

School Health Promotion in Manitoba

Manitoba in Profile¹

The province of **Manitoba** is located between Saskatchewan and Ontario, at approximately the center of the country. Land and freshwater area total almost 650,000 square kilometers.

Manitoba enjoys a rich population mix, with people from every continent and virtually every country in the world providing a wide infusion of cultures and a broadened heritage. The Aboriginal population of Manitoba was joined by the Scottish Selkirk settlers in 1811, English and French Canadians after confederation in 1870, followed by Russian Mennonites, Icelanders, Ukrainians and Germans in subsequent years. Post W.W.II saw additional immigration from Europe and most recently from the Caribbean, South America, Africa and Asia.

Manitoba's school system is comprised of public schools, independent schools that receive provincial funding, non-funded independent schools and home-schooled students. Public schools operate directly under the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth. These schools are governed by locally elected school divisions/district boards. The operation of independent schools varies. Some schools are affiliated with a specific religious or denominational group. They have their own governing bodies or boards. Independent schools are eligible for provincial funding if they implement the Manitoba curriculum and meet a number of additional requirements.

English and French are the languages of instruction in Manitoba. Schools that provide French language instruction fall into one of two program models:

- *French Immersion* schools are intended for students for whom French is a second language.
- *Français* schools are intended for students for whom French is a first or home language.

The responsibility for providing for the delivery of, and administering, health services is delegated to 11 Regional Health Authorities or RHAs, each of which sets the policy framework (consistent with the provincial objectives and priorities) and strategic priorities for their region and allocates resources according to these priorities. There is no formal link between the school divisions and RHAs.

Healthy Schools Manitoba

Healthy Schools is Manitoba's school health initiative. It attempts to reach students by promoting health within and beyond the classroom. Designed to promote the physical, emotional, and social health and wellness of students, their families, school staff, and school communities, Healthy Schools is based on the belief that health is important to learning and that schools are uniquely positioned to influence healthy child, youth, and family development. The

¹ Sources: *A Statistical Profile of Education and Training in Manitoba 2000-01 to 2004-05*, Department of Education, Citizenship, and Youth and Manitoba Health Population Report June 1, 2006

mission is to create school environments that enhance the healthy development of children and their families by working in partnership with community service providers and resources.

The initiative draws on the principles of Comprehensive School Health² and:

- incorporates a population health focus (recognizing the impact of the determinants of health)
- recognizes that neighbourhoods (environmental factors) affect health
- acknowledges that families and communities can positively influence the health of students
- complements rather than replaces or duplicates existing services and supports
- recognizes the interdependence between health and learning
- promotes partnerships
- encourages community development (leadership opportunities and student participation in decision-making)
- incorporates the principles of best practice and evidence (standards for assessing and developing high quality programs are based on current research and ongoing evaluation).

Understanding that the needs, issues, and concerns of students, families, and schools differ from community to community, there are nonetheless five key elements in the Healthy Schools model:

- Access to health and social supports (and these include health, social and related services)
- Integrated teaching strategies (e.g. connections between curricula; the combined [Physical Education/Health Education curriculum](#))
- Healthy physical and social environments
- Community partnerships
- Healthy lifestyle choices

Healthy Schools focuses on six important health issues in the school community:

- Physical Activity
- Healthy Eating
- Safety and Injury Prevention
- Substance Use and Addictions
- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Mental Health Promotion
- Environmental Health
- Dental Health

For additional information, see the [Healthy Schools Booklet](#).

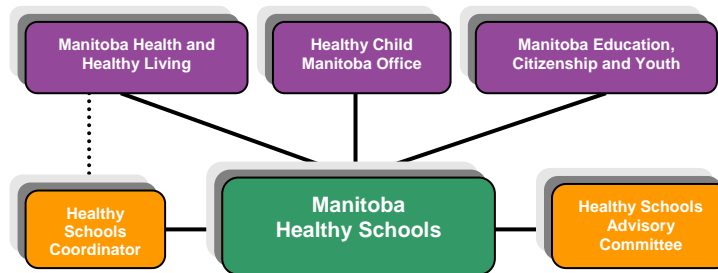
² “Comprehensive School Health includes all the school activities which promote the health of children. In particular, it includes health services, health and physical education instruction, and a healthy school environment.” Accessed July 9, 2007 at www.gov.mb.ca/healthyschools/about/csh.html

Background

Healthy Schools was first introduced in Manitoba in 2000 as the “Nurses-in-Schools” program with a view to increase public health and primary health capacity in schools and promote wellness activities in the larger school community.

In December 2002, a provincial consultation forum bringing together government, non-government, health education, and community representatives enlarged the original concept and this led to the development of a Healthy Schools Framework that now guides many educators, health professionals, parent councils, and others as they work towards comprehensive school health in their communities. A [follow-up consultation](#) in October 2006 provided some perspectives on progress made, challenges to implementation, and the supports needed to increase awareness.

Healthy Schools is a partnership between [Manitoba Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors](#) (HLYS) (the lead department), [Manitoba Education](#) (ME), and [Healthy Child Manitoba](#) (HCM) (which is a partnership of all departments connected to children and is run by the [Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet](#) (HCCC), comprised of 8 cabinet ministers).

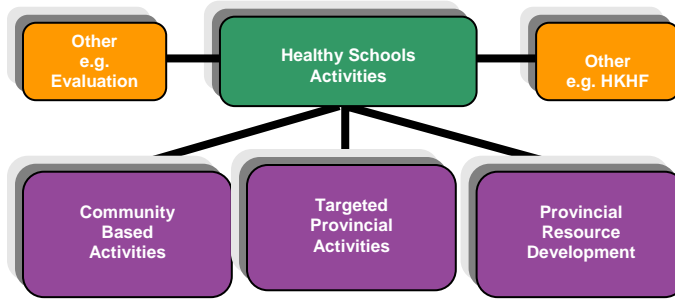


All three partners share funding but there is no Memorandum of Understanding. Healthy Schools reports through the Ministry of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors who chairs the HCCC. A Healthy Schools Management Team includes the Director of Healthy Populations (reporting to an Associate Deputy Minister of Healthy Living), the Programs Director of the *Bureau de l'éducation française*, (reporting to an Assistant Deputy Minister of Manitoba Education), and the Executive Director of HCM. The Healthy Schools Consultant position is housed in the Healthy Populations Branch and liaises with the French and English-language physical education/health education curriculum consultants in Manitoba Education.

Implementation

Implementation of the Healthy Schools initiative depends on the voluntary participation of 11 Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and 37 school divisions which are autonomous and set their own strategic priorities. A number of regions have a healthy schools committee (where both the health and education sectors participate) to facilitate planning and implementation. Ideally, these committees would meet on a regular basis, assess the community to identify priority issues and follow up with plans and implementation.

The [Healthy Schools Framework](#) includes three main components.



- *Community-based activities* are promoted by funding to school divisions to facilitate their ability to work with regional health authorities and other local resources in developing and/or implementing Healthy Schools activities. The funding creates opportunities for organizations to work together to develop plans and implement activities consistent with the Healthy Schools Framework.

At the start of each school year school divisions are provided with \$5,000 plus approximately \$1.30 per student. Some divisions choose division-based activities (e.g. development of a divisional nutrition policy). Some divisions chose school-based activities, either by dividing funding between schools or having schools submit proposals. Some divisions chose a combination of both divisional and school based activities. Levels of participation and partnership among school divisions and RHAs vary as a result of differences in capacities and priorities. School divisions must report at the end of every school year and indicate how the funds were spent, how the community, staff, and students were involved, etc. Examples of Community-based activities include:

- Wellness promotion (e.g. workshops, fairs, days) on various health topics.
 - Purchase of equipment and/or materials (e.g. sports equipment, food, books, etc.).
 - Implementation of programs and staff training (e.g. Lions Quest, Friends for Life, FAST, Kids in the Know, Substance Use).
 - Distribution of kits (successful learners, kindergarten, healthy living, medicine bags, tobacco reduction).
 - Presentations to students on various topics (e.g. bullying, Teen Talk, MADD).
 - Development and implementation of division wide healthy living (e.g. nutrition) policy.
- *Targeted provincial campaigns* are undertaken on specific health issues (such as safety/injury prevention, physical activity, healthy eating, mental health promotion, active living).

Healthy Schools typically hold two campaigns per year (fall and spring). Participating schools receive \$100.00 (plus \$0.35 per student) to undertake an activity related to a specified health topic. Examples of targeted-provincial campaigns have included:

- Hosting a family information event.

- Hosting a school-wide rally.
 - Organizing student presentations.
 - Inviting a guest speaker.
 - Creating a bulletin board to post information.
 - Encouraging student council to run an event.
 - Creating poems, songs or posters contests.
 - Designing ads or public service announcements.
 - Creating school policies.
- Resources are developed for province-wide use.

The following are the resources available online:

- The [Healthy Schools](#) website provides information and educational materials to assist school communities to promote health.
- [Healthy Schools Resource Directory](#) featuring a searchable listing of services, programs and organizations throughout Manitoba related to child health and education, as well as a variety of other useful topics. Healthy Schools worked with CONTACT Community Information (a program of Volunteer Manitoba) to develop this customized directory. CONTACT houses Manitoba's most comprehensive listing of province-wide community services, programs and organizations.
- an electronic subscription ([Healthy Schools eNews](#)) service that provides the latest information about Manitoba Healthy Schools, and updates to Healthy Schools, Healthy Food in Schools, and **Healthy Schools in motion**.
- a [Healthy Schools newsletter](#) that will be distributed to all schools and school divisions and that will grow into an opportunity to tell stories and share experiences learned in implementing Healthy Schools.
- a Healthy Schools [PowerPoint presentation](#) that stakeholders can use to explain and promote the Healthy Schools initiative.
- A [Resource Index](#) (an annotated list of resources including websites, lesson ideas, activities and games, books, manuals, guides, workbooks, workshops/ speakers, training, information sheets, programs, reports, videos/DVDs, kits, etc.), focusing on the six key health topics, featuring information for school staff, parents, youth, and children.

Other activities complement the Healthy Schools initiative. These activities include those stemming from [Healthy Kids](#), [Healthy Futures](#), a series of recommendations (some directed at school communities) developed by an all-party task force. Examples include:

- **Healthy Schools in motion**, a highly visible component of **Manitoba in motion** which promotes and supports daily physical activity in schools. Schools can become **in motion** by working toward the goal of 30 minutes of physical activity every day for every student.
- **I Love to Run** promotes moderate and vigorous physical activities for teachers, students and their families. Students are encouraged to log their moderate and vigorous activities for one month and work toward an individual goal for that month.

- **Nutrition in Schools** mandating all schools in Manitoba to establish school nutrition policies. Schools are provided resources through the [Food in Schools](#) website and a copy of the [Manitoba School Nutrition Handbook: Getting Started with Guidelines and Policies](#) document.
- [Low Cost Bike Helmet Initiative](#), where all preschool and school-aged children in the province are provided an opportunity to purchase affordable bike helmets for the whole family.
- **Mandating the Physical Education/Health Education curriculum** from grades K-12. [Resources](#) have been developed to assist schools with implementation.

Other activities also include the **Healthy Schools evaluation**. A baseline survey was sent to all schools in Manitoba in the spring of 2005 and again in 2007, to understand the strengths and challenges schools face in supporting health.

Challenges and Keys to Success

Decentralization of RHAs and school divisions poses a challenge. Because RHA and school divisions are autonomous and set their own priorities, there is no control over the rate or approach used in implementation. Funding of school divisions is meant to encourage partnerships and the efficient and effective use of available resources, but partnerships cannot be mandated. They must rely on previously developed relationships and local champions. Differences in capacities (e.g. human resources) and geographical challenges partially explain differences in implementation, but not all. A recent environmental scan is expected to shed light on challenges to partnerships and how they can be more effectively fostered.

On the other hand, a major key to success is the high-level partnership and relationships among the three Healthy Schools partners. The visibility and support that accrues from this partnership guarantees a dedicated position for Healthy Schools and implementation support.

Benefits of JCSH Membership

The benefits that accrue from membership in the Consortium include knowledge exchange and networking that assist representatives of Manitoba Healthy Schools to uncover information and resources to continue to improve the initiative. A national perspective creates a single, strong voice for school health across the country. A key event (2006 conference) served to enhance Manitoba's already strong internal partnerships: as a result of the benefits perceived from key partners spending time together at this conference, the School Health Interested Partners group was formed, chaired by an ADM of Manitoba Education, and continues to meet to ensure continued and collaborative movement forward.

For additional information contact **Andrea Lamboo Miln** at Andrea.Lamboo-Miln@gov.mb.ca or visit Manitoba's Healthy School website at www.gov.mb.ca/healthyschools