

Handouts to Support Completion of the Healthy Schools Six-Step Process

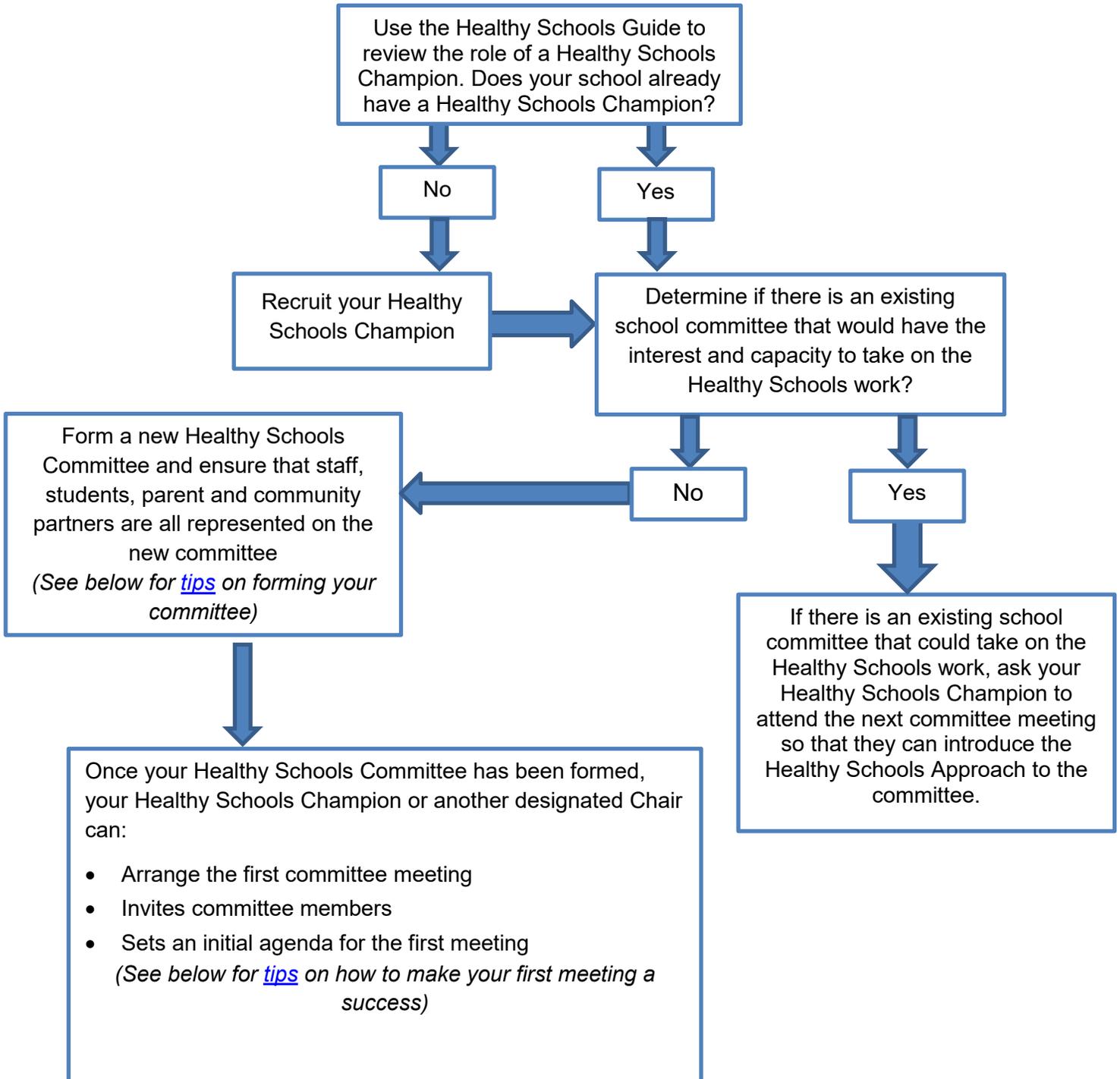
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Step 1: Establish A Healthy Schools Committee

Establishing Your Healthy Schools Committee:

The first step to becoming a Healthy School is to establish your Committee. Walk through the following items to determine the first steps and identify potential committee members:





A Healthy Schools Champion:

- Someone in the school regularly, such as a teacher, parent/guardian, administrator, child and youth worker, early childhood educator, etc.
- They demonstrate enthusiasm and a keen interest in student wellbeing.
- Models healthy behaviours.
- Communicates regularly with school administrators on Healthy Schools activities.
- Establishes the Committee and is the primary contact for group members, community partners and media.
- Promotes Healthy Schools and recruits committee members from school and community.
- Organizes committee meetings and books meeting times and locations.
- Prepares and distributes agendas and meeting notes.
- Facilitates the planning and implementation process, including evaluation and celebration.



A Healthy Schools Committee:

- Assesses strengths and identifies areas for enhancing the health of the school community.
- Decides on a priority topic and creates goals and success indicators for student wellbeing.
- Oversees the planning, implementation, monitoring and reflection of health-related activities that support the committee's goals and cover the five interconnected areas of the Ministry's Foundations for a Healthy School.
- Connects with other school committees as needed to collaborate on school activities (e.g. school improvement teams, school council, eco-schools).
- Organizes celebration events that unite the school community and showcase achievements.

Recruiting Healthy Schools Committee Members

General Tips

- Try to hold meetings at times when staff, students, parents and community partners can participate (e.g. Lunch break, before or after school, evenings).
- Promote the benefits of Healthy Schools through Newswire/School Day, feature events, and recognize exemplary committee members.
- Highlight how Healthy Schools complements pre-existing school activities and initiatives.
- Encourage committee members to promote involvement through word of mouth to other staff, parents, and community members.
- Post agendas and minutes on the school website or a designated bulletin board to generate member interest when they see the great work the Committee is doing!

Group-Specific Recruitment Tips



Students

- Invite students from a range of grades.
 - All ages can be involved in some capacity; however, students in grades four and up can benefit from a more active role in planning and implementation.
 - Consider ways that older students can support and mentor younger students.
 - Remember – older students will be graduating soon, so a varied age range of student involvement will help build capacity for years to come!
- Put up posters and make P.A. announcements inviting students to join the Committee.
- Invite students to participate on the Committee by hosting short introductions at your:
 - School council meeting
 - Student council meeting
 - Other clubs/team meetings



Parents and Community Members

- Present at the Parent/School Council meeting and invite the school community to learn more.
- Advertise the Committee at school events (e.g. Parent night, school B.B.Q.).

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- Hand out fliers, provide a sign-up sheet, and speak to parents/community members directly.
 - Post recruitment announcements on the school website or in the school newsletter, or through school social media platforms.
 - Identify and approach parents who already take an active role in the school community and invite them to get involved.



Staff

- Hang fliers in the staff room or place them into staff mailboxes.
- Invite participation from members of pre-existing health-related teams, committees or groups.
- Identify staff interested in health and mention Healthy Schools as a great way to pursue their passion further.
- Advertise Healthy Schools as a support for curriculum requirements and school board mandates.
- Share success stories from other schools to build excitement around all that Healthy Schools has to offer!

Making Your First Healthy Schools Meeting a Success

Your first committee meeting is a time to welcome members, get energized and set the stage for a successful year ahead!



Introductions

Welcome, everyone! Try an icebreaker to learn more about committee members and encourage interaction among the group. Give each member a welcome folder used to organize materials throughout the year.



Review the agenda

Prepare a brief agenda ahead of the first meeting and review it as a committee (see Template – agenda and notes). In the first meeting, the agenda should focus on introductions, setting a committee name and vision, and drafting terms of reference.



Draft your terms of reference

Visit the [Healthy Schools](#) website to find the terms of reference template.

Discuss values and objectives

Discuss what values come to mind when committee members think about a healthy school. Write down some ideas for goals and objectives, using the examples in Template – Terms of Reference as a guide. These can be finalized at a later meeting.

Determine membership

Think about who should be represented on your committee (parents, students, staff, administration and community members) and how many individuals from each group. Membership should be reviewed annually and confirmed at the first meeting of the school year.

Complete a contact list

Make a list with contact information for each member. Student members can be listed by classroom and teacher's name. Post a copy of the list on a designated school bulletin board, so school community members know who to contact if needed.



Set roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities determine how the committee will run. Discuss the role of the chair, note taker, Healthy Schools Champion and committee members using the Terms of Reference template for ideas. Edit the template content to fit your committee's needs. Having these guidelines will prevent any miscommunication right from the start.

Healthy Schools Champion

Energizes and helps facilitate the committee and may fill the chairperson or note taker role.

Chairperson

The Healthy Schools Champion may choose to chair meetings but if possible, try rotating the chair to share work and give others leadership opportunities.

Note taker

The note taker could be a standing role or something that is rotated among members by asking for a volunteer at the start of each meeting. A sample template for taking notes is available on our [Healthy Schools](#) website, under templates.

Committee member

Discuss what is required of committee members, for example, prompt attendance at meetings, active participation in discussions and assisting with completing the action plan items and reflections.



Discuss Working As A Group

Decide on basic guidelines that the group will use to work cooperatively, including determining meeting frequency, times and location, how decisions will be made, and ground rules for respect. See 'Handout – Tips for Running Effective Committee Meetings' for sample ground rules. Specify who the Committee should report to and when.



Get creative - give your Committee a name!

End the meeting by brainstorming a committee name. Encourage students to shine and take the lead!



Closing the meeting

To encourage involvement and to build momentum, suggest members bring their ideas for committee goals to the next meeting. Try setting the next meeting date together as a committee to ensure the date and time works for most members. The chair ensures all members receive an agenda before the next meeting.

Tips for Improving Your Committee Meetings

Effective meetings improve how members plan activities, make decisions and solve problems.



Before the meeting

- Set meeting dates in advance and send out reminders.
- Do your best to make the meeting space comfortable and accessible.
- If needed, arrange a laptop and projector for each meeting.
- Ensure that meeting notes with agreed actions, and any required materials are circulated to all members before the meeting.
- Put together a meeting agenda to keep the meeting organized. Visit the [Healthy Schools](#) website for a sample agenda template.
- Be Prepared! Think of ways to facilitate conversation - bring tools to steer the conversation.



Suggestions for an Effective Agenda

- List each item.
- Highlight those attending, guests, and regrets.
- Identify who is leading each conversation topic.
- Time limits for each item.
- Identify whether each item needs a decision or if the next steps are required.
- Reminder on agenda if attendees need to bring or have anything prepared.



During the meeting

Review ground rules

Ground rules should be determined as a group in the first few meetings. Agree that everyone is responsible for helping each other follow the ground rules. Revisit and revise the rules as needed.

Sample ground rules

- Be on time and return from breaks promptly.
- Share the speaking time, honour time limits, and stay on topic.

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- Communicate changes in meeting times well in advance.
 - Ask if you are not sure of the meeting's purpose.
 - Come prepared.
 - Turn cell phones off or set them to vibrate.
 - Participate in the meeting (share ideas, speak honestly, ask questions).
 - Respect confidentiality.
 - Speak one at a time.
 - Remember that all ideas are valid.
 - Be positive and stay open to new ways of doing things.



Leading and Facilitating the Meeting

The chair leads the Committee's discussion, ensuring the agenda is covered. The chair should:

- Introduce and welcome new members, e.g. try an ice breaker or team-building activity.
- Review the agenda and, if needed, review the ground rules (once set) at the start of the meeting.
- Encourage participation, ask for input, and use open-ended questions (instead of questions requiring a yes and no answer).
- Keep everyone on track with the agenda.
- If agenda items are going over time, decide as a group whether the discussion should continue or be revisited at a later time.
- Listen actively, acknowledge input and summarize what is said.
- Wrap up each agenda item by repeating key decisions and action items to help the note-taker capture key points.
- At the end of the meeting, it's important to summarize and review key decisions and action items to be completed between meetings.
- Ask for any questions or concerns from members.
- Identify who will complete each action item and by what time.
- Ensure meeting notes are sent out to all members after the meeting.
- Provide feedback on committee progress and thank members for their participation.



Committee Decision-Making Tips

In making any big decision, a number of steps are involved. Ensure all members:

- Have read or heard all relevant information.
- Understand the committee's goal and objectives.
- Are aware of all possible options, including resources and limitations.
- Have enough time to ask questions and process information.

If you have created a Terms of Reference for how decisions are made (by vote or consensus), refer to the Terms. All decisions should be clearly written in the meeting notes.

End of the Meeting



Summarize Clear Outcomes

It's important to use action items between meetings to continue moving toward the committee's goals. At the end of the meeting, the chair should:

- Ask for any questions or concerns from members.
- Close the meeting by reviewing key decisions and action items.
- Identify who will complete each action item and by what time.
- Ensure meeting notes are promptly circulated to all members after the meeting.
- Acknowledge progress that was made and thank members for their participation.

Communicating About Healthy Schools: Sample Messages

Below are some sample announcements for each step of the Healthy Schools approach. Adapt and personalize these messages to suit your school's unique needs.



Step 1 – Establishing a Healthy Schools Committee

PA announcement sample

Healthy students = healthy learners = brighter futures! This is what our school is working to achieve. We are excited to announce our school is becoming a Healthy School. This means there is an opportunity for staff, students, parents and community members to join our Healthy Schools Committee and make a difference in the health of our school community. If you would like to learn more about Healthy Schools and how to get involved, contact _____ (Healthy Schools Champion). An information session will be held on _____ (date). Get involved and stay tuned for more updates and exciting events throughout the year. We are on our way to making our school the best it can be!

Newsletter sample

Did you know our school started a Healthy Schools Committee? It is a group of students, teachers, parents and community members working to make our school a healthier place for all! The Healthy Schools Committee will focus on addressing a priority health topic by developing an action plan of activities, events, and initiatives to support improved health for the whole school community. By working together, we can create a healthier school environment. We encourage students, staff, parents and community members to join the Committee and work with us in building a healthy school. If you are interested in joining or want to learn more, we invite you to the first Healthy Schools Committee meeting, which will be held on _____ at _____. Please contact _____ to get involved. See you soon!



Step 2 – Assessing your school's strengths and needs sample message:

Your Healthy Schools Committee is well on its way to developing a plan to improve our school's health, and they need your help! As an important member of the school community, the Committee wants your input – What are our school's strengths? What areas can we improve on? Voice your opinion on what we should work on this school year. Contact _____ (Healthy Schools Champion) to share your thoughts.



Step 3 – Determine your priority topic sample message:

Your Healthy Schools Committee has decided on a clear focus for this school year! At our last meeting, we reviewed everyone's ideas, looked at our school data, and discussed a number of health topics. We are excited to share that our priority topic this year will be _____. We would like to involve the whole school community with activities that will help us meet our goal of improving _____ (priority topic) and our overall school health. Stay tuned for ways you can get involved or contact _____ (Healthy Schools Champion).



Step 4 – Create your healthy school's action plan sample message

Your Healthy Schools Committee is busy putting together an action plan with ideas to improve _____ (priority topic) in our school community. One activity that we are working on is _____ (Provide details on an activity or promote an event and how staff and students can get involved). Continue to check _____ (Newswire/School Day), the school website, and/or social media for information about upcoming activities and events you can participate in.



Step 5 – Monitor your progress sample message

Thanks to your support and participation, we have made excellent steps towards becoming a healthier school! A few examples of our accomplishments this year include _____ (list activities). We know it's important to always take time to reflect and learn from what we've done. One example of what we learned is _____ (Provide an example action the school will take based on what was learned). Congratulations to everyone involved! Let's keep the momentum going by continuing to work together to make our school the healthiest it can be.



Step 6 – Year end celebration sample message

Your Healthy Schools Committee would like to thank the entire school community for the support and amazing participation seen throughout the school year with the many actions we took to improve _____ (priority topic)! We have accomplished a lot, including _____ (list accomplishments). This success would not have been possible without the hard work and input of the Healthy Schools Committee and the entire school community. As we wrap up this year and begin planning for next year, we'd like to invite new faces to join the Healthy Schools Committee. If you're interested in joining the Committee for next year, contact _____ (Healthy Schools Champion). Our Healthy School has a bright future, and we're excited to continue this great work with more exciting ideas next year!

Step 3: Determine Priority Topic

Sample Goals and Success Indicators

Now that your committee has determined a priority topic, the next step is to develop goals. The purpose of your goal is to state what you would like to see within your school community. The goal does not need to include the specific steps you will take to achieve this broader vision.

Next, consider how you will know if you've reached your goal. Ask yourself, "what can we measure to know we've been successful?" Use the answers to this question to write success indicators. When writing these success indicators, it is helpful to use the S.M.A.R.T acronym outlined below.

Be S.M.A.R.T. About Your Success Indicators!

S — Is your success indicator **specific** to your goal?

M — Can you easily **measure** your success indicator?

A — Is your success indicator **achievable** given your timeframe and resources?

R — Is your success indicator **realistic** for your goal?

T — What is the **timeframe** to measure your success indicator?



Healthy Eating

Sample Goals

- Become a healthier school by improving knowledge of healthy food and beverage choices.
- Create a supportive school environment that encourages healthy beverage and food choices.

Sample Indicators

- From December to June, plan and implement two school-wide campaigns or events that increase staff, student and parent understanding of healthy beverage and food choices.
- By the end of June, 50 per cent of food options brought in by staff for meetings or celebrations will meet maximum nutritional value guidelines.
- Commit to ensuring that all new fundraising activities involve selling non-food-related items or healthier food items when planning for next year.



Physical Activity

Sample Goals

- Increase staff and student movement throughout the school day.
- Create a supportive school environment that encourages staff, students and parents to be physically active before, during and after school.

Sample Indicators

- Students lead the creation of motivational physical activity messages to be shared four times (from December to June) through bulletin boards, Newswire/School Day and/or the school's website and social media accounts. These messages encourage others to get active.
- From December to June, administration will schedule two staff team-building activities that encourage physical activity.
- By the end of the year, 90 per cent of classrooms report a 20-minute increase in total weekly Daily Physical Activity (DPA) time as measured through classroom surveys.



Mental Health

Sample Goals

- Improve staff, student and parent mental health and wellbeing by improving coping and resiliency skills.
- Increase connectivity and sense of belonging among the school community.

Sample Indicators

- From December to June, staff will implement two new activities to encourage regular connection and a sense of belonging, such as Fruit Fridays or Walking Wednesdays.
- By June, a designated "chill zone" will be created in the school with seating, tables and activities where students can gather daily.
- By the end of the year, 75 per cent of students can identify three coping strategies they can use when faced with a problem if asked in a classroom survey.

Step 4: Create and Implement an Action Plan

Avoiding Mixed Messages in Healthy Schools



What are mixed messages?

School activities and events can touch on many health topics at once, such as healthy eating, physical activity, active transportation, positive mental health, substance misuse prevention and sun protection. Inadvertently, schools may introduce mixed messages when there are inconsistencies between health messages and healthy schools activities. For example, less healthy food may be used as an incentive to participate in wellness activities or sold as a fundraiser for healthy schools activities.

When Healthy Schools' actions do not align with the health messages of the school, there can be unintended consequences, including:

- Diminishing the importance of the health message. For example, giving out food and beverages that fall under the "Foods to Limit" in Canada's Food Guide at a school event suggests that healthy eating isn't that important.
- Creating an unsupportive environment that tempts staff, students and parents to engage in behaviours they might not otherwise, such as school-wide events like Donuts for Dads and Muffins for Moms.
- Inadvertently exposing staff, students and parents to harmful behaviours, such as sitting for an extended time at a conference or being at an outdoor event where individuals can't escape the sun or heat and there is no shade, sunscreen or water provided.



How to avoid mixed messages

To avoid contradicting your school's values, consider possible mixed messages while planning all activities and events. The questions below will help ensure your initiatives fully support staff, student and parent health.

Questions to ask if you are selling or offering food:

- Do the food and beverage choices meet the criteria laid out in the School Nutrition Policy?
- Is there a place for people to wash their hands before serving food and eating?
- Can we use reusable plates, cutlery, or items that can be recycled or composted?
- If food will be offered outside, are we following food safety recommendations?



Questions to ask if you are hosting a meeting, presentation, health fair or other indoor events:

- Can we encourage attendees to carpool to the event?*
- Is the location easily accessible by public transit or easy to walk or bike to?*
- Does the location provide secure bicycle racks?*
- If participants will be seated during the event, can we build movement breaks every 60 minutes and include activities in the agenda encouraging participants to move?*

Questions to ask if you are running an outdoor event or activity:

- If the event is outdoors during high ultraviolet (U.V.) periods (April to September, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.), how can we provide shade for those working and attending the event?*
- How can we encourage and support participants and event workers to use sun protection (sunscreen, sunglasses, hats, and protective clothing) and to take breaks indoors as needed?*
- How can we encourage and support participants and event workers to use protection for West Nile Virus (protective clothing and insect repellent containing DEET) for evening or early morning activities during the late spring to the early fall season?*
- Are we following the Smoke-Free Ontario Act legislation and existing tobacco-use policies for our school and the location where the event is being held?*

Questions to ask if you will be raising money or offering prizes or incentives for participation:

- Do the items we sell support our health promotion messages?*
- Do the prizes and incentives we plan to offer support individuals to make healthy food and beverage choices, be physically active and mentally well?*

Questions to ask if you are running an event that involves physical movement or exercise:

- Have we included modifications to ensure activities are accessible for all?*
- Can we provide a rest area for participants to take breaks whenever needed?*
- Have we planned and included time for sufficient warm-up and cool-down?*
- How can we ensure that all participants have fresh tap water to ensure adequate hydration?*

Healthy Fundraising Ideas

Many traditional fundraising options organizations have used for years, such as selling chocolate bars, can inadvertently send mixed messages if the organization values health and wellness. However, there are now many more options for fundraising that will align with the goals of your Committee. Consider replacing unhealthy fundraising options with some of the healthy ideas listed below. Selling these items or hosting these events will help your school raise funds to support your school's values and sends a clear message that health and wellness are important to your school community.



Non-food fundraisers

Selling common and useful everyday items can be a great way to raise funds for your school. Another idea is to host an event at your school that invites family members, caregivers and the school community to come together to support your school. This is a great way to bring the school community together to showcase the great things your school is doing to promote health and wellness and can even help to promote a sense of belonging while raising funds simultaneously.



Sales

- School spirit wear (hats, bags, travel mugs, water bottles, sweaters, etc.)
- Calendars
- [Greeting cards](#)
- [Gift wrap, gift boxes/bags](#)
- Flowers, plants and hanging baskets
- [Seeds for gardens](#)
- Gift cards
- [Book fair](#)
- Magazine subscriptions
- Coupon booklets from local shops



Events

- Car wash
- [Dance-a-thon](#)
- Scavenger hunts
- Walk/run event
- Team sports tournament (bowling, softball, etc.)
- Family portrait sessions
- Arts and craft show
- Talent show
- Musical
- Raffles (movie or concert tickets)
- Holiday gift wrapping
- School carnival
- School dance
- Theme days (crazy hair day, p.j. day)
- Evening family events (e.g. movie night in the school gym)
- Electronic device recycling programs



Food-related fundraisers

You can still offer food-related fundraisers but try to select items that align with your school nutrition policies and that meet maximum nutritional guidelines. Some healthier options include:

- [Local fruits and vegetables](#)
- [Soup mixes](#)
- Frozen chicken or turkey breasts
- Spices
- [Air-popped popcorn](#)
- Healthy cookbooks

Sample Action Plan Ideas: Healthy Eating

When developing your action plan, align activities with your goals and success indicators. You can include activities under each of the five interconnected areas of the Ministry's Foundations for a Healthy School, as they have been divided below. This is not an exhaustive list but will provide ideas to build upon as you reflect on your school's unique needs and capacity.



Curriculum, teaching and learning

- [Bright Bites](#) is a way to promote healthy eating through earning badges and using social media.
- Evergreen and lifecycles have put together [Patterns Through the Seasons](#), which includes curriculum supports for a year of school garden activities and lessons for grades K-7.
- F.I.T.G.O. is a school-wide challenge that involves completing classroom activity cards on topics such as Healthy Eating, Daily Physical Activity, Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds and Healthy Environments.
- Food Literacy – use cross-curricular lessons to develop food literacy (e.g. create a healthy food budget in business class, work on measuring ingredients using fractions in math).



School and classroom leadership

- Explore healthy fundraising opportunities. (see Healthy Fundraising Ideas handout).
- Explore healthy lunch options – choose options with whole grains, vegetables and fruits.
- Organize school-wide campaigns such as Nutrition Month, where classrooms are challenged with a healthy choices door decorating competition.
- Celebrate diversity by discussing healthy foods from different cultural backgrounds.
- Incorporate more vegetables and fruits, and instead of a Cake Walk, have a Garden Walk.
- Avoid using unhealthy food as a reward.
- Role model healthy behaviours in front of students (e.g. using a reusable water bottle).



Student engagement

- Offer students the opportunity to be Food Helpers for the Nutrition for Learning Program.
- Seek student input into school menus for lunches and celebrations.
- Organize a cooking challenge where students invent dishes from available healthy ingredients and judges select winning recipes featured in the school newsletter or on the cafeteria menu.



Social and Physical Environments

- Engage the school community to source non-food alternatives for rewards and celebrations.
- Create and consistently follow school-wide healthy eating guidelines and policies.
- Create and maintain a school garden.
- Consider installing hydration stations to promote using refillable water bottles.
- Ensure water is promoted as the drink of choice at school celebrations and events.
- Establish new clubs such as a cooking club or salad club.
- Plan "Try It" days where the whole school community is invited to taste a new fruit or vegetable.



Home, school and community partnerships

- Promote family challenges such as trying a new healthy recipe featured in the school newsletter.
- Send home messages about creative, affordable ways to serve vegetables and fruit at home.
- Host an event that raises awareness about the importance of healthy eating by inviting a guest speaker, such as a dietitian, to share information, tips and tools with students, staff and parents.
- Partner with or visit a local nursery or farm to learn about growing fresh vegetables or fruits.
- Establish new healthy fundraising partnerships in the community, such as [Fresh from the Farm](#).
- Partner with a local community dietitian to work with students, staff and parents to create a healthy school cookbook.

Other resources:

- [Nutrition Month](#) — Dietitians of Canada
- [Ideas for Action: Healthy Eating](#) — Ophea's Resource Guide
- [Print resources and teaching kits are available](#) — Region of Waterloo Library
- [Student-Led projects](#) — Middlesex London Health Unit
- [School Food Garden Start-Up Guide](#) or [Community Gardens - Region of Waterloo](#) — Region of Waterloo Public Health

Sample Action Plan Ideas: Physical Activity

When developing your action plan, be sure activities align with your identified goals and success indicators, and can include activities under each of the five interconnected areas of the Ministry's Foundations for a Healthy School, as the suggestions below have been divided. This is not an exhaustive list but will provide ideas to build upon as you reflect on your school's unique needs and capacity!



Curriculum, teaching and learning

- The not-for-profit social initiative [activeforlife](#) includes resources and lesson plans for parents to help their children develop physical literacy skills.
- Find programs and information on physical activity benefits and guidelines at [participation](#).
- [Passport for Life](#) is P.H.E.'s online platform that assesses students' physical literacy skills and a teacher's guide with ideas and resources to help students set and achieve physical literacy goals.
- Ophea's new [Raise the Bar Intramural Program](#) provides an easy-to-follow 4-step process with everything needed to plan and run quality, inclusive, and sustainable intramurals.
- Ophea also has other resources, including [Lesson Plans and Activities](#), as well as [Daily Physical Activity ideas](#).

Incorporate movement into regular lesson plans

- Provide opportunities for students to stand or move during class time.
- Conduct lesson plans outside, where natural movement and exploration can take place.
- Administration and staff can act as role models by breaking up sedentary behaviour by finding ways to stand, stretch, and move every 60 minutes.



School and classroom leadership

- Develop a class timetable that ensures Daily Physical Activity (DPA) occurs consistently.
- Implement a school-wide DPA event (everyone does a similar activity simultaneously).
- Start a walking (or other activity) group for students and staff at lunch.



Student Engagement

Indoor/outdoor DPA at recess

- Train Healthy Schools Student Leaders and DPA Buddies.
- Develop student activity leaders through PALS or Recess Guardians training.

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- Have students plan indoor and outdoor recess activities, e.g. Rethink your Recess.
 - Have students create a list of DPA activities and develop a schedule for class participation.

Provide opportunities for student leadership

- Support students in planning classroom and school-wide activities that decrease sedentary behaviour.
- Have students work with a staff mentor to organize theme days incorporating movement.
- Seek student ideas and feedback on the types of physical activities your school offers before, during, and after school.



Social and physical environments

- Ensure physical activity equipment is in good condition and appeals to a wide variety of ages.
- Offer a variety of clubs, teams, and intramurals to encourage movement for everyone.
- Hold student versus teacher challenges (basketball, pedometer, pickleball, baseball etc.).
- Coordinate a walking or biking program (e.g. Walking Wednesdays, biking to school day).
- Install sidewalk markings and bicycle/scooter racks to support active transportation.
- Ensure adequate shade on the school grounds (buildings, awnings, umbrellas, trees).



Home, school and community partnerships

- Student Transportation Services can help plan student travel, including a Walking School Bus.
- Incorporate movement into special events (e.g. 'Family Fun Night' or parent education evenings).
- Connect with community recreation facilities for opportunities to try activities (e.g., tennis, skiing, snowshoeing, and curling).
- Partner with local agencies that can provide free or low-cost activities to students and families.
- Participate in community-wide fundraisers that promote physical activity, e.g. [Terry Fox Walk/Run](#).

Sample Action Plan Ideas: Mental Health

When developing your action plan, be sure activities align with your identified goals and success indicators, and can include activities under each of the five interconnected areas of the Ministry's Foundations for a Healthy School, as the suggestions below have been divided. This is not an exhaustive list but will provide ideas to build upon as you reflect on your school's unique needs and capacity.



Curriculum, teaching and learning

- [School Mental Health Ontario](#) is designed to help Ontario school boards promote student mental health and wellbeing through leadership, coaching support, resources, and a community of practice.
- Ophea - [Health & PhysEd Elementary Curriculum Supports](#); [Secondary Supports](#).
- Visit [Can We Talk](#) to access the Canadian Mental Health Association's mental health lesson plans for Grades 6-12.
- The [Umbrella Project](#) is a 19-month school-wide initiative that teaches skills for emotional wellbeing.



School and classroom leadership

- Send out a survey to staff, students and parents asking which topics are important to address in your school (e.g. Coping and resiliency skills; bullying; substance use, addictions and related behaviours; a sense of belonging; relationships etc.).
- Set up peer-mentoring or "buddy" programs (e.g. Providing reading assistance to younger students, supporting students transitioning into secondary school).
- Create a positive environment by implementing activities such as "Give, Take, or Pass" to share compliments or daily meditation in classrooms or on the announcements.



Student Engagement

- Gratitude graffiti — place mural paper around your school walls and ask students to write down things they are grateful for.
- Hallway Greetings (e.g. Fist bump, elbow touch, wave, head nod etc.) — encourage students to greet people they pass in the hallways throughout the day to help build a sense of belonging and connection.

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- Showcase students' unique strengths, talents, and interests by displaying student work in the hallway or through student-led assemblies, talent shows, or musical events.
 - Help student leaders plan wellness events for the school that highlight positive coping strategies.



Social and physical environments

- Create an indoor wellness space where students and staff can quietly engage in calming activities such as meditation, listening to music, playing with puzzles, drawing or journaling.
- Create an outdoor garden or gathering space where staff and students can mindfully connect with and explore nature.
- Use the [Bell Let's Talk](#) campaign to spark conversation about mental health at your school and keep the conversation going all year.
- Promote [Mental Health Week](#) by sharing information and resources that promote mental health through your school newsletter or social media accounts.
- Create opportunities for staff connection such as Coffee Mondays, Salad Thursdays, Walking Wednesdays or other special events or activities chosen by staff.



Home, school and community partnerships

- Promote family challenges such as putting all technology away during meals.
- Hold information sessions for parents. Consider using translators and approaching leaders from diverse communities to help create a welcoming, positive, and caring school environment.
- Build a sense of community by encouraging parents from diverse backgrounds to share their stories, cultures, histories and experiences through a classroom presentation or a school assembly.
- Contact community organizations that offer mental wellness activities such as yoga, mindfulness, social inclusion groups, music therapy, exercise classes, etc. and invite them to run staff and student wellness sessions at your school.
- Review the Kids Help Phone webpage for applicable resources and consider ordering some of their free posters and wallet cards for your school ([Order Form](#)).

Step 6: Evaluate and Celebrate

Healthy Celebration Ideas

Celebrations, both big and small, can occur throughout the year as your Committee completes action plan items. It is important to celebrate your achievements and recognize the hard work of everyone involved. Below are ways to recognize committee members and celebrate your Healthy Schools accomplishments.



Healthy Schools Committee:

- Submit an article and photo to healthyschools@regionofwaterloo.ca to recognize your Committee in the Public Health Virtual Nurse school e-newsletter.
- Profile committee work on one of your school bulletin boards.
- Thank committee members through school announcements or assemblies.
- Add a short 'shout out' section on each meeting agenda.
- Host a potluck for your Committee where everyone brings a healthy food item and recipe.
- Give each member a certificate of recognition.
- Take a picture of the Committee and recognize them in the year-end school newsletter.
- Organize a team end-of-year celebration activity (e.g. Indoor or outdoor game), serve healthy snacks and start discussing plans for next year.



School-Wide Celebration:

- Plan a mid-year celebration assembly involving the whole school community to highlight the healthy successes made to date.
- Host a wellness fair to share information and to show all the great things the school has been working on to become healthier.
- Provide ongoing updates to the school community through social media, newsletters and announcements.
- Plan family evenings combining curriculum and physical activity (e.g. math and physical activity).
- Invite family and caregivers to the school for a healthy meal or fun activity.
- Host a play day for primary and junior students organized and led by senior students with support from staff or the school council.
- Invite the whole school community to an end-of-year celebration assembly showcasing the school's achievements through creative performances.

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- Organize a free healthy school lunch or snack for the whole school.
 - Provide a certificate to each student to acknowledge their involvement in Healthy Schools activities throughout the year.
 - Send a thank you to parents in the school newsletter to appreciate their efforts to make your school healthier.
 - Organize a school graffiti board to celebrate your achievements. Pose a question, e.g. "what was your favourite Healthy Schools activity this year? Or "I did _____ to make my school healthier this year."
 - Create and display a large mural showcasing what your school has done to promote health.



Healthy Food Ideas For Events

- A vegetable tray served with hummus or tzatziki.
- Mini pizzas made using whole grain English muffins and vegetable toppings.
- Salads with a variety of options, including vegetables, leafy greens, lentils and grains.
- Reduced fat cheese, whole grain crackers, popcorn with minimal fat, salt and/or sugar added.
- Whole grain wraps with turkey and vegetables.
- Sliced fruit tray, served alone or with reduced fat yogurt dip.
- Yogurt parfaits or fruit smoothies.

Choosing Healthy Incentives and Rewards

General tips

- Common incentives and rewards such as candy or pizza parties often contradict the health messaging your committee promotes. Aim to replace these rewards with equally exciting options that align with your school's goals and values.
- Choosing rewards is a great opportunity to get students involved. Ask them how they like to be rewarded and encourage creativity!
- Remember, rewarding students does not have to cost anything. The simple act of giving thanks and recognition itself can often be enough.

Individual incentives and rewards

- Students can sit with a friend for a day/week.
- Allow a student to do the announcements.
- Give the student extra free time.
- Nominate a "student of the day" and give special privileges (e.g. line leader, lead DPA).
- Give out a "no homework" pass.
- Let a student use the teacher's desk for a day.
- Give a student a free yearbook.
- Let a student eat lunch with the teacher or principal.
- Dress up as the school mascot during an assembly or other school event.
- Give out a free entrance to a school dance.

Group incentives and rewards

- Allow the class to have extra time at recess.
- Teach outside on a nice day.
- Bring in a special speaker or visitor (e.g. local choir, author, artist).
- Allow the class to pick a theme day of their choice (e.g. P.J. day, hat day, fun hair day).
- Host a board games afternoon.
- Allow extended 'free time' in class (for reading, art, playing, etc.).
- Host a movie afternoon.