



**HEALTHY  
SCHOOLS** | **BC**

# Comprehensive School Health Resource

for Health Professionals



**HealthyFamiliesBC** 



[www.healthyschoolsbc.ca](http://www.healthyschoolsbc.ca)



## Acknowledgements

The development of the *Comprehensive School Health Resource for Health Professionals* evolved out of a recognized need for a resource tailored specifically to health professionals who are interested in working through a Comprehensive School Health lens to promote health and learning in the school setting.

This resource was created by the Directorate of Agencies for School Health of British Columbia (DASH BC) in partnership with the BC Ministry of Health, and involved consultations with health professionals who are recognized for their commitment to promoting optimal health and learning outcomes in BC students.

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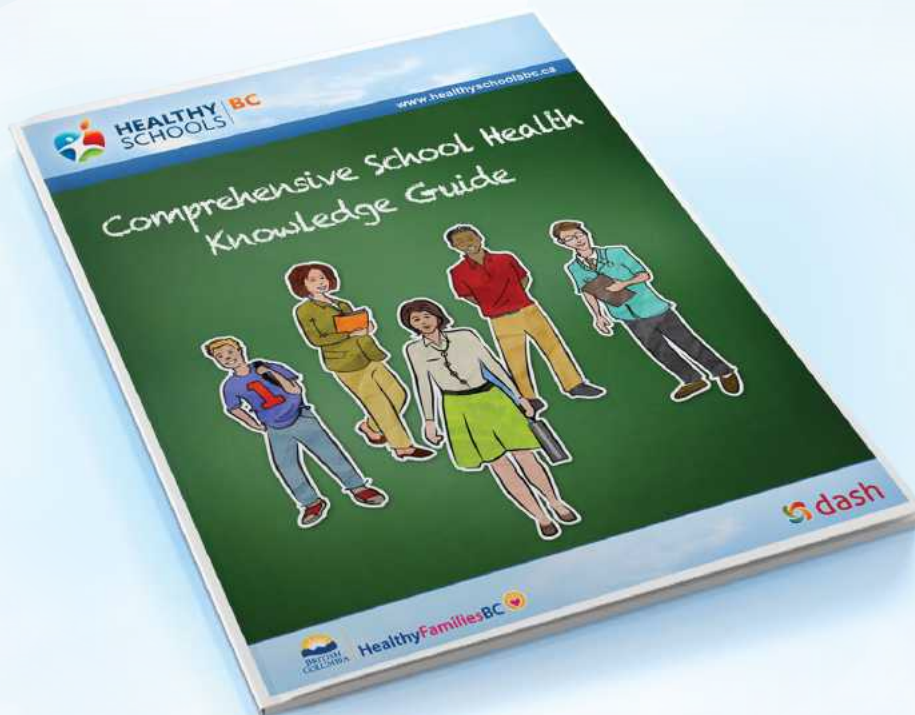




# 1 | Introduction

This resource was written for you, the health professional who works to promote and protect health in the school setting. The purpose of this resource is to support you in using a CSH approach, through best practice examples and real stories at both the school and district level of engagement.

This resource is intended to serve as a supplement to the *Comprehensive School Health Knowledge Guide*. If you have never heard of CSH, or want to refresh your understanding of CSH as a holistic approach to health and learning, it is recommended you start with the *CSH Knowledge Guide*, which can be found on the Healthy Schools BC website at [www.healthyschoolsbc.ca](http://www.healthyschoolsbc.ca). To refresh your memory, we will start with a brief overview of Comprehensive School Health as an approach to practice.



## 2 | Comprehensive School Health: A Brief Overview

A CSH approach to practice is based on the understanding that healthy students are better learners and better educated students are healthier.<sup>1</sup> When addressed in concert, these elements will produce optimal health and learning outcomes for the student, the school, and the community. Putting the CSH approach into practice involves looking at the whole school environment and coordinating healthy school actions across four distinct but interrelated areas also referred to as pillars:

### Teaching and Learning:

Includes both formal and informal knowledge/skill development; relates to resources, activities and curriculum that support learning and overall wellbeing.

### Relationships and Environments:

Relates to emotional and social wellbeing, as well as the relationships between and among the physical and social spaces in the school setting.

### Community Partnerships:

Relates to connections between the school and students' families, and relationships between the school and outside community organizations.

### Our School Policies:

Relates to practices, procedures, rules, policies etc. at all levels, from provincial to classroom-specific that support wellbeing.



<sup>1</sup> Joint Consortium for School Health (2008). What is a "Comprehensive School Health approach"?

## 3 | The Role of the Health Sector in CSH

Support from the health sector in promoting healthy schools can occur at both the school level and the district level. Below are a few best practice examples of how health professionals can support schools in promoting optimal health and learning outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Each pillar includes some potential actions that should be considered within your capacity and role within your health authority. You can use these as a guide, or identify your own to best suit the unique needs of your setting.\*

### Teaching and Learning:

- Provide and link to information on key health issues including data, research and best practice
- Encourage learning strategies that are culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate
- Encourage positive role modeling by school staff and community partners
- Advise on health curricula and provide resources, materials, and tools to support teachers



### Relationships and Environments:

- Encourage and facilitate student leadership and peer-led healthy school initiatives
- Support opportunities for physical and social wellbeing, such as through extra-curricular activities
- Advocate for safe, respectful and inclusive social environments
- Participate in a healthy schools community of practice
- Support in conducting strengths-based assessments of the school environment to identify assets and gaps in each of the 4 pillars



<sup>2</sup> Healthy Schools BC (2012). *Health sector support of comprehensive school health: Best practices implementation*. Directorate of Agencies for School Health BC, Vancouver, Canada.

\* For CSH practice examples, go to [healthyschoolsbc.ca/hp](https://healthyschoolsbc.ca/hp)

## 3 | The Role of the Health Sector in CSH *Continued...*

### Community Partnerships:

- Support coordination of services and programs by facilitating linkages between schools, communities, and families
- Identify and build strong working relationships with education partners at the school, district, and regional levels
- Support the dissemination and utilization of reliable health information/ resources across sectors
- Provide effective messaging regarding health sector services and supports that are available\*
- Encourage active parent and community participation in healthy school initiatives



### Our School Policies:

- Support development, interpretation and implementation of provincial and school district healthy school policies
- Encourage and participate in school health committees
- Facilitate collaboration between education, health, and community stakeholders in support of policy work
- Advocate for student participation in the creation of school-specific policies that promote and protect health and learning outcomes
- Share and interpret health promotion best practice and evidence and support integration into policies at the school and district level



Find more evidence and best practice documents at [healthyschoolsbc.ca/hp](https://healthyschoolsbc.ca/hp)



## 3 | The Role of the Health Sector in CSH *Continued...*

### The Healthy Schools Process

The red arrow on the next page consists of four stages (*Assess, Plan, Act, Evaluate*) collectively known as the Healthy Schools Process. This process involves a series of collaborative actions between health and education partners in promoting healthier schools for BC students. Health professionals can support health and learning at any stage of the Healthy Schools Process. Whether you are engaging with schools, school districts, students, teachers or administrators, this framework can be adapted to fit your unique practice situation. You can use the suggested actions on the next few pages to guide you in determining what your role in the process could look like.

The four images highlighted in **yellow** (below the arrow) represent the broad areas of support the health sector could provide to their education partners throughout the process. In the next section we will take a closer look at some specific actions that could be taken at each of the four stages of *Assess, Plan, Act, and Evaluate*.



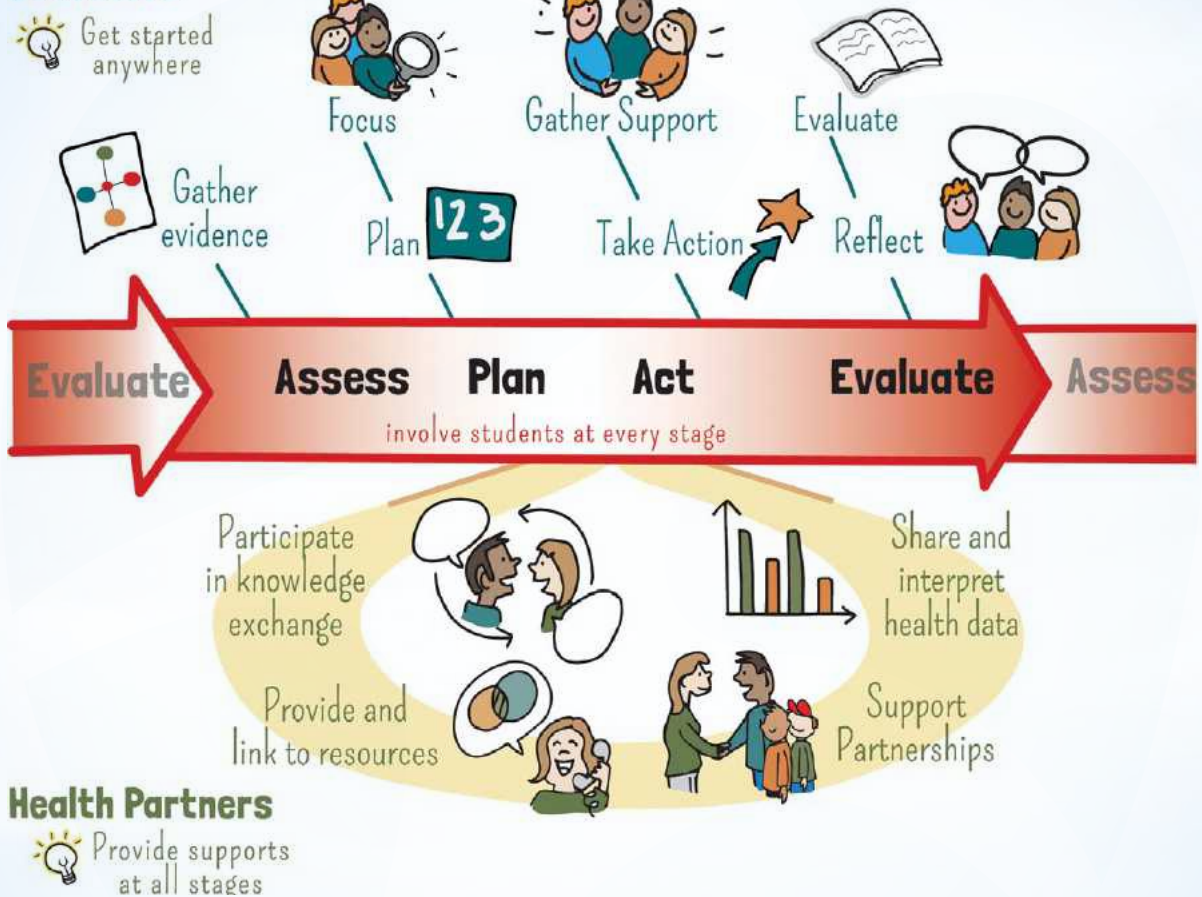


## Putting It All Together:

See how your work fits into the bigger picture of Healthy Schools BC.

### Healthy Schools BC Learning Framework

#### Educators



The Healthy Schools BC Learning Framework is reflective of John Hattie and Helen Timperley's key learning oriented questions<sup>1</sup> and also incorporates components of what is commonly referred to as the "Nursing Process"<sup>2</sup> (though many health promotion practitioners also use a similar process to guide their practice).

1. Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). *The Power of Feedback. Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.

2. The Nursing Process is credited to Ida Jean Orlando (1958).

## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH

This section provides some suggested ways of working through the lens of CSH by walking you through the four stages of Assess, Plan, Act, and Evaluate. Remember, you can support the school or district at any stage of the process however it best suits your unique situation. A key consideration at all phases of the Healthy Schools Process is supporting the involvement of students so future actions will best reflect their health and learning needs.

### Assess

The assessment phase is about determining the health status of the school environment and the students within it.



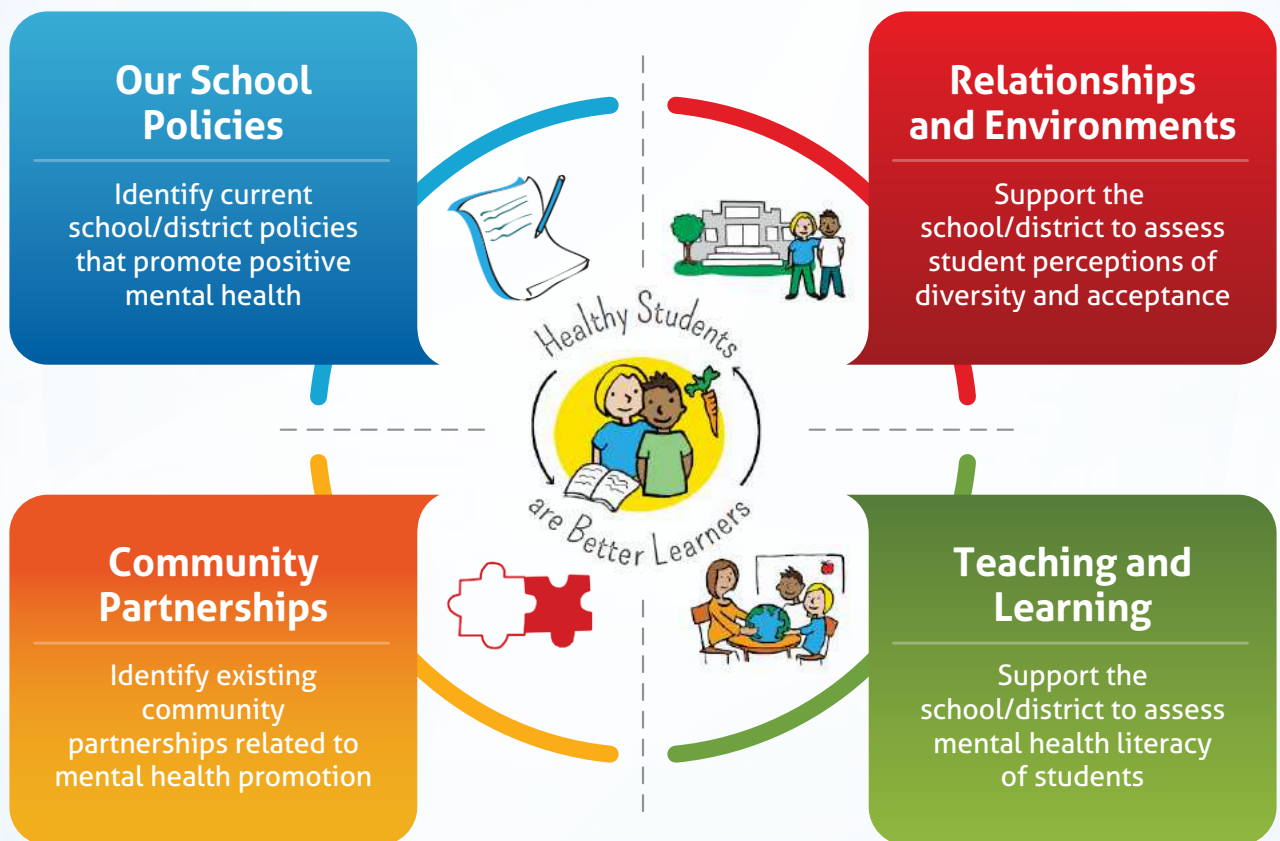
#### Where are we at?

- In establishing a starting point for collaborative action, it may be helpful to connect with the school or school district (where appropriate) to discuss your shared understanding of CSH.
- Support the school/district in conducting an assessment to identify assets (ie: current programs, physical spaces, healthy policies, community partnerships) and gaps, and establish health priorities in each of the four pillars of CSH.\*
- Conduct a student health survey to help establish what they perceive as priority areas for action.
- Share and discuss information on current child & youth health issues.



## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH *Continued...*

Below is a best practice example of how positive mental health could be addressed in the assessment phase of a CSH approach. The suggested actions in each pillar should be considered within your capacity and role within your health authority.\*





## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH *Continued...*

### Plan

The planning phase involves creating a collaborative action plan that aims to address the health needs of students across the four pillars of CSH.



### What is our focus for healthy school actions?

- Collaborate with the school/district to establish a focus based on the priorities identified during the assessment. This will help to inform how the plan will be evaluated later.
- Support your education partners to develop a plan that addresses actions across the 4 pillars of CSH.\*
- Identify programs and resources available to support your plan.\*\*

### How will we evaluate our plan?

- Collaborate with the school/district to set short, intermediate, and long-term goals.
- Develop measurable outcome indicators to evaluate the success of your healthy school plan.
- Collaborate with the school/district and other health sector partners to determine how information will be collected to evaluate your action plan. You might consider a focus group, questionnaire, or interview to guide the evaluation.

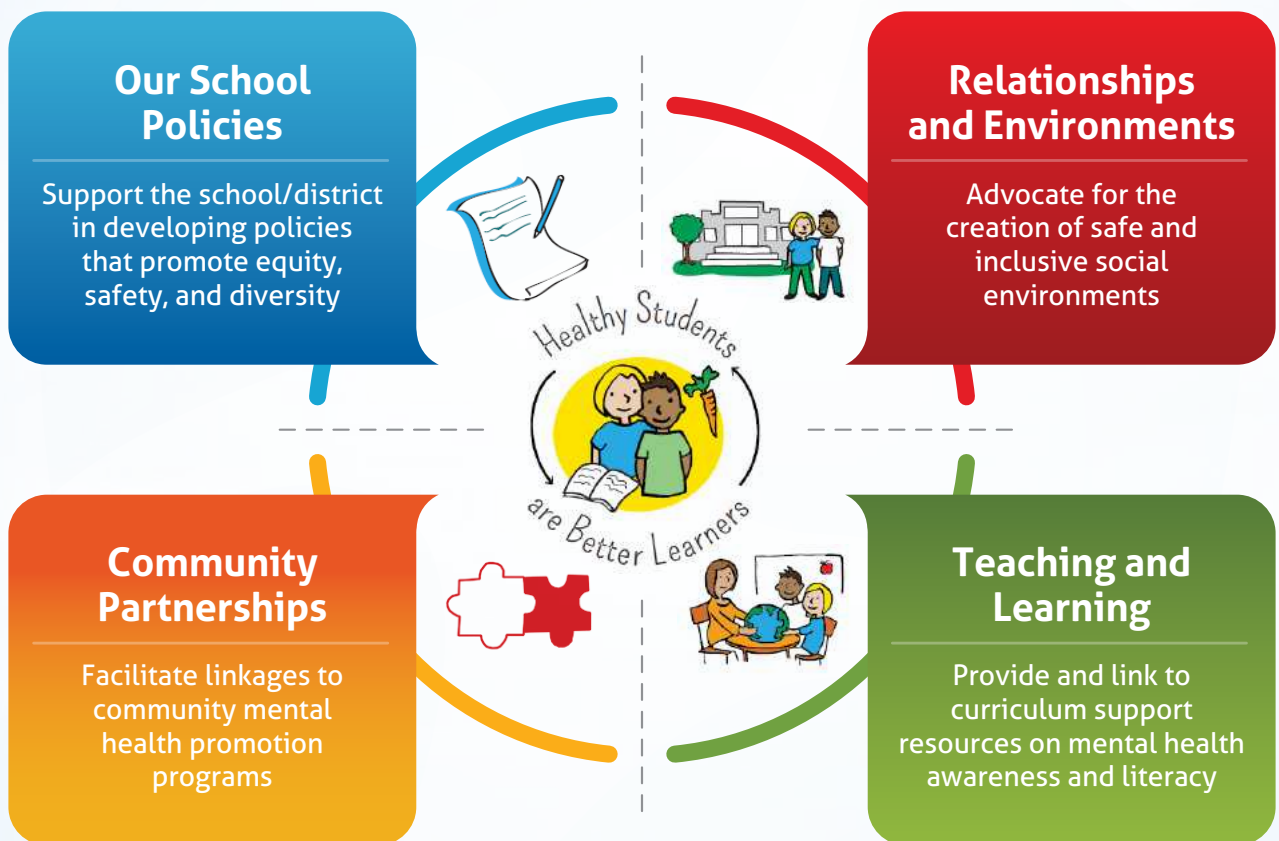


\* For a helpful CSH 4 pillar tool go to [healthyschoolsbc.ca/resources](https://healthyschoolsbc.ca/resources)

\*\* For programs and services in your community go to [healthyschoolsbc.ca/programs](https://healthyschoolsbc.ca/programs)

## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH *Continued...*

Below is a best practice example of how positive mental health could be addressed in the planning phase of a CSH approach. The suggested actions in each pillar should be considered within your capacity and role within your health authority.



## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH *Continued...*

### Act

A CSH approach to healthy school actions is a flexible, participatory process. Feedback should be gathered throughout the process from all partners, including students.



### How will we take action on our plan?

- Support the school/district to identify community partners that can help the plan move into action.\*
- Encourage the establishment of roles and responsibilities for each partner involved.
- Support the active involvement of all partners in the implementation of the plan.
- Help facilitate coordination of services and programs.

### How can we track our progress?

- Support the school/district to map out their healthy school action plan according to the CSH pillars.\*\*
- Support the school/district to develop timelines, goals and outcomes.
- Encourage celebration of achievements along the way.



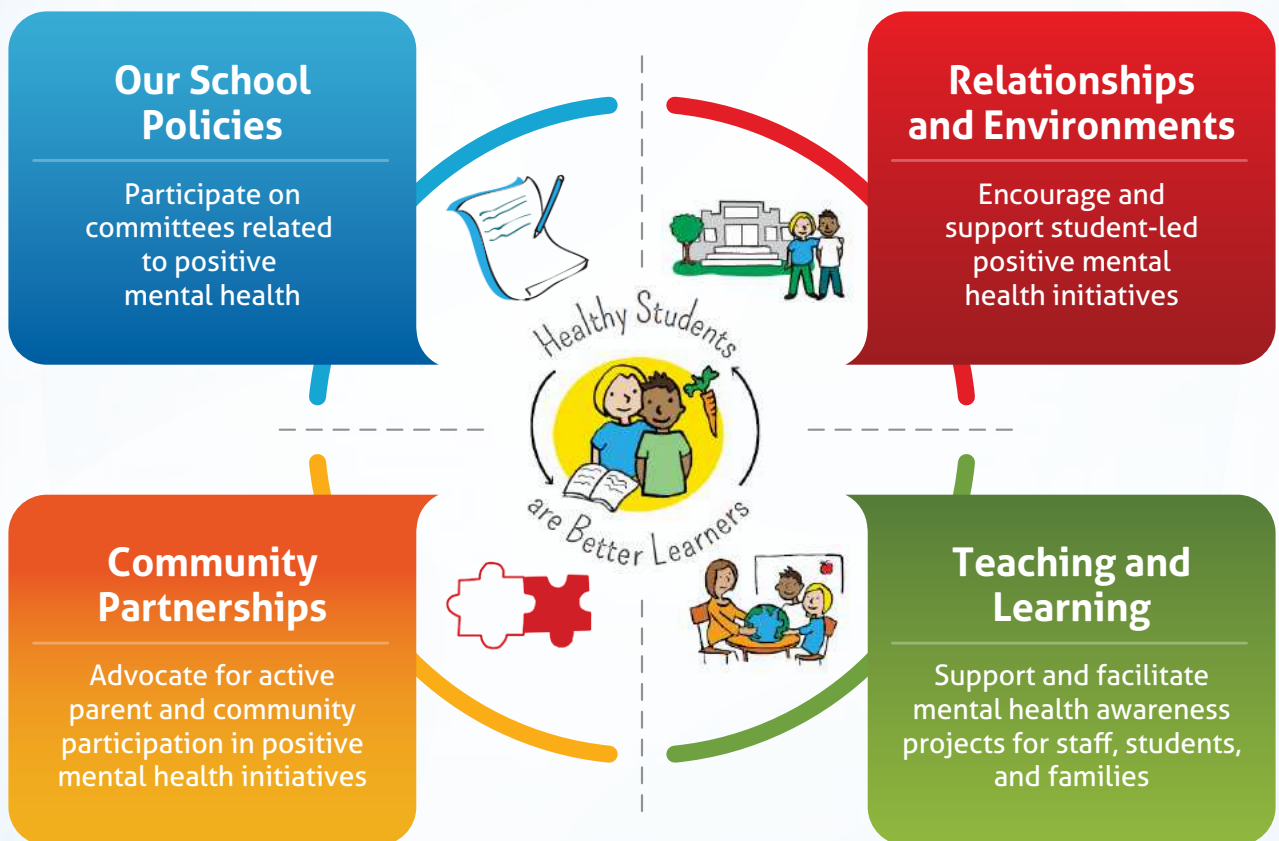
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## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH *Continued...*

Below is a best practice example of how positive mental health could be addressed in the action phase of a CSH approach. The suggested actions in each pillar should be considered within your capacity and role within your health authority.



## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH *Continued...*

### Evaluate

Evaluation provides an opportunity to reflect on the process and use the experience to guide future progress. As you support the school or school district in conducting an evaluation, remember that student health and learning outcomes are central to making progress on a healthy school plan.



### What were the outcomes?

- Encourage student involvement in identifying impacts on their health and learning outcomes (eg: conduct a student survey to assess what they learned about setting health and learning goals)
- Help facilitate evaluation using a tool to gather data/information and track progress (eg: interviews, focus groups, surveys).
- Support the school/district to identify and share any unintended consequences with health and education partners.

### How can we continue to improve the process?

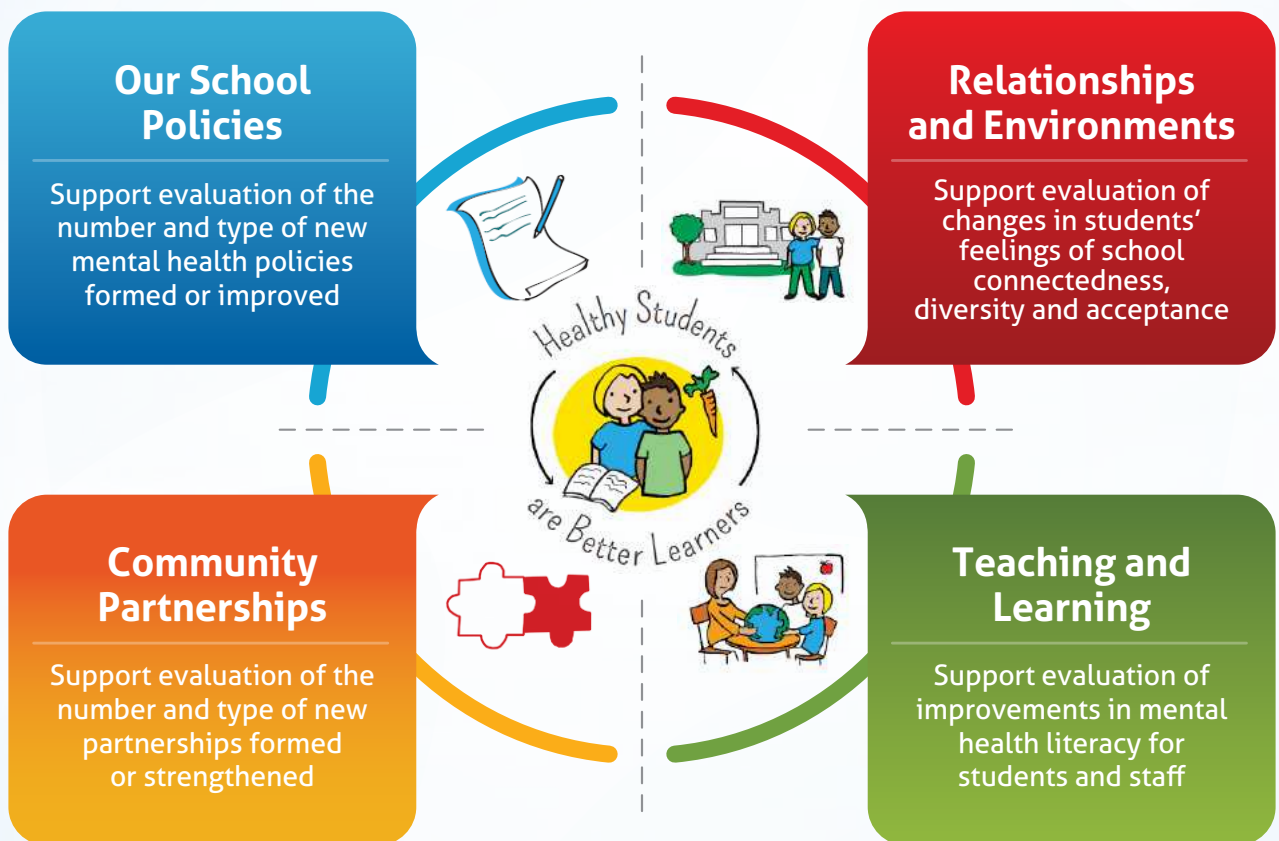
- Encourage building on existing strengths and modifying the current course of action where needed.
- Collaborate with the school/district and community partners to communicate your shared story through the Healthy Schools BC website\*, healthy school committees, or organizational meetings.
- Encourage and support the school/district to continue to strengthen community partnerships.

### What's next?

- Encourage the school/district to use this experience to build on key areas of learning in establishing the next healthy school plan.

## 4 | Working through the Lens of CSH *Continued...*

Below is a best practice example of how positive mental health could be addressed in the evaluation phase of a CSH approach. The suggested actions in each pillar should be considered within your capacity and role within your health authority.





## 5 | CSH In Action

# From Pilots to Policies: A Community Nutritionist's Story

### How did this healthy school story begin to take shape?

"A high school student proposed starting a food garden at their school. That spark brought together a group to pilot a garden and create a how-to guide for starting school food gardens. What the initial conversations and project ultimately led to was something that touched on all of the pillars of Comprehensive School Health, including the creation and adoption of a district-wide policy that expresses Vancouver School Board's support for school food gardens for learning, ongoing staff training, a network of community partners offering supportive services, and about half of the school district schools engaged in onsite food growing."

### Who was involved in developing the plan?

"Originally it was the effort of a group of students, teachers, the principal, community agencies, the grounds department and other school board staff, as well as a community nutritionist that moved the initial pilot forward. Since its creation in 2010, the Vancouver School Food Network (VSFN), a group of school, community, and health agencies, has taken the lead on offering Pro-D training."

### What has been your role in supporting this process?

"The community nutritionists' role (both mine and my predecessor's) has been to help create and revise the policy and how-to guide, convene community groups to be able to organize professional development, and support schools in moving through and navigating the process once they know they want to create a garden."

### What are some challenges you have faced?

"One of the challenges has been trying to meet diverse needs. That is being addressed through ongoing conversations between stakeholder groups, and revising the how-to guide to include better language about responsibilities and care for the gardens and also what the process is if a garden falls into disrepair."

### What were the key outcomes?

"The key outcome is that more students and staff are learning through food gardens and more students have an opportunity to learn about their food system, the food cycle, and how great fresh-grown vegetables taste!"

### Has there been an evaluation or reflection involved in the process?

"Evaluation of the garden creation process has been ongoing. We solicit feedback from schools and community agencies involved to find out what's working and what's not, and use that feedback to revise the how-to guide. As for the success of the gardens themselves, Think&EatGreen@School, a community-university research alliance, is conducting research about the number of gardens and the extent to which they are used."

### What have you learned from this experience that you want to share with others?

"Forming a really strong team is one of the most important things. Bringing the right people to the table who are excited about an idea allows you to move forward so much more easily."

For more information about the Vancouver School Food Network, go to [www.vancouverschoolfoodnetwork.wordpress.com](http://www.vancouverschoolfoodnetwork.wordpress.com)

To view the VSB Garden Policy and Process document, go to <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/district-policy/io-garden-policy>

For more healthy school stories go to [www.healthyschoolsbc.ca/stories](http://www.healthyschoolsbc.ca/stories)

## 5 | CSH In Action *Continued...*

### One Partnership at a Time: A Public Health Nurse's Story

#### **How did this healthy school story begin to take shape?**

"Over the last few years, it has become an increasing priority for public health to become more involved with schools and Comprehensive School Health (CSH). In reflecting on the concept and my involvement I wondered if staff in our school district knew or had heard about CSH. So one day, when I went to the schools to do my anaphylaxis training, I decided to pose the question – has anyone heard of CSH? It seemed no one had, but one of the school teachers literally leapt up and proposed healthy eating as a possible CSH initiative because she had noticed a lot of sugary snacks and beverages in her students' lunches. I was so excited because suddenly I had clarity on how to get the concept rolling!"

**Who was involved in developing the plan?** "We are just in the early stages of looking at students' lunches and assessing parents' beliefs and values around the nutritional content that goes into a lunch. At this time, we have partnered with a 4th year nursing student, Spotted Fawn Minnabarriet, who is working closely with the teacher to further expand her understanding of the concepts of CSH, and supporting the teacher to fully utilize the Healthy Schools BC website to guide her in moving this healthy eating project forward."

#### **What has been your role in supporting this process?**

"My role has been connecting the school with various health professionals such as a Community Nutritionist and Dental Hygienist, and being a support to the teacher by utilizing standardized & reliable resources to seek out information, such as the healthy schools assessment template from the CSH Knowledge Guide\*. I also listen to and share insights regarding parents' perceptions of healthy lunches to support the development of effective strategies for making healthy eating a sustainable outcome. Last week I joined in on some parent-teacher interviews to have an informal conversation about lunches, and it turns out a big barrier for parents was not being able to give their children leftovers because they cannot warm the food up at lunch time."

**What have been some challenges?** "One of the challenges is that this is a remote community so we are limited in our resources and the face-to-face time we can work on this project. There are also a number of social determinants such as income, transportation, and health literacy that are significant factors. In addition, we are having difficulty

meeting with parents, and knowing how to engage them in a way that acknowledges their good intentions with preparing healthy lunches. We are overcoming these challenges one day at a time by being open and creative, and understanding that successful change occurs over time and in small steps."

#### **What outcomes have you started to see develop?**

"So far the kids are really engaged with their teacher. She is making learning about food fun by allowing the children to prepare and explore new foods."

#### **Has there been an evaluation or reflection involved in the process?**

"Every idea, every 'ah ha' moment, we discuss it. For example, the teacher took pictures of all the students' lunches and Spotted Fawn and I sat together with her and reviewed them. It was a real eye opener to see what the kids are eating and drinking, and has allowed us to see where we are starting from. We are still in the process of exploring parents' priorities so we can determine what we are going to evaluate down the road."

#### **What have you learned from this experience that you want to share with others?**

"Take it slowly. Clarity comes with time and no two CSH initiatives or adventures are ever the same. We may struggle with the concepts of CSH at first, but it really is simple – it's reminding us that we work with many players when addressing health – from parents, to children, to community, etc. Involve as many stakeholders as you can – every voice sheds new light and importance to these CSH initiatives."

**What are the next steps for this project?** "Because we are really in the pre-contemplation stages, we are still figuring out if the parents, community and children will embrace our idea. Spotted Fawn and I have many professionals involved at this point – it is our hope this is a priority for our school community as well. If not, it gives us a starting point to let them know we are here and want to help."

\*To download the Knowledge Guide, go to [healthyschoolsbc.ca/resources](http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/resources)

For more healthy school stories go to [healthyschoolsbc.ca/stories](http://healthyschoolsbc.ca/stories)

## 5 | CSH In Action *Continued...*

### Making Space for Play: A Youth & Family Counselor's Story

#### **How did this healthy school story begin to take shape?**

"In 2002, we were reconfigured from a Jr. High School to a Middle School. Field hockey was a big deal with the previous group of older kids, but the new group was as young as 10 and did not play field hockey. We soon noticed a huge spike in disciplinary referrals to the office and many parents voiced their concerns about the lack of age-appropriate facilities to meet their children's physical and social needs for play. We believed it was in part because there was nothing to engage them outside. So we asked ourselves, 'What do we need to provide these kids so their needs for play and age-appropriate social interactions can be met?'"

#### **Who was involved in developing the plan?**

"A group of three of us formed a subcommittee and created a vision for this project. We surveyed students to find out what they thought would create an appealing space for them, and they did a video where they interviewed peers, the principal and staff members. We also got a group of ten kids together every year before an annual healthy schools meeting to brainstorm ideas."

#### **What was your role in supporting this process?**

"Every meeting I showed up to where we talked about distribution of funds or budget allocation for different projects, I just kept raising the issue of a playground. I never let it be off the agenda. I also submitted many grant applications."

#### **What were some challenges you faced?**

"It was a slow process, and finding the money was a huge challenge. We overcame this through a combination of plain old perseverance. I spoke about our vision so that it became part of what people were thinking about. Because so many people over so many years heard about it, things started happening."

#### **What were the outcomes?**

"We anticipated that by creating play space that allowed for healthy and appropriate interactions for kids, the number of office referrals for disciplinary issues would diminish."

Our administration data showed this happening. Every time we added a component to the field, referrals to the office diminished."

#### **Was there an evaluation or reflection involved in the process?**

"We are continuously asking ourselves, in all these aspects of spiritual, social, emotional and mental wellbeing, are we doing the best we can? And what needs to be tweaked? Structurally, how do we create a framework where everything that we're doing is supporting moving forward in our goals for advancing health and wellness? We don't rest on our laurels. We're always asking ourselves 'what's next?' It's the small successes that make all the difference."

#### **What have you learned from this experience that you want to share with others?**

"Never give up. What seems impossible becomes possible when you just persist. I made many calls, filled out numerous grant applications that were denied, went to lots of meetings in which nothing came, and that was disappointing. But it was just a matter of picking myself up again. It's the very things we teach our kids in school, like how do you deal with disappointment and then pick yourself back up and keep moving forward? And finding the allies that, if they can't contribute in any way financially, at least they can provide encouragement."

#### **What are the next steps for this project?**

"The next part of this is multi-pronged. We're unofficially used as part of the Greenways (cycling) Pathway and this can be a safety issue for kids who cross that path. So we want to formalize the pathway and create rules of engagement to ensure everyone's safety. The second aspect is to create more play space for the kids. The third aspect is to create a naturalized play space/community garden to give a place to simply 'be', that doesn't have a prescribed outcome."

For more healthy school stories go to [healthyschoolsbc.ca/stories](https://healthyschoolsbc.ca/stories)



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. The background behind the paper is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white pattern.

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[www.healthyschoolsbc.ca](http://www.healthyschoolsbc.ca)

Healthy Schools BC is a provincial strategy that strives to support students to learn, play and thrive in healthy school communities. This initiative recognizes that we can achieve more by working together than we can on our own. Healthy Schools BC is a partnership between DASH BC and Healthy Families BC.



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