

**Development of the
Core Indicators and Measurements Framework
for School Health
and Student Achievement in Canada**

Executive Summary

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and Student Achievement in Canada**

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Core Indicators and Measures (CIM) Framework: Executive Summary

We need to prepare them [students] for their whole life, not just for a job or good academic success, but preparing them for their life.

Context

Recognizing the lack of an evidence-based Canadian framework to understand the effects of Comprehensive School Health (CSH), in the spring of 2013, the pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH) commissioned the Social Program Evaluation Group (SPEG) at Queen's University to develop a set of Core Indicators and Measures (CIM). The goal was to understand how CSH enhances student achievement. To accomplish this goal, the SPEG team, in collaboration with the JCSH, consulted three data sources: scholarly literature, grey literature, and interviews with 24 experts from across Canada (two from each JCSH jurisdiction).

Process

The development of this report went through six stages:

1. Clarification of the research objectives in light of the history of CSH efforts in Canada and elsewhere;
2. Development of an analytical lens using cognitive, behavioural, and affective domains;
3. Analysis of recent scholarly literature (2000-2013) on CSH and student achievement;
4. Analysis of recent grey literature on CSH and student achievement;
5. Analysis of interviews SPEG team members conducted with 24 Canadian CSH experts;
6. Synthesis of the three data sources into a CIM Framework.

At each stage, SPEG and JCSH worked together to ensure that theory was informing practice and practice was informing theory.

Challenges

- Lack of literature on *comprehensive, integrated, and holistic* approaches to school health (most research studies focused on a single aspect of school health, commonly, healthy eating and physical activity);
- Lack of research in the unique Canadian context (much research was conducted in the United States);
- Lack of a broad-based understanding in the research on student achievement (researchers tended to see student achievement as individual academic achievement).

Categories of Indicators

Academic Indicators: Academic indicators most closely represent traditional views of achievement as an outcome of Comprehensive School Health initiatives. As such, academic indicators were the foremost ones reflected in the research and were consistently mentioned in the interviews.

Achievement Test Scores (Cognitive): *When I hear student achievement, marks, grades, and graduation come to mind immediately. That's all.*

Attendance (Behavioural): *If they're [students] not coming to school, that's the first problem, so any impediments to attendance have to be addressed.*

Academic Motivation (Affective): *How students feel about themselves and about their work is reflected in their performance academically.*

Success Indicators: One of the key principles of Comprehensive School Health is the extension of student achievement beyond academic achievement, often referred to as student success. Success indicators recognize a more holistic view of student achievement.

High School Progression (Cognitive): *Students being academically successful often entails finishing school – graduating with a diploma.*

Student Participation (Behavioural): *That's what student achievement means to me – healthy, well-balanced students that are engaged.*

Mental Health (Affective): *I think of the whole person. The social and emotional well-being of these students. I think of just everything.*

Environmental Indicators: While environment can be seen as a factor of CSH rather than as a CSH achievement indicator, it is both. CSH success is dependent on altering the environment. As such, environment becomes an indicator of (or at least precursor to/proxy for) student achievement.

Understanding of Comprehensive School Health (Cognitive): *You need to get people to understand what the steps in the process are.*

Adult Engagement (Behavioural): *Superintendents, principals, RCMP, different health services type stuff, all the community.*

Inclusive School Environment (Affective): *We are dedicated to a rich experiential environment, particularly as we want to accommodate [diversity].*

Common Indicators and Measures (CIM) Framework

	COGNITIVE	BEHAVIOURAL	AFFECTIVE
ACADEMIC INDICATORS	<i>Achievement test scores:</i> standardized tests, GPA, report cards	<i>Attendance:</i> absences, lates, suspensions/expulsions	<i>Academic motivation:</i> academic self-concept/self-efficacy, self-regulation, self-confidence, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, coping strategies
SUCCESS INDICATORS	<i>High school progression:</i> graduation rates, graduating with Honours, credit attainment, drop-out rates, post-secondary plans	<i>Student participation:</i> number of activities in which students participate, type of participation (e.g., leadership; on-task/off-task), variety of participation (in-class, extra-curricular, community), quality of participation (student engagement, peer relationships)	<i>Mental health:</i> well-being, ill-being, suicidal tendencies, depression, school connectedness
ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS	<i>Understanding of Comprehensive School Health:</i> student, teacher, school administrator, parent, community	<i>Adult engagement:</i> parent and family member authentic engagement in school, teacher and administrator professional development, community partnerships	<i>Inclusive school environment:</i> safety, accepting environment, positive school culture, healthy school “buy-in”

If we use the CIM framework to judge students and schools based on the extent to which they match a standardized level on these indicators, we neglect the powerful effects of socio-environmental factors on students' lives.

Next Steps

We must expand our research into Comprehensive School Health within the Canadian context in line with the four JCSH pillars (teaching and learning; social and physical environments; healthy school policy; partnerships and services). Additionally, we must move beyond academic achievement, especially as measured by achievement test scores, to an expansive view of student achievement that encompasses academic, success, and environmental indicators within cognitive, behavioural, and affective domains. The pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health is ideally situated to accomplish both these goals. How does the JCSH move forward?

- ❖ The JCSH has shown over its mandate a constant commitment to support Canadian research into Comprehensive School Health. As such, the JCSH can leverage the CIM Framework to create opportunities for research that is based on all four JCSH pillars and that moves beyond studies that focus on a singular health outcome, such as physical activity or healthy eating.
- ❖ With its connections to policymakers, practitioners, and researchers from both education and health sectors across 12 provinces and territories, the JCSH has the forum upon which to create a greater vision for Comprehensive School Health and its measurement. The JCSH needs to mobilize its pan-Canadian resources to disseminate the findings from this report. Open discussion around how we as Canadians can help our young people to thrive in the 21st century is greatly facilitated through a consortium such as JCSH.

When we show students that we care about them and not just about their results, then we create a better environment where students learn.

[Illustrative quotes in italics are taken from interviews with Canadian school health experts.]