all information is confidential and must not be shared with anyone outside the Data Entry Project Team.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness Name: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Building Trust and Momentum

TOOL	INTENDED AUDIENCE				
	STUDENTS	TEACHERS	PARENTS	ADMINISTRATION	OTHER
Newsletter					
Posters					
Announcements					
Assembly					
Interviews / with whom					
Display case					
Presentations					

Instructions

Introduction:

_____ is a project to help our school promote
(Name of your Voices and Choices initiative)

healthier students and a healthier, safer, more caring school environment. As part of this project, we are inviting you to complete a questionnaire that will allow you to share your thoughts, feelings and opinions about how to maintain or improve your health and well-being, as well as the health and safety of the school. Your answers are very important to us and will be kept strictly confidential. The results from this questionnaire will be used by the _____ to develop a plan to better meet your needs.
(Name of your School Health Committee)

The questionnaire is made up of 76 questions and takes about 50 – 75 minutes to complete. The questions look at different aspects of your health, as well as things that may affect your health, like what goes on at school or outside of school.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you do not want to answer these questions, please let me know and I will provide you with something else to do. Choosing not to complete the questionnaire will not affect your grades. If you start the questionnaire, you may stop at any time. You do not have to answer questions that make you feel too uncomfortable. If you have a question, raise your hand and a person will come to see you. This needs assessment is an opportunity for you to express your views and needs.

Instructions:

- ▶ To participate, you need a pencil and an eraser. (for paper and pencil format only)
- ▶ Please do not put your name, or any other identifying information on the questionnaire. The questionnaire must remain anonymous and confidential. (see Guide, section 3.4.2.)
- ▶ Please take the time to read through each question carefully before choosing a response.
- ▶ You must provide your school name on the first page of the questionnaire. Please put _____.
(Name of school) (computer format only)
- ▶ You must answer the first three questions about your age, grade and gender before you will be able to go to the rest of the questions. Once you have chosen a response, if needed, you can go back and change it to another option. However, many questions will not let you change your response to a “no-response”. In other words, once you have chosen a response, you will no longer be able to decide not to respond to that particular question. You will only be able to change your response to another option. All of the questions, except the check box questions, are like this. The check box questions allow you to do both. So please be sure that you read the question carefully first – before you click on anything. (for computer format only)
- ▶ Use your mouse to select the responses that best describe your situation. Once you have answered the first three questions, the tabs at the top of the questionnaire will light up question numbers that will allow you to move back and forth through the questionnaire. (for computer format only)

- ▶ Please do not talk during the needs assessment, or look at the answers of your classmates (see Guide, section 3.4.3).
- ▶ When you have completed the questionnaire, detach the last page (or on your computers, copy down the information provided on the last page). It is for you.
- ▶ Finally, place the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided (or on your computers, press “SUBMIT”).

Thank you for your participation. Your answers are important!