

Healthy Schools Handouts

Step 1

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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 first steps and identify potential committee members:

Find your Healthy Schools Champion

- Use the Healthy Schools Guide to review the role description and recruit your Champion accordingly.
- If there is an existing school committee that could take on Healthy Schools work, the Champion should attend the next committee meeting to introduce Healthy Schools.

If not partnering with a pre-established committee, establish a new committee

- Ensure staff, students, parents and community partners are represented.



A Healthy Schools Champion:

- Is someone who is in the school regularly such as a teacher, parent/guardian, administrator, child and youth worker, early childhood educator, etc.
- Demonstrates enthusiasm and a keen interest in student well-being.
- Models healthy behaviours.
- Communicates regularly with school administrators on Healthy Schools activities
- Establishes the committee and is the main contact for group members, community partners and media.
- Promotes Healthy Schools and recruits committee members from school and community.
- Organizes committee meetings, 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 well-being.
- 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.

For more information visit the Region of Waterloo's [Healthy Schools Website](#).

Recruiting Healthy Schools Committee members

General tips

- Try to hold meetings at times when staff, students, parents and community partners are able to 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. This can 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 grade 4 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 PA 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 club/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 BBQ)
 - Hand out fliers, provide a sign-up sheet, 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 into staff mailboxes.
- Invite participation from members of pre-existing health-related teams, committees or groups.
- Identify staff with an interest in health and mention Healthy Schools as a great way to further pursue their passion.
- 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!

For more information visit the Region of Waterloo's [Healthy Schools Website](#).

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 that can be 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'). For the first meeting, the agenda should focus on introductions; setting a committee name and vision; and drafting a terms of reference.



Draft your terms of reference

Contact healthyschools@regionofwaterloo.ca to request a 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 both 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. Having these guidelines will prevent any miscommunication right from the start. Discuss the role of chair, note taker, Healthy Schools Champion and committee members using the 'Template – Terms of Reference' for ideas. Edit the template content to fit your committee's needs.

Healthy Schools Champion

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

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 provided to support this role.

Committee member

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



Discuss working as a group

Decide on basic guidelines that the group will use to work cooperatively. This includes determining meeting frequency, times and location as well as 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 is then responsible for ensuring all members receive an agenda in advance of the next meeting.

For more information visit the Region of Waterloo's [Healthy Schools Website](#).

Tips for Running Effective Committee Meetings

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



Before the meeting

- Set meeting dates well in advance and send out reminders.
- Do your best to make the meeting space comfortable and accessible.
- If possible, arrange a laptop and a projector for each meeting.
- Circulate action items, meeting notes and required materials.
- Always have a meeting agenda to provide direction and purpose.



Agenda should include

- Clear meeting objective(s).
- An explanation of each item and its purpose.
- An indication of who is leading each conversation topic.
- Time limits for each item.
- Notes about whether each item needs a decision or if next steps are required.
- Information about what attendees need to bring or have 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

Respect everyone's time.

- Be on time and return from breaks promptly.
- Share the airtime, honour time limits and stay on topic.
- Communicate changes in meeting times well in advance.

Respect the work of the committee

- Know the meeting's purpose and desired outcomes and ask if unclear.
- Come prepared. Success depends on participation (share ideas, draw others out).
- Turn cell phones off or set to vibrate.
- Honour confidentiality.



Respect each other

- Speak one at a time and do not interrupt others.
- Respect each others' thinking and value contributions.
- Ask questions, seek common ground and understanding.
- Be positive and stay open to new ideas.



Leading and facilitating

The role of the chair is to direct discussion and ensure meeting objectives are met. The chair should:

- Introduce and welcome new members; try an ice breaker!
- Review the agenda and ground rules at the start of meeting and seek agreement.
- Encourage participation, ask for input, use open ended questions.
- Keep the discussion moving forward by redirecting to the agenda if conversations go off track.
- If items are going over time, decide as a group whether the discussion should continue or be revisited at a later time.
- Listen actively, acknowledge and summarize what is said.
- Wrap up each agenda item by noting key decisions and action items.



Decision making

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 constraints.
- Have sufficient time to ask questions and process information.

Refer to your terms of reference for how decisions are made (by vote or consensus). All decisions should be clearly captured in the meeting notes.

End of the meeting



Summarize clear outcomes

It's important to use action items between meetings to continue moving towards 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.

For more information visit the Region of Waterloo's [Healthy Schools Website](#).

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 that will 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

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

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 schools action plan

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

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

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!

For more information visit the Region of Waterloo's [Healthy Schools Website](#).