

ACHSC Consensus Statement for Healthy School Communities

This Consensus Statement has been prepared by the **Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities (ACHSC)**. ACHSC is a registered non-profit society representing a network of individuals and organizations committed to promoting and fostering healthy school communities through a comprehensive school health (CSH) approach. The coalition's vision is to support and inform government planning, provincial organizations, and school communities to understand the correlation between student success and school health.

In Alberta there is policy and legislation that would support stakeholders in creating healthy school communities such as:

- Amendments to the Education Act 33(d) A board shall ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board and each staff member employed by the board is provided with a welcoming, caring respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.
- In 2007, Alberta Education and Alberta Health and Wellness developed the "Strategic Plan to Create Healthy Alberta School Communities". The wellness related priorities, identified in this document were: Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, and Positive Social Environments.
- Daily Physical Activity (DPA). DPA is based on the belief that healthy students are better able to learn and that school communities provide supportive environments for students to develop positive habits needed for a healthy, active lifestyle (Alberta Education).
- The Ministries of Education and Health have endorsed and support the implementation of the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth (ANGY) in schools and districts across Alberta.

It is our belief that every school-aged child or youth has the right to be part of a safe, caring, healthy school community. We also recognize that when students are healthy, they are better able to learn, lead and become ethically engaged members of society.

Healthy School Communities

Schools are an ideal setting to support students to develop competencies, attitudes, skills and knowledge, to ensure improved health outcomes. A **healthy school community** embeds a culture of wellness for the entire school community using a comprehensive school health framework to create an inclusive, collaborative and connected environment.¹ It is a community that supports the wellness of all its members (e.g., students, teachers, staff, parents, administrators, community partners) and continuously strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.^{2,3}

Comprehensive School Health (CSH)

The pan Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH) states that CSH is an internationally recognized framework for supporting improvements in students' educational outcomes while addressing school wellness in a planned, integrated and holistic way. It is not just about what happens in the classroom. Rather, it encompasses the whole school environment with actions addressing four distinct yet inter-related pillars that provide a strong foundation for a healthy school community:

- Social and physical environment
- Teaching and learning
- Healthy school policy
- Partnerships and services (see Appendix B)

When actions in all four pillars are harmonized, students are supported to realize their full potential as learners – and as healthy, productive members of society.

Working Together

The programs, activities and services delivered within such comprehensive approaches to school health are the responsibility of everyone in the community: young people; families; professionals; all levels of government; non-government institutions, agencies and organizations; the business community; volunteer sector; and the broader community.

Each individual, organization and government department can potentially contribute to improved health and learning outcomes for all Alberta children and youth through strategic planning and supports that target the pillar areas outlined in a CSH approach. Effective linkages between partners and coordination at all levels, from provincial to local school levels, are fundamental to sustainability (adapted from the Canadian Consensus Statement).

This statement has been endorsed by a number of provincial organizations that support healthy school communities.

APPENDIX B

Pillars of Comprehensive School Health⁴

When We Say	We Mean
Social and Physical Environment	<p>The social environment is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of the relationships among and between staff and students in the school.• The emotional well-being of students.• Influenced by relationships with families and the wider community. <p>The physical environment includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The buildings, grounds, play space, and equipment in and surrounding the school.• Basic amenities such as sanitation and air cleanliness.
Teaching and Learning	Resources, activities and provincial/territorial curriculum where students gain age-appropriate knowledge and experiences, helping to build the skills to improve their health and wellbeing.
Healthy School Policy	Management practices, decision-making processes, rules, procedures and policies at all levels that promote health and wellbeing, and shape a respectful, welcoming and caring school environment.
Partnerships and Services	<p>Partnerships are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The connections between the school and students' families.• Supportive working relationships within schools (staff and students), between schools, and between schools and other community organizations and representative groups.• Health, education and other sectors working together to advance school health. <p>Services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community and school based services that support and promote student and staff health and wellbeing.

1 Developing Healthy School Communities Handbook (2013). Page 1.2. Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund.

2 Health promotion: better health, better learning guidelines for health promotion with schools and preschools [Resource Guidelines] (2006). Centre for Health Promotion, Government of South Australia, Australia.

3 Joint Consortium for School Health, 2008

4 Joint Consortium for School Health, retrieved from website: <http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/index.php/school-health> (January, 2014)

Endorsements:

The Alberta Policy Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention and the following agencies within it:

- Action on Smoking and Health
- Alberta Centre for Active Living
- Alberta Public Health Association
- Alberta Recreation and Parks Association
- Canadian Cancer Society, AB/NWT Division
- Cardel Place (Calgary)
- Dietitians of Canada, Alberta and Territories
- Ever Active Schools
- Growing Food Security in Alberta
- Heart and Stroke Foundation
- Injury Prevention Centre
- Lung Association of Alberta and NWT
- Policy, Location, and Access in Community Environments (PLACE)
- Promoting Optimal Weights through Ecological Research (POWER) Lab
- Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere (SHAPE)
- School of Public Health, University of Alberta

Alberta Health Services

The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies (ISMSS), University of Alberta

The ASBA Student Health and Wellness Task Force Sub-Committee, The Alberta School Boards Association

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

The Alberta School Councils' Association

APPLE Schools

The Alberta Medical Association

The Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund

Alberta Milk (Alberta Milk has not formally endorsed the Consensus Statement because of its current endorsement of the Canada's Food Guide vs. our endorsement of the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth. They did, however, request a seat on any future Board of Directors of ACHSC).