This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Sat Oct 31 8:59:16 2026 / +0000 GMT

Help make your school a healthy one

What makes a school healthy? Healthy schools inspire students, parents and teachers to make the school environment a safe, welcoming, active and inclusive one. You may find staff personally greeting each student by name as they come in the door, outdoor gardens and classrooms, and ample opportunities for physical activity. The overarching goal of the ?healthy schools' approach is to consistently strive for optimal student health and well-being, as a complement to other educational goals.

Why is this important? Research has shown that students attending health-focused schools are happier, healthier, and do better academically. A healthy school also gives students more opportunities to participate and make a difference. And finally, a healthy school ideally looks for ways to make the school environment more positive for teachers and staff.

It is hard, though, for schools to achieve this alone. Parent volunteers and community partners are vital to the success of many school health initiatives. One way you can be involved is to suggest to your local school that they create a healthy school committee, if the school doesn't yet have one. Through the committee, parents, community agencies, teachers, staff and students at the school will have a forum to identify priority health issues and create a plan of action.

As an example, here's how one local school addressed the topic of positive mental health promotion. The school administration recruited partner agencies to join teachers and students in a community mental health committee that met weekly at the school. This group was able to plan and hold a number of events at the school. A mental health night invited parents to get together for a potluck meal and to learn about mental health supports and services in their local community. A mental health fair day enabled students to learn about constructive ways to deal with common stress. Triple P parenting sessions were offered after school, to help parents learn effective ways of dealing with common and stress-producing misbehaviours in children.

School nutrition, as another example, has been addressed by looking at the availability and quality of snack and breakfast programs, offering smoothie stations, fundraising with healthier food options like frozen meat instead of chocolate bars, and school lunch monitors giving prize ballots for students who bring in a healthy lunch.

The possibilities for how a school can become a healthier place are limited only by the imagination. As parents, community partners, neighbours and students, we have the opportunity to strive for optimal health and well-being for ourselves and others, and our schools are a great place to start.

By Dr. Lisa Simon