

Health Assessment Tool for Schools (HATS)

The **Health Assessment Tool for School (HATS)** is a series of checklists that help school communities define practices and programs that positively influence health behaviours related to active living, healthy eating and mental well-being. The results from these checklists are used to guide the yearly plans of Albertan schools and to help them follow a health promoting school (HPS) approach. According to the World Health Organization, a health promoting school:

- *Fosters health and learning with all the measures at its disposal.*
- *Engages health and education officials, teachers, teachers' unions, students, parents, health providers and community leaders in efforts to make the school a healthy place.*
- *Strives to provide a healthy environment, school health education, and school health services along with school/community projects and outreach, health promotion programmes for staff, nutrition and food safety programmes, opportunities for physical education and recreation, and programmes for counselling, social support and mental health promotion.*
- *Implements policies and practices that respect an individual's well being and dignity, provide multiple opportunities for success, and acknowledge good efforts and intentions as well as personal achievements.*
- *Strives to improve the health of school personnel, families and community members as well as pupils; and works with community leaders to help them understand how the community contributes to, or undermines, health and education.¹*

HATS was developed by Ever Active Schools in partnership with APPLE Schools (Alberta Project Promoting active Living and healthy Eating), the University of Alberta School of Public Health, and Schools Come Alive.

Did you know?

Healthy students have better academic success. Students that have a high quality diet have a 30% lower failure rate than those students whose diet is of low quality².

Schools that actively promote health make children healthier.

Research has clearly shown that schools that provide a health promoting school (HPS) approach in their school community can positively affect physical activity levels and the diet quality of students. These schools can also reduce the amount of screen time that students spend in a day as well as reduce the chances of students being obese or overweight³.

Healthy students are happier. Active students are less susceptible to stress, exhibit positive attitudes about school and themselves, are less aggressive, and play better with fellow students⁴.

¹ Source: World Health Organization website, accessed Aug 2008: http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/hps/en/

² Florence, Asbridge and Veugelers. "Diet Quality and Academic Performance." *Journal of School Health*, American School Health Association. April 2008, 78 (4).

³ Veugelers and Fitzgerald. "Prevalence of and risk factors for childhood overweight and obesity." *CMAJ*. September 13, 2005, 173 (6).

⁴ Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 1992.

A comprehensive approach to student health and well-being achieves the best results. A health promoting schools approach (HPS) is the most effective way to affect student health and is the suggested model to effectively improve health behaviours. The HPS approaches that have seen the biggest health behaviour gains are those that address active living, healthy eating and mental well-being⁵. An HPS approach is supported by Alberta Education's *Guide to Implementation* for the K-9 Health and Life Skills and K-12 Physical Education programs of study.

The 4 Es. Everyone, Education, Environment and Evidence, the 4 Es of the Ever Active Schools (EAS) program, have been identified by researchers and teachers as essential components of health promoting schools. These four areas form the health promoting school framework used as the basis for the HATS.

How do I use HATS?

HATS is intended to be completed by school community members annually and used as a tool to guide the development and implementation of school planning. The HATS tool is most effective if a variety of stakeholders with a variety of perspectives and needs are asked to complete the checklists; e.g., students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members. Spring is often the best time of year to use HATS, as the results can then be coordinated with other school initiatives and implemented in the fall for the new school year.

When using HATS:

First ... invite members of the school community, e.g., students, teachers, school staff, administration, parents and community partners, to complete HATS.

Then ... follow the process outlined in the *Facilitation Guide to Implementing the HATS Tool* found at: www.everactive.org.

Throughout the year ... access the resources available from Ever Active Schools and community partners to support the development and implementation.

At the end of the year ... consider inviting EAS staff to facilitate a discussion of your results.

Schools that are members of Ever Active Schools will complete the HATS annually to track progress. The data gathered through this tool will contribute to a province-wide sharing and assessment network.

For more information about HATS and healthy school communities, visit:

www.everactive.org and www.appleschools.ca.



Alberta



⁵: Stewart-Brown, S. "What is the evidence on school health promotion in improving health or preventing disease and specifically, what is the effectiveness of the health promoting schools approach?" WHO Regional Office for Europe (Health Evidence Network report: <http://www.euro.who.int/document/e88185.pdf>, accessed Mar 2006).

Essential Elements of Health Promoting Schools

Everyone	<i>Collaborating in a meaningful way with the people involved in the everyday life of the school and equal and inclusive opportunities for everyone to make healthy choices.</i>
Shared Vision	The school community (e.g., students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members) develops a shared vision of their health promoting school.
Ever Active Committee	Students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members are active participants on the Committee, whose primary purpose is to develop and implement an HPS plan.
Equitable Opportunity	Students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members, regardless of gender, age, ability, race, religion, or socioeconomic status, are invited to participate. All events are accessible to all students.
Community Engagement	The Committee fosters partnerships and communications with parents and community members to support the school's health promotion plan.
Education	<i>Supporting a culture of learning for all school community members including wellness-related programs for students and health promotion learning opportunities for teachers, staff and parents.</i>
Curriculum Implementation	Students are engaged in quality learning experiences to achieve the outcomes included in all wellness-related programs.
Adult Learning Opportunities	Teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members have consistent access to learning opportunities related to health promotion.
Environment	<i>Fostering safe social and physical environments in the school, home and community, implementing policies that enable healthy active lifestyles and cultivating a place where everyone knows they belong.</i>
Healthy Social Environment	Students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members are engaged and feel connected to the school environment.
Healthy Physical Environment	The school environment provides physical support for healthy living; and facilities are maintained for safety and access.
Policies	Policies, requirements and initiatives are developed at the provincial, regional, district and school levels to support a health promoting schools approach.
Evidence	<i>Collaboratively identifying goals, planning for action and gathering information to indicate the effectiveness of actions to support healthy active lifestyles throughout the school community.</i>
Health Promoting School Plan	The Committee develops a plan to ensure goals, initiatives and resources support the school community's shared vision.
Assessment	The Committee, in partnership with Ever Active Schools, gathers and reviews data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the HPS plan.

Note! The numbers 1, 2, 3 & 4 below are for data gathering purposes only. The categories for the online version are: **Not Yet, A Good Start, Well Done and WOW!**

Everyone <i>Collaborating in a meaningful way with the people involved in the everyday life of the school and equal and inclusive opportunities for everyone to make healthy choices.</i>				
Eve. #1: Shared Vision The school community (e.g., students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members) develops a shared vision of their health promoting school.				
a. The shared vision is developed or reviewed annually.	1	2	3	4
b. The shared vision represents the priorities, needs and culture of the school community.	1	2	3	4
c. The school administration supports the development of and participates in the visioning process.	1	2	3	4
d. The shared vision influences decisions about the implementation of wellness-related programs.	1	2	3	4
e. The shared vision is communicated to the school community.	1	2	3	4
Eve. #2: Ever Active Committee: Students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members are active participants on the Committee, whose primary purpose is to develop and implement an HPS plan.				
a. The Committee meets regularly and develops a plan based on the shared vision that meets the needs of the school community.	1	2	3	4
b. The roles and responsibilities of the Committee members are clearly defined and documented.	1	2	3	4
c. All Committee members are actively involved.	1	2	3	4
Eve. #3: Equitable Opportunity: Students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members, regardless of gender, age, ability, race, religion, or socioeconomic status, are invited to participate. All events are accessible to all students.				
a. Healthy food choices, physical activity opportunities and mental well-being initiatives at the school are offered at little or no cost.	1	2	3	4
b. Decisions and practices of the school community are frequently monitored and reviewed to ensure inclusiveness.	1	2	3	4
c. A clear, two-way parent/community communication system has been established that includes e-mail, website, newsletters, phone calls and so on.	1	2	3	4
Eve. #4: Engagement: The Committee fosters partnerships and communications with parents and community members to support the school's health promotion plan.				
a. The community is included in school-wide activities and events that promote healthy active lifestyles; e.g., Nutrition Month, Walk to School Day, Random Acts of Kindness Day.	1	2	3	4
b. Parents and community members are influential decision makers in the school.	1	2	3	4
c. Community resources are accessed to support the wellness-related programs and to enhance participation in physical activity, healthy eating, and mental well-being initiatives in the school.	1	2	3	4
d. Parents and others are easily able to volunteer to help with events and initiatives.	1	2	3	4
e. The community served by the school is very supportive of the school.	1	2	3	4
f. Students requiring specialized health services are appropriately supported through partnerships with health authorities.	1	2	3	4

Education <i>Supporting a culture of learning for all school community members including wellness-related programs for students and health promotion learning opportunities for teachers, staff and parents</i>				
Edu. #1: Curriculum Implementation: Students are engaged in quality learning experiences to achieve the outcomes included in all wellness-related programs.				
a. School administrators and teachers are familiar with the learning outcomes in wellness-related programs.	1	2	3	4
b. The teachers are comfortable with the material, confident in their knowledge and supportive of the delivery of wellness-related programs.	1	2	3	4
c. Reluctant learners in wellness-related programs are provided with support.	1	2	3	4
d. Daily Physical Activity is fully implemented and its activities follow the guiding principles outlined in Alberta Education's Guide to Education: ECS – Grade 12.	1	2	3	4
e. Students learn through high quality learning experiences in Physical Education and Health and Life Skills programs that follow the provincial programs of study.	1	2	3	4
f. Resources to support the implementation of wellness programs are known to teachers, readily available and accessed often.	1	2	3	4
g. Students develop an appreciation of healthy living and model positive behaviours by learning about wellness in many subject areas.	1	2	3	4
h. Teaching and learning opportunities encourage family involvement in a variety of ways.	1	2	3	4
Edu. #2: Opportunities: Teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members have consistent access to learning opportunities related to health promotion.				
a. Teachers are encouraged to attend adult learning opportunities for wellness-related programs and mandated initiatives.	1	2	3	4
b. Adult learning opportunities in the school are tailored to meet the needs of the school community and are offered regularly, at a variety of times and for a reasonable cost.	1	2	3	4
c. Adult learning opportunities increase awareness of the shared vision and direction of the HPS plan for the school.	1	2	3	4
d. Teachers have access to a mentor/champion who supports effective implementation of wellness-related programs and a HPS approach.	1	2	3	4
e. Teachers and administrators are willing to change practices as necessary in light of new understandings of health promotion in schools.	1	2	3	4
f. Leaders in the school encourage staff to evaluate their practices and refine them as needed.	1	2	3	4
g. Leaders in the school have high expectations for the school community.	1	2	3	4

Environment <i>Fostering safe social and physical environments in the school, home and community, implementing policies that enable healthy active lifestyles and cultivating a place where everyone knows they belong.</i>				
Env. #1: Healthy Social Environment: Students, teachers, school staff, administrators, parents and community members are engaged and feel connected to the school environment.				
a. Leaders in the school set a respectful tone for interactions with students, staff and community members.	1	2	3	4
b. A peer support or mentoring program is in place and supported by administrators, teachers and parents.	1	2	3	4
c. Student voices are heard through student leadership opportunities, Committee involvement and planned activities to assess student opinion/action.				
d. A variety of communication strategies with parents and families have been used to improve the health and educational climate in the home.	1	2	3	4
e. Members of the school community model the culture of a HPS so it becomes part of everyday thinking at the school. (or: part of the way schools operate.).	1	2	3	4
f. Physical Education classes maximize the use of physical activity spaces in the school community and provide a variety of activity options.	1	2	3	4
Env. #2: Healthy Physical Environment: The school environment provides physical support for healthy living; and facilities are maintained for safety and access.				
a. The school environment reflects the shared vision through visual displays, messaging, events and initiatives.	1	2	3	4
b. Physical barriers to physical activity, healthy eating and mental well-being opportunities have been addressed.	1	2	3	4
c. Indoor and outdoor spaces are used throughout the day and before and after school to maximize physical activity and learning for students and adults in the school community.				
d. Equipment is regularly inspected and updated to provide a variety of safe opportunities for all students.				
e. The school budget supports the shared vision and implementation of the HPS plan.	1	2	3	4
Env. #3: Policies: Policies, requirements and initiatives are developed at the provincial, regional, district and school levels to support a health promoting schools approach.				
a. Policies and procedures are established to support the engagement of all students in the school community.	1	2	3	4
b. Policies and procedures are established to support a healthy school environment.	1	2	3	4
c. Guidelines and policies regarding physical activity, healthy eating, mental well-being and other health-related issues align with the HPS plan.	1	2	3	4
d. If food is provided at school, all children who need to be fed. If feeding students at schools, all children should be provided with food without being singled out as not being able to pay for their food.	1	2	3	4
e. The HPS plan has been developed, implemented and assessed in collaboration with school community members.	1	2	3	4
f. Administration, teachers, students and parents are involved in developing HPS school policies and guidelines related to physical activity, healthy eating and mental well-being.	1	2	3	4

g. District policies reflect the goals and purposes of an HPS approach.	1	2	3	4
h. Provincial, local and national guidelines are reviewed when developing policy; e.g., School Nutrition Guidelines by Alberta Health and Wellness are used to develop a school nutrition policy.	1	2	3	4

Evidence <i>Collaboratively identifying goals, planning for action and gathering information to indicate the effectiveness of actions to support healthy active lifestyles throughout the school community.</i>				
Evi. #1: Health Promoting School Plan: The Committee develops a plan to ensure goals, initiatives and resources support the school community's shared vision.				
a. The HPS plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reflects the shared vision. identifies short-term and long-term goals. includes strategies for gathering and sharing promising practices. identifies indicators for each goal. designates specific responsibilities, timelines, and resources. is developed, implemented and reviewed by the Committee. identifies initiatives and events that support district and provincial mandates. includes a variety of initiatives and events that support the 4 Es. is monitored. 	1	2	3	4
b. The goals of the HPS plan are embedded in the school's 3 year business/improvement plan.	1	2	3	4
c. The goals of the HPS plan encourage the successful implementation of wellness-related programs.	1	2	3	4
d. Evidence of the effectiveness of the HPS plan is appropriately and widely communicated.	1	2	3	4
Evi. #2: Assessment: The Committee, in partnership with Ever Active Schools, gathers and reviews data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the HPS plan.				
a. Multiple strategies are employed to gather data from all school community members related to the implementation of HPS strategies, initiatives and events.	1	2	3	4
b. Goals, indicators and information gathering procedures are communicated to the school community.	1	2	3	4
c. Assessment and evaluation of the HPS plan is ongoing and reflective of each of the 4 Es.	1	2	3	4
d. Results of the assessment strategies inform the ongoing planning of the Committee.	1	2	3	4