

Health & Wellbeing Promoting Schools

Setting Global Standards for Education & Wellbeing

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19456729 | Volume 01, Issue 01, 2026

Introduction

“We achieve our greatest happiness when we realise ourselves through others. Equally, we need to reaffirm our commitment to cultural and socio-economic diversity from which children enter into the portals of the school.”

- Rabindranath Tagore

“Health Promoting Schools are schools which display and support the commitment to enhancing the emotional, social, physical and moral wellbeing of their school community” (WHO).

It is increasingly recognised that schools play a vital role in a child's overall development into a competent adult who contributes usefully to society. Health is an important aspect of children's development, and education is a key determinant of health. Almost all children attend school at some point in their lives and spend 6–7 hours a day in that learning environment. Apart from this, the school curriculum can have a substantial influence on health-promoting behaviours, as it is the strongest social and educational institution available

for implementing intervention programmes, with the required structure and governance. It is important that all schools strive to be child-friendly and health-promoting. Schools must be safe, caring and supportive learning environments. Everyone involved in the school has a role to play: teachers, students, management, parents and the wider community. All stakeholders must actively participate to improve our children's health.

Keywords: School; Health; Wellbeing; Children

Global School Health Initiatives

WHO's Global School Health Initiative, launched in 1995, seeks to mobilise and strengthen health promotion and education activities at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Initiative is designed to improve the health of students, school personnel, families and other members of the community through schools.

The goal of WHO's Global School Health Initiative is to increase the number of schools that can truly be called "Health-Promoting Schools". Although definitions will vary, depending on need and circumstance, a Health-Promoting School can be characterised as a school constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.

The Emerging Global Vision of a “Health Promoting school”

- One that is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.
- It focuses on promoting health and presenting the key causes of death, disease and disability, helping school children, staff, family and community members care for themselves.
- It equips schoolchildren to make informed decisions about circumstances that affect their health and to create conditions conducive to health (WHO, 2008).

Creating a health-promoting school means applying new ways of positive thinking. It strives to incorporate health into all aspects of life at the school and in the neighbourhood community, even as it nears the Goals of a Nation.

A Comprehensive School Health Policy

- 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.
- Implement 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.

Goals of Health Promoting Schools across the globe

- Building capacities for peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable ecosystem, equity, social justice, and sustainable development.
- Recognise the importance of stakeholder participation and consultation in a school community.
- Promote health and well-being for all members of the school community: students, teachers, parents and the local community around it.
- Encourage planning, coordinated action, and the use of resources rather than a reactive response to crises.
- Preventing leading causes of death, disease and disability: tobacco use, HIV/AIDS/STDs, sedentary lifestyle, drugs and alcohol, violence and injuries, unhealthy nutrition.
- Influencing health-related behaviours: knowledge, beliefs, skills, attitudes, values and support.
- Provide screening and counselling for common child and adolescent concerns, depression, stress, anxiety, aggression, and continuous behavioural issues.

How can we become a health-promoting school?

Members of the school community: leaders, teachers, students and parents can do training in the HPS framework. Officers in Curriculum Support: Health Promoting Schools and the Drug Education Officer can provide information, resources, and presentations to school health committees and staff. The Health Promoting Schools Community Network, coordinated by the Health Promoting Schools officer, would serve as a valuable network of health-related community agencies, health coordinators, and school community members. Forums and meetings need to be held throughout the year to share ideas on themes, stories, successes and the challenges of health promotion in schools.

How can we encourage parents/guardians to get involved in our school health programs?

Being a health-promoting school is a great way to involve parents with the school community. Requests for support for tailored programs that fit with a bigger plan or goal can be daunting for parents. Where some may not come to a meeting, they may be happy to help weed a vegetable patch or paint a courtyard. Parents/guardians do like to be consulted and to participate in shaping a vision for the school community when their children's health and well-being are the focus. Their own health issues can also be addressed through involvement in a health-promoting community.

Activities such as drafting a policy or volunteering on a project can provide opportunities for parent participation. Communication through newsletters, notice boards, and displays, as well as information at parent/teacher interviews and conferences, can help keep parents/guardians in touch.

Key steps in developing a Health Promoting School

- Engaging health and educational officials, teachers, students, parents and community leaders in efforts to promote health in schools.
- Providing a safe, healthy environment, both physical and psychosocial.
- Providing effective skill-based health education and life skills training.
- Providing access to health services (child & adolescent).
- Implementing school policies and good practices that support health as a mission.

School Health – An Integrated Model for Good Practices



Aims of schools

To achieve these sound parameters, the School may aim to:

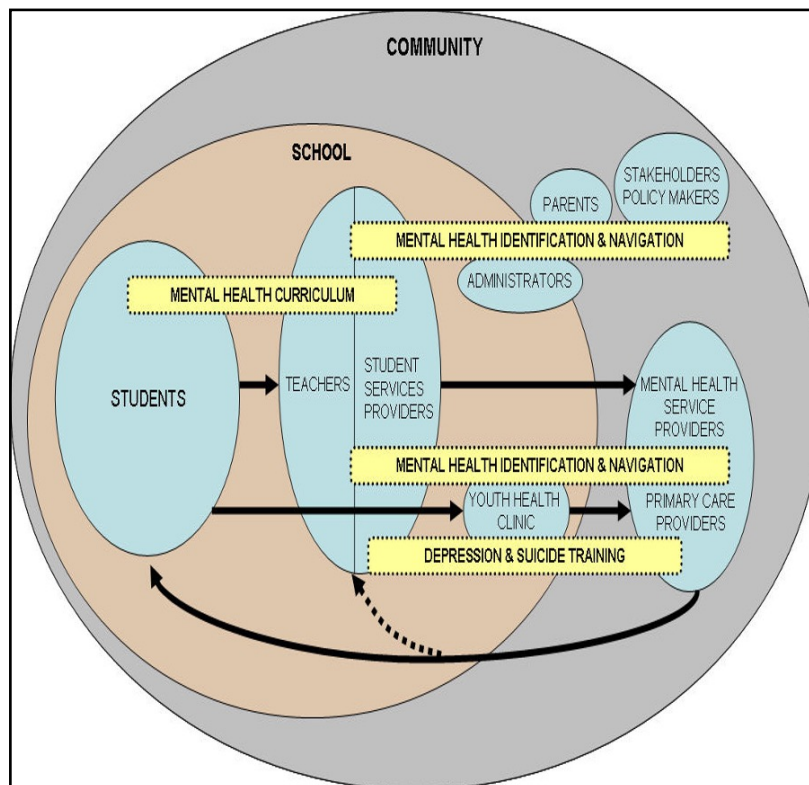
- Remove barriers to learning and raise achievement as a holistic concept.
- Foster healthy development of children and young people in their settings of school, home, community and peer group so that they can learn, grow and make a positive contribution now and in the future.
- Evaluating the range of related activities they are currently involved in, identifying areas of need and setting goals for further promoting wellbeing.
- Enhance the links between schools and their communities in promoting positive learning and health outcomes for young people.
- Raise awareness of the importance of promoting health for all of us.

- Established Health clubs as a platform for planned dissemination.

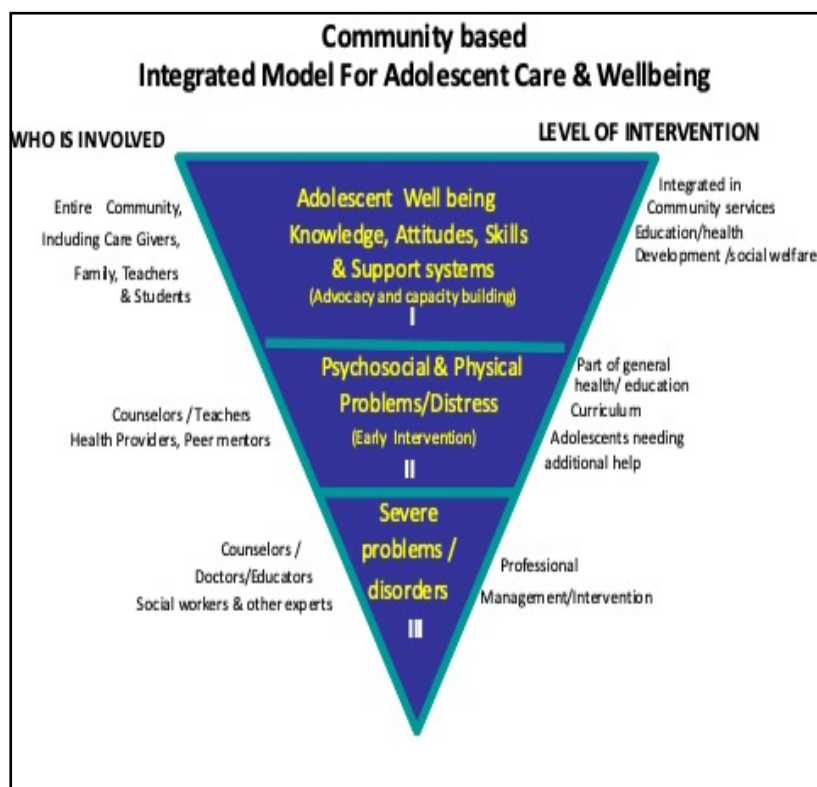
It has long been recognised that schools provide the most appropriate setting for both health services and health education for children and young people. The need of the time is a comprehensive school health policy integrated within the national and regional levels of the educational system. Globally, 'school health' has been an important national programme for several decades, comprising largely of school health services and school health education. Attempts to view students' health more holistically through a more comprehensive approach need to be strengthened. The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, by NCERT, has categorically stated that health is a critical input to the overall development of the child and significantly influences enrolment, retention, and completion of school. Above all, promoting holistic health on the school platform raises the profile of joyful learning in the formative years.

Appendix A

Working Model to Address Mental Health in Schools



Appendix B



Prevalence of Child and Adolescent Mental Disorders, selected countries			
Country	Study	Age (years)	Prevalence (%)
Brazil	Fleitch-Blyk & Goodman, 2004	7-14	12.7
Canada (Ontario)	Offord et al., 1987	4-16	18.1
Ethiopia	Tadesse et al., 1999	1-15	17.7
Germany	Weyerer et al., 1988	12-15	20.7
India	Indian Council of Medical Research	1-16	12.8
Japan	Morita et al., 1993	12-15	15.0
Spain	Gomez-Beneyto et al., 1994	8, 11, 15	21.7
Switzerland	Steinhausen et al., 1998	1-15	22.5
USA	United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1999	9-17	21.0

WHO, 2005

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