

# Healthy Schools Program Annual Report 2022-2023



# Healthy Schools Program

## Annual Report 2022-2023

Since 2018, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) has partnered with Hastings Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) and Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) to operationalize the [School Health Guideline, 2018](#) in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties (HPEC). This report highlights the work that has been accomplished over the past year and will help guide planning for the following school year.

## Healthy Schools Program

The [Healthy Schools Program](#) is an evidence-informed program which promotes and supports student health and well-being. The program works with decision-makers to ensure the health and well-being of children and youth across our communities. The program offers health promotion and clinical services to individuals and whole school communities.

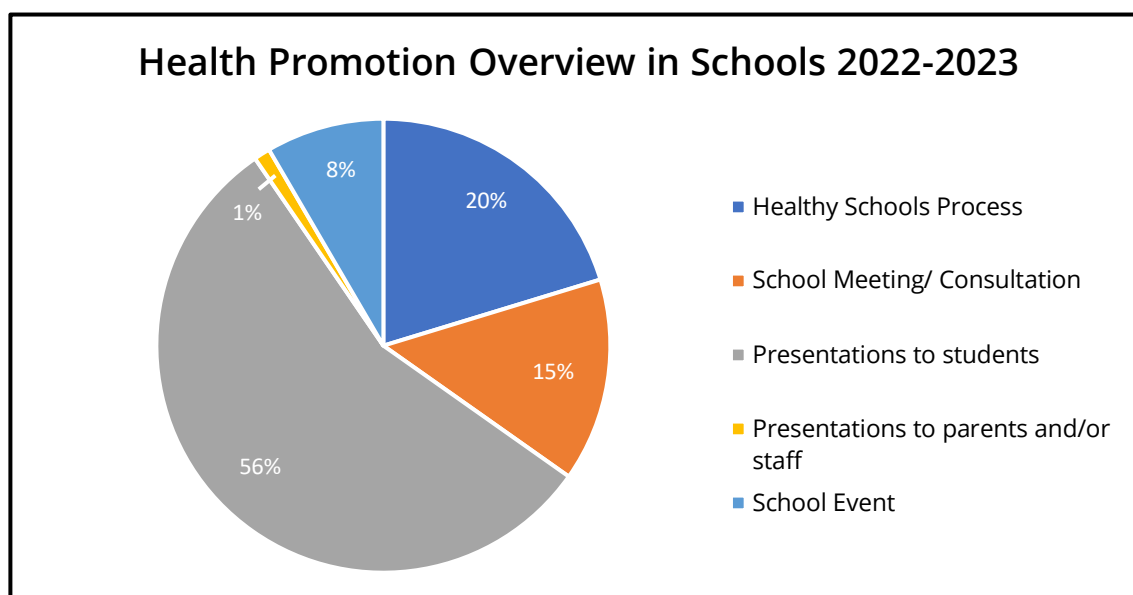
As identified in the annual year end survey sent to school administrators and staff (n=61), 99 per cent of school staff were very satisfied or satisfied with the support their school received from HPEPH during the 2022-2023 school year. Survey respondents shared comments such as: "It is so great to have public health right in our building. It's a huge asset for both the staff and students."

### Health Promotion Services

The Healthy Schools Program provides a variety of health promotion services in schools. These services are aimed at supporting curriculum and health needs in school settings. Services include presentations to staff, parents, and students, attending school events and meetings, and supporting schools in the healthy schools process (also known as comprehensive school health).

**"Comprehensive school health** [also called the healthy schools process] is an internationally recognized approach to supporting improvements in student's educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated, and holistic way." - Joint Consortium for School Health

**Table 1: Health Promotion Overview in Schools 2022-2023**



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## The Healthy Schools Process (Comprehensive School Health)

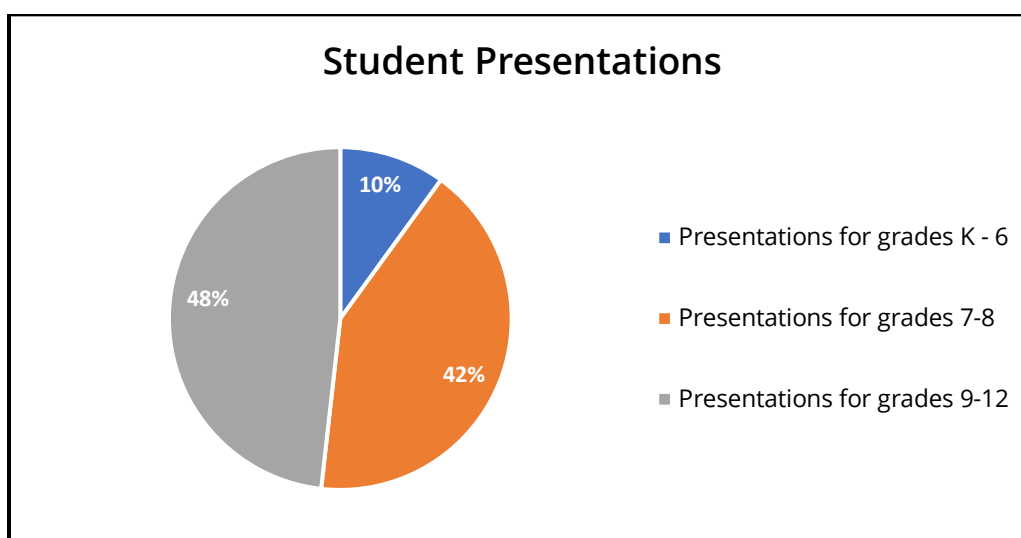
In 2022-2023, the Healthy Schools Program supported schools to implement comprehensive school health through our [Healthy Schools Toolkit](#). The toolkit provides strategies, tips, and tools that focus on a comprehensive approach to school health and helps to create a healthy school environment, thereby contributing to student success. A total of 13 local schools (seven high schools and six elementary schools) developed teams and submitted action plans. This represents 70 per cent of our priority secondary schools and 43 per cent of our priority elementary schools. Ten of the schools identified mental health as the priority topic for their action plans, while the others identified healthy eating and physical activity. Highlights of successful activities that schools completed included food skills workshops, school spirit days, a lacrosse workshop, creating and distributing exam stress kits, reinvigorating a school garden, and development of a sensory garden.

Most of the secondary schools included activities during Mental Health Week 2023, held annually in May, as part of their action plans. Activities included succulent plantings, cookie decorating, therapy dog visits, positivTEA and chill space, Just Dance activity, yoga, photobooth, and mural painting.

## Presentations

Presentations are used to support curriculum or provide education about health topics based on a need in the school community. Healthy School team members facilitated 280 presentations to students and nine presentations to staff and/or parents. Table 2 outlines the age groups that received presentations. The most requested presentation topic was vaping, follow by sexual health/healthy growth and development (i.e., contraception, STI, consent etc.) School staff feedback included “Amazing presentations and learning!” and “Vaping presentations for Grade 6 students were great!”

**Table 2: Overview of Student Presentations**



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This year, HPEPH, ALCDSB, and HPEDSB were part of a pilot project to receive the [Catch My Breath](#) (CMB) nicotine vaping prevention program. While CMB is known to be effective for students in Grades 6 to 9, the pilot program was designed to look at how it would be used secondary school and to judge the uptake by Grade 9 students. The pilot project included two local high schools, Bayside Secondary School and Nicholson Catholic College, with a total of eight classes, representing approximately 200 students. The CMB program has four sessions that feature hands on activities and discussions about topics such as health effects, the vaping industry, marketing tactics, and refusal skills. This information will be used to determine the most acceptable vaping prevention program to offer in HPE schools in the future.

### School Events

The Healthy Schools team attended 55 events at local schools to promote public health services and health promotion messaging. These events included school BBQs, meet the teacher nights, Grade 9 orientations, welcome to kindergarten events, and school engagement “fun” fairs.

There were a few special events that were made possible through grant funding. The Healthy Schools team assisted local schools in receiving \$10,000 through the ParticipACTION Community Challenge grants. These grants were provided to remove barriers and increase physical activity and sport participation for equity-deserving groups. Local initiatives included lacrosse workshops and equipment, Playground Activity Leaders (PALS) training and equipment, and a school spirit day to provide non-traditional physical activity opportunities. The events were very successful, and schools are working to keep the programs running for the next school year.

### Healthy Schools Resources

HPEPH offers a variety of education and curriculum support resources through the Educators section of [hpePublicHealth.ca](http://hpePublicHealth.ca), including monthly newsletters from HPEPH, newsletter inserts for school distribution, social media resources, lending kits, and action guides. All these resources are evidence-informed and aimed at supporting educators with teaching health-related curricula and creating positive school environments.

HPEPH distributed 10 educator E-newsletters to a subscriber list of 93 individuals from September 2022 to June 2023. The most popular topics were our September “Welcome Back to School” edition, mental health, and healthy eating.

There were over 5,000 pageviews for the HPEPH Educators section in 2022 and 2023. The action guide with the most web traffic was the “[Substance Use, Addiction and Related Behaviours](#)” page. This page had 1,820 pageviews, which is 35 per cent of the entire Educator section pageviews. The next most viewed pages were general healthy schools, human development, and sexual health and immunization.

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## Healthy Schools Staff Training

Public health staff need the appropriate skills to deliver our programs and services in an effective and empathetic way. The Healthy Schools team completed several training and professional development opportunities this year to better equip them to support schools. These included:

- Rainbow Health Ontario – 2SLGBTQ Foundations Course
- Indigenous Cultural Safety – San’yas
- TEACH – E cigarettes and vaping: Approaches to Address Use in Adults and Youth
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Ontario Healthy School Conference

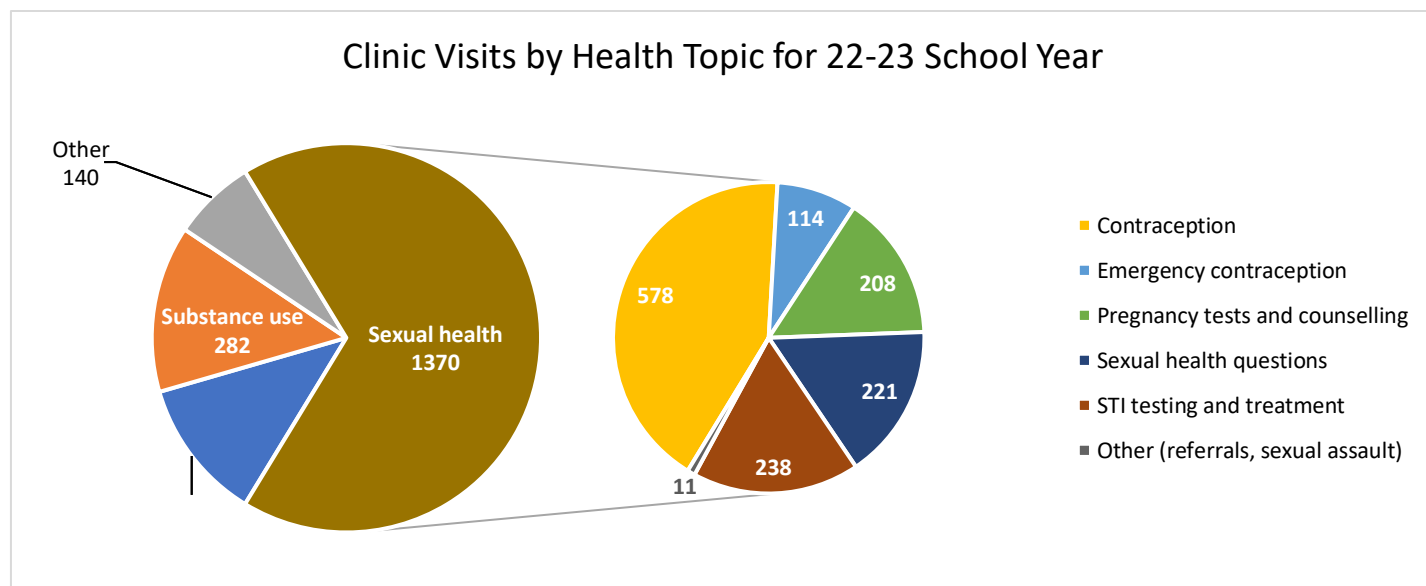
## School Public Health Clinics

[School-based public health clinics](#) were provided weekly at 10 secondary schools in HPEC in both the HPEDSB and ALCDSB (limited sexual health services available in ALCDSB schools). Public health nurses provided the following services to support student health and well-being:

- Contraception (including emergency)
- Pregnancy testing
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment
- Tobacco and vaping cessation
- Mental health and substance use early identification, support, and referrals
- Immunization

During the 2022-2023 school year, the public health clinics in schools received a total of **2,032 visits**. Table 3 outlines the clinic visits by health topic. The 140 visits in the “other” category include health topics such as immunizations, disordered eating, referral to primary care provider, pregnancy follow up and dental concerns. The smaller chart to the right outlines subtopics of all sexual health visits.

**Table 3: School-Based Public Health Clinic visits by health topic from September 2022 to June 2023**



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Schools are overwhelmingly satisfied with services provided to students through the school-based public health clinics. In the year end survey, 97 per cent of respondents (i.e., school administrators and other school staff) reported they were very satisfied or satisfied with the clinic services. Respondents also reported on the positive relationships the public health nurses developed with students, staff, and school community. Here are a few quotes from the survey respondents:

“Our public health nurse is amazing and is such a valuable resource for students.”

“[The public health nurse was] always extremely approachable and professional with staff and students. Students were all very satisfied with the services provided at the public health clinic.”

### School Immunization Program

Ontario’s Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) requires that children and youth “attending primary or secondary school be appropriately immunized against designated diseases, unless they have a valid exemption” (<https://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/immunization/ispa.aspx>).

Due to circumstances such as COVID-19, there were many children and youth in HPEC without immunizations or any exemptions on record for the 2022-2023 school year. In January 2023, HPEPH sent out over 7,000 notices to students in JK to Grade 12 with immunization records that were not up to date. Fourteen school-based clinics were held for students to offer catch up immunizations and more than 1,000 students were immunized in the school setting. HPEPH staff and school board staff worked diligently to communicate with families and by April 2023, 6,000 immunization records (over 85 per cent) had been updated.

Annually, the [school-based immunization program](#) provides vaccinations for hepatitis B, human papillomavirus (HPV), and meningococcal disease to Grade 7 students. Immunizations require two doses, so a series of two visits is required. From September to December 2022, 49 initial school-based clinics were held for all Grade 7 and 8’s with over 1,500 students immunized. These students’ immunization series were completed from May through June 2023. In addition, HPEPH hosted catch up clinics at secondary schools for Grades 9 to 12, where 223 students received immunizations.

### Oral Health Screening

[Oral health screening](#) is completed for students in junior and senior kindergarten and Grade 2 in all HPE elementary schools, as well as some Grade 4 and Grade 7 classes.

In the 2022-2023 school year, the HPEPH Oral Health team completed the oral health screening program at a total of 65 schools. Results from these oral health school screenings are below.

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Table 4: 2022-2023 Oral Health School Screening Results

Indicator	Number of Students	Percentage
Total number of students eligible for screening in schools where it was offered	6413	100%
Total number of students screened	5481	85.5%
Total number of students absent at time of screening	674	12%
Total number of students who refused at time of screening	52	1%
Total number of students who were excluded from screening by their caregivers	206	4%

Table 5: 2022-2023 Oral Health School Screening DMF\* Results

Indicator	Number of Students	Percentage
DMF* 0 for students (no decay, missing, filled teeth)	2998	55%
Number of students with decayed teeth	1152 (648 urgent care)	21% (12%)
Number of students with missing teeth	506	9%
Number of students with filled teeth	1667	30%

\*Decayed, Missing, Filled teeth

HPEPH staff followed up with the 648 students (12 per cent) who were identified as needing urgent dental care and provided support to their families with accessing appropriate care.

### 2023-2024 School Year

During the 2023-2024 School Year, HPEPH Healthy Schools program will continue to work with our school board partners to determine joint priorities for schools and public health related to the health and well-being of children and youth in HPEC. In 2023-2024, we will continue to support all schools to implement comprehensive school health, support priority topic programming with a focus on substance use and vaping in elementary schools and Grade 7/8s, and provide clinical services in secondary schools.

On behalf of the Healthy Schools Team at HPEPH, I am excited to continue to build relationships and connections with our school communities and look forward to continuing to work together to improve the health and well-being of school aged children in HPEC.

Sheryl Farrar MHSc CHE  
Manager, Healthy Schools