



Heart Healthy Schools

2021-2022

Program Evaluation

To date: 17862 total students

1298 educators

Executive Summary

Heart Healthy Schools (HHS) is a program led by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick (HSFNB) since 2017 aimed at reducing the rates of childhood obesity by improving the school environment to support and promote healthy lifestyle choices, for children and youth.

Health behaviours, such as making healthy food choices and being physically active, are sensitive to environmental influences.

The school environment, comprised of the physical and social environment, can play a significant role in supporting health behaviours in children and youth. The environment defines culture. A school culture that supports the healthy choice as the easiest and most popular choice available will benefit from student engagement in healthy lifestyle choices and behaviours.

Heart Healthy Schools supports and promotes:



The consumption of fruit and vegetables



The limitation of sedentary screen time



The adoption of physical activity in the classroom



The consumption of water as the preferred beverage choice

These behaviours are important for the healthy development of children and youth. They also play an imperative role in the prevention of childhood obesity – a risk factor for many chronic diseases, including heart disease and stroke.

2021-2022 Program Summary

This school year presented yet again challenges to the school community related to Covid-19. Students and educators missed time for isolation protocols and unplanned school closures. A significant closure occurred during December and January where elementary schools were closed for four weeks outside of the scheduled Christmas break. Additionally, a 16 day strike occurred by the union representing educational support staff including custodians, educational assistants and administrative staff. This resulted in another period of virtual learning for students. It is important to note both of these province wide closures

occurred during the first half of the school year, setting the tone and predictions for the effects of Covid-19 for the remainder of the year.

Many schools expressed difficulties with limited group settings, additional tasks on their plates with hygiene protocols, and coordinating learning from home for isolating students. As well, staffing was a challenge when educators were isolating at home impacting execution of challenge weeks. Despite their interest in championing Heart Healthy Schools, it was one extra task that some schools could not take on or continue this year, despite their interest.

The schools who registered and were able to complete it were flexible and creative. Many benefitted from having experienced HHS champions familiar with the program content from previous years and having run it during two other pandemic years. They made slight modifications to challenges such as in smaller group sizes at school and incorporating activities to complete at home such as a photo challenge of students doing non screen activities with their family or bubble contacts to complete each challenge week. One resilient school even managed to complete the program after being displaced from their school building due to a fire for most of the year.

Heart Healthy Schools experienced yet again, another challenging year. New contacts at new schools, although interested in trying the program, were reluctant to initiate it during the Pandemic while they navigated challenges in their day to day work. Many of the interested schools indicated their intentions to try again next year when the expectation of “normalcy” later in 2022.

Quick Facts

24 schools were welcomed into the program

20 schools completed the program and received the HHS designation

90% of the participating schools were from the Anglophone school district

10% of the schools were from the Francophone school district

100% of schools who completed the program have participated in the past

3731 students were part of a Heart Healthy School this year

17 862 students have been part of a Heart Healthy School since inception

1298 staff have been part of a Heart Healthy School since inception

Heart Healthy Schools 2021-2022

In total there were 20 schools across N.B. who completed the Heart Healthy Schools program. Each school received a \$350 grant, totaling \$7 000.

Nackawic Elementary
Nelson Rural School
Donald Fraser Memorial
Sussex Elementary
McAdam Elementary
Back Bay Elementary
Burton Elementary
Glen Falls
Arnold H McLeod
Geary Elementary
Rexton Elementary
Nashwaaksis Memorial
Ecole Communautaire arc-en-ciel
Hammond River Valley Elementary
Ecole communautaire Saint-Joseph
Dorchester Consolidated School
Dr. A. T. Leatherbarrow Primary
Riverside Consolidated School
Havelock Elementary
Milltown Elementary

Over the years:

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	Schools with HHS designation on one or more years
# of Schools	4	2	13	41	40	25	20	70

There were an additional 4 schools who registered, but did not complete the program, which was in direct relation with Covid-19 and staffing.

Budget

This year, HHS was underbudget by **\$2,637.86**. This is partially due to the fact that 4 schools did not finish the program and therefore did not receive their grant.

Allotted Budget	Budget Used
\$15,000.00	\$12,362.14

Recommendations:

One of the HSFNB's Strategic Pillars is to **Improve Health** by focusing on prevention, improving health literacy and support systems that promote health and wellness. There are opportunities for Heart Healthy Schools to improve the program to meet current best practices for education of children and youth that lean toward more play based, exploratory learning, to simplify the program by streamlining program steps on the website and to encourage participation of new schools by way of grant opportunities.

There are 3 opportunities for Heart Healthy Schools to

- 1. Update the Website**
- 2. Adjust content to reflect current best practice**
- 3. Use HHS as gateway to other grant opportunities**

Website Update:

The Heart Healthy Schools website has not had any major updates, outside of addition of resources since its creation. Heart and Stroke NB is in the process of creating a single organization wide website which will also house the HHS program. This will improve visibility of HHS to visitors to the organization wide site and access to HSF resources.

Program Content Revisions

The HHS program content had not been revised since the pilot in 2017. Best Practice indicates that programs and guidelines should be revisited every 3 years. Current best practices for education of children favours more experiential learning with exploratory, role playing and hands on activities while limiting activities involving tracking of health behaviours. Additionally, numbers based messaging lends itself to an all or nothing, good vs bad labelling of behaviours and bodies rather than acknowledging the step by step changes that occur as learners gain knowledge about health promoting behaviours. The program will be updated with these factors in mind for a 2022-2023 launch.

Other Grant Opportunities

Having schools register for the HHS as a requirement for grant eligibility increases the participation potential for HHS. This would be an avenue for schools to apply for future funding for vaping prevention, school food programming, etc.

Let's hear from our Heart Healthy Schools!

Average scores on a scale from 1 to 5 on how excited students were to participate in the Challenge weeks:

1 being not at all, 5 being very enthusiastic

Fruit & Vegetable	4.3
Screen Time	3.2
Physical Activity	4.2
Water	3.7

Students were enthusiastic about participation in challenge weeks.

“We harvested our classroom lettuce twice for hot lunch hamburger day and **most students ate it or at least tried it**. Students had access to fruit as an option for breakfast or snacks and chose it more often as well. Students were **excited** to tell me that they brought fruit and veggies in their lunches.”

“We made a poster of all our “off screen” ideas and posted it in the hallway on our Heart Healthy Schools bulletin boards. We **also started Jump Rope for Heart** at this time so students were excited to tell me they jumped rope at home and at recess/lunch.”

Behaviour changes were noted

“After the implementation of the Physical Activity Challenge a change we witnessed in the school's environment was that **students were calmer**.”

“We had hall moves this year and they **loved being able to skip/shuffle/gallop** quietly and safely in halls.”

“Students are **not allowed to bring electronic devices** to Glen Falls School. Classrooms no longer put on a video when students are eating recess and lunch.”

Measurable changes

“We noticed the **amount of water bottle fill ups increase** as shown by the counters on the water fountain.”

Provides opportunities students may not have at home:

“Students love to eat fruits and vegetables when given the chance but I think that many do not have access to this type of food at home, especially given the rise in food prices. When here, **any opportunity to eat fresh fruits and veggies are always a hit**.”

Photo Gallery



