

INTRODUCTION

Schools are in a unique position to promote health among students and help reverse the trend of students adopting unhealthy lifestyles. Current research shows that student-led activities, with the support of interested adults, are well-received by peers in the school environment. Therefore, forming a Wellness Council with students can have a great impact on school health and can create a healthier future. Involving parents and community groups in wellness activities in the school is also beneficial to improving the health of students.

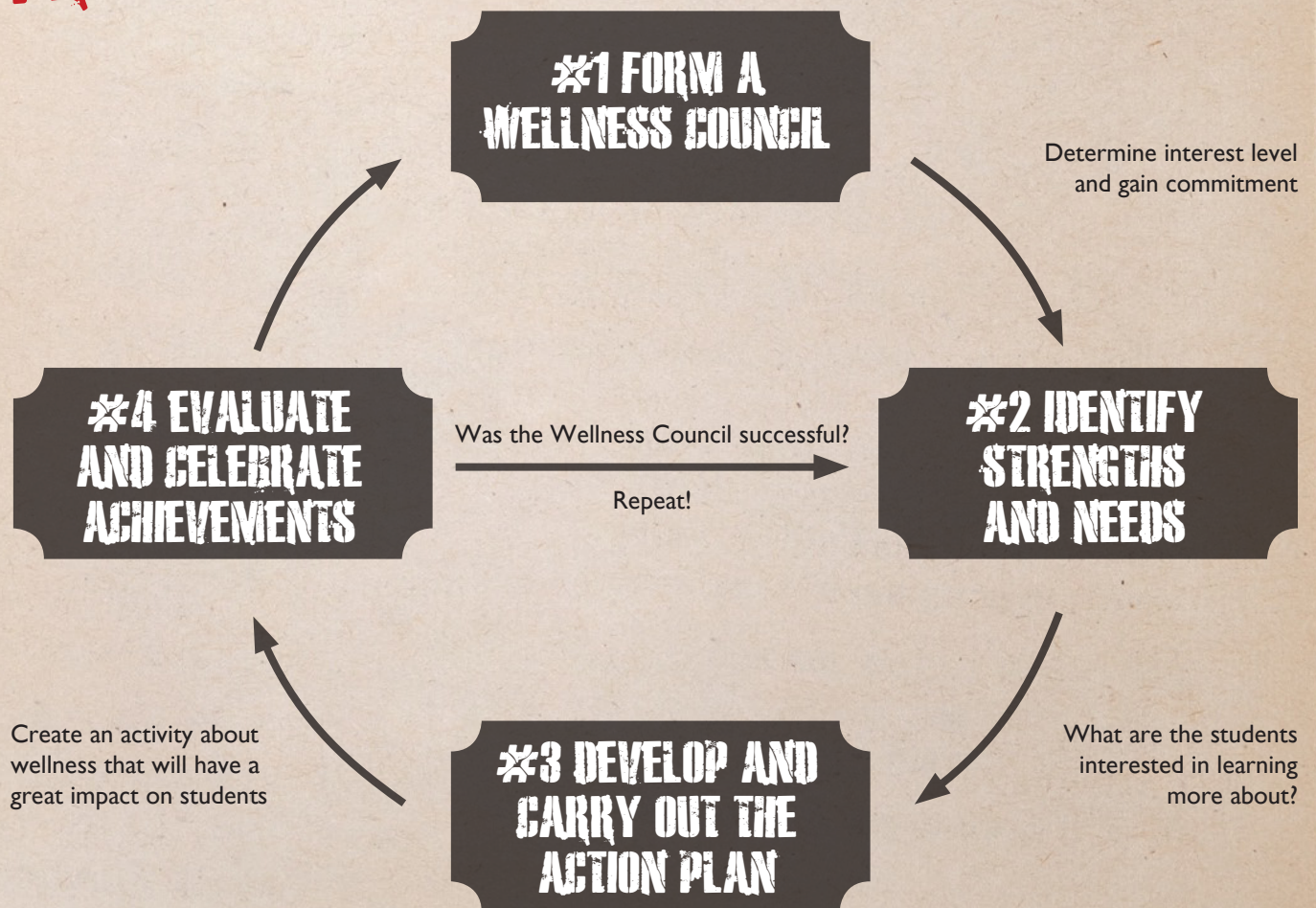
Read on to find out how you can form a Wellness Council and promote health in a fun and interactive way!

BENEFITS:

The benefits of creating an active, healthy school community. Students in healthy schools will:

- Be able to concentrate and learn better in class
- Develop greater confidence, motivation, self-esteem
- Have the capacity to make important life and health choices
- Have access to community services
- Be more likely to achieve better academic results
- Have strategies to interact effectively with peers
- Attend school more regularly

PROCESS OF CREATING A HEALTHY SCHOOL



LET'S GET STARTED!



Form a Wellness Council

Purpose - Engage a group of students in promoting and supporting healthy practices (e.g., healthy eating, physical activity etc.) in the school to improve the health and learning of all students.

A. Determine level of interest

- Consult with your principal
- Contact school coordinator, at the Chatham Kent Health Unit (519-352-7270) for assistance
- Provide a fact sheet about the Wellness Council for staff and parents

Develop a plan to inform and educate intermediate students about the Council (attachment #1)

SUGGESTIONS:

- Create an interesting announcement, talk to classrooms, hang up posters
- Empower students by explaining how they can have a voice in school decisions
- Invite interested staff, parents, and community partners to join the Wellness Council
- Hand out application forms to students who are interested in starting/joining the Wellness Council (attachment #2)

B. Form the Wellness Council

Determine which intermediate students will make up the Wellness Council

SUGGESTIONS:

- Choose members based on interest level or appoint students who have potential in a leadership role
- The Wellness Council may be a sub-committee of the student council or a newly formed group
- Groups of 10-12 students ranging from grades 6-8 work great!

C. Organize the first Wellness Council meeting

- Create an agenda (attachment #3)
- Record minutes to track progress, decisions and actions (attachment #4)

Establish roles and responsibilities

SUGGESTIONS:

- Try splitting up health topics among students depending on interest level (physical activity, nutrition, bullying prevention, etc)
- Roles may also include Prime Minister, Secretary etc.

Come up with a name for the Wellness Council

SUGGESTIONS:

- Healthy champs, Health Squad, etc
- Have a naming and/or logo contest involving the whole school. This is also a great way to make the Wellness Council known in the school!

- Complete a member contact list (attachment #5)
- Decide on a convenient meeting schedule
- Provide each member with a folder to keep track of all materials



Identify Strengths and Needs

Purpose - Identify the interests and needs of the school community by providing a survey for staff, students, and parents.

A. Determine how to survey the school community using the following examples:

Develop a paper survey or adapt the attached one for students, teachers, and parents to identify areas of interest of the school (attachment #6)

SUGGESTIONS:

- Wellness Council members can hand out paper surveys to classrooms for students to complete. Those who complete and hand in a survey can be entered into a draw.
- Develop a poster for each classroom with topic areas listed in separate boxes (i.e. stress, bullying/peer pressure, sun safety, physical activity, and healthy eating). Students place stickers in the area they would like to learn more about

- Create an electronic survey (www.surveymonkey.com) for students to access during computer class
- Set up a healthy schools suggestion box in each classroom
- There are lots of survey's already developed that assist schools in assessing the school environment to help identify areas for improvement in creating a healthy supportive environment. Contact CKPHU to access these resources.

B. Share the results

- Allow students to summarize the survey results
- Think about sharing the results in the school newsletter or school assebly

C. Establish the vision, and prioritize the health issue

- Based on the survey results, prioritize the most important health issues the Wellness Council can realistically address



Develop and Carry Out the Action Plan

Purpose - promote healthy behaviours in the school in a fun and memorable way.

A. Develop an action plan

- Brainstorm and choose activities to target your priority areas (check out the "Need Some Ideas" section in this booklet)
- Develop goals for chosen activities
- Complete an organizational plan to help you implement the activities (attachment #7)

- Assign Wellness Council members to certain tasks
- Submit the Wellness Council Activity Form (attachment #8) to the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit for additional support

B. Carry out the action plan

- Students should be actively involved in carrying out specified activities

STEP 4

Evaluate and Celebrate Achievements

Purpose - Determine whether the activity was worthwhile, identify any problem areas, and inspire new ideas.

A. Evaluate the action plan and wellness activity

- Distribute evaluation forms to students and staff (attachment #9)
- Debrief with the Wellness Council members about what went well and what could be improved

B. Celebrate achievements

- Provide opportunities for the school to hear about the completed activities
- Share successes with students and staff through a newsletter or announcement

Acknowledge and celebrate the efforts of the Wellness Council

SUGGESTIONS:

- At the end of the school year, plan a celebration for Wellness Council members activities can be planned
- Create certificates for Wellness Council members (attachment #11)

C. Plan for next event

- Based on previous survey results, another priority health topic can be chosen
- Discuss any changes that may be occurring that could affect next events activities



This school celebrated their new tobacco-free playground.



One Wellness Council found out what their school thought about "Wellness" by creating this poster in the gym.



NEED SOME IDEAS?

Here are some examples that will get your creative juices pumping. Remember, students will know what activities will work best among their peers, so let them guide your brainstorming sessions. Feel free to use the great ideas that other real-life Wellness Councils have already done in their schools across Chatham-Kent!

IDEA - BE TOBACCO-FREE

One Wellness Council decided to get their school talking about the dangers of tobacco products. Students participated in a poster contest, which was judged by the Wellness Council according to different categories that they established. They also arranged for a health professional from the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit to provide an interactive presentation about tobacco use, decision-making, and being your own unique self. The students loved seeing the effects of tobacco products on pig's lungs!

IDEA - THE BE-YOU-TIFUL PROJECT

A Wellness Council in Chatham-Kent wanted to promote positive body image, decrease bullying, and encourage their peers to simply be themselves! They planned an assembly where they showed a slideshow, movie, and play that they created. The students in the Wellness Council designed and sold bracelets and T-shirts with the Be-YOU-tiful slogan on it. They also went to each of the grade 4-8 classrooms and talked about the importance of inner beauty.

IDEA - RETHINK YOUR DRINK

A group of students in a Wellness Council noticed that their peers were beginning to drink energy drinks. They planned an assembly and presented a skit they created featuring the harmful effects of these drinks. The Wellness Council organized a Rethink your Drink challenge between classrooms: they counted the number of healthy and unhealthy drinks in each class at lunchtime. The winning classroom played a dodge ball game against "Crash," a human-size energy drink!



Local high school students take a pledge to stop bullying during an Anti-Bullying Week organized by the school Wellness Council.

NUTRITION

- 🍏 Plant a school vegetable garden
- 🍏 Give out apples, pencils, erasers, etc instead of candy grams on Valentine's day
- 🍏 Challenge classrooms with daily nutrition trivia for a week
- 🍏 Have a recipe contest for healthy lunch ideas
- 🍏 Promote a litter-less lunch day
- 🍏 Sell fruit kabobs and yogurt dip or smoothies
- 🍏 Have a "colour-it-up" week where students wear different colours and bring a fruit or vegetable of the same colour
- 🍏 Encourage students to "ban" all fast food for one week
- 🍏 Have a "healthy drink" week where students bring 100% juice, water, milk etc instead of pop, energy drinks, and other sugar sweetened beverages



Students from a local elementary school made and sold fruit kabobs as a fundraiser for their Wellness Council.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- 👟 Set up wacky intramurals during recess
- 👟 Research and play games and sports from other cultures
- 👟 Encourage students to submit pictures of themselves staying active in the winter months
- 👟 Create an active school travel plan, that encourages students to walk or bike to school on a regular basis.
- 👟 Borrow pedometers from the health unit to loan out during recess and add everyone's steps together
- 👟 Organize a family fitness night with different stations throughout the school (Wii Just Dance, aerobics, yoga, dodgeball, etc)
- 👟 Map out a "physical activity circuit," listing activities students need to complete across the school yard at recess (ie go down the slide 10 times, run to the fence and back, etc)



The Wellness Council here enjoyed teaching their peers new sports and games from other countries at a cultural sports day.

MENTAL HEALTH

- 🧠 Educate students about the different forms of bullying (physical, verbal, social, and cyber)
- 🧠 Play a yoga video in the gym at lunch and invite students to wind down
- 🧠 Create a play outlining healthy ways to deal with anxiety, sadness, frustration, etc.
- 🧠 Have a poster or photography contest depicting the impact of bullying
- 🧠 Invite police services to a parent night to talk about internet safety
- 🧠 Have a "healthy relationship" day with different stations about healthy and unhealthy relationships and who to go to for help
- 🧠 Invite older students to read a book related to mental health (ie. Have you filled your bucket today?) to younger kids and lead some cooperative games
- 🧠 Have a poetry contest about friendship

SUBSTANCE MISUSE

- 🚫 Borrow the pig lungs from the health unit and show the effects of smoking on lungs
- 🚫 Have a slogan contest and invite students to think of creative phrases to encourage people to not start smoking
- 🚫 Share interesting statistics in the form of announcements, newsletter blurbs, or use sidewalk chalk on the playground and sidewalks about tobacco products
- 🚫 Borrow the "impaired vision goggles" from the health unit and highlight the importance of not drinking and driving
- 🚫 Host a tobacco-free school dance

SUN SAFETY

- ☀️ Plant trees in the school yard
- ☀️ Have a photo contest showing students practicing sun safety outside
- ☀️ Borrow the health unit's computer program that shows wrinkles and sun damage on your real-life picture
- ☀️ Have a wacky sun safe day (ie wear funny sunglasses, hats, shirts, etc)
- ☀️ Make posters about the dangers of tanning beds
- ☀️ Design and sell hats and t-shirts and promote their use to protect against the sun's rays

INJURY PREVENTION

- 🧢 Allow intermediate students to form a "safety patrol" group that watches the playground at recess
- 🧢 Host a helmet safety clinic where all students bring in their helmet to be checked and fitted by intermediate students
- 🧢 Create a video about ATV safety to show at an assembly
- 🧢 Borrow the health unit's "concussion goggles" to show students what a concussion feels like and what to do if they have one



Students in older grades participated in a poster contest about the dangers of tobacco products, which was organized by a Wellness Council at a local elementary school.

Wellness Councils can make healthy eating fun.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Healthy Schools Toolkit: Committee Member Handbook - York Regional Health Unit

Making Health Happen: A toolkit for school councils - Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition

Student Wellness Council Manual - Lambton County

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.chatham-kent.ca/publichealth

www.ckphu.com

www.ophea.net

www.oshp.ca

www.eatrightontario.ca/en/schoolhealth

www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

www.ourmindsmatter.com

www.Areuready.ca

Please contact CKPHU for more ideas, resources, support with your wellness council.

519-352-7270

This school invited health professionals from the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit to a parent evening to share information about healthy eating, physical activity, vaccines and more.

