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Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities

ALBERTA COALITION FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

3 Year Strategic Plan (2004 - 2007)

This document was compiled and prepared by Lori Baugh Littlejohns, ACHSC Project Coordinator, however, without the passion, commitment, and dedication on the part of many Executive Committee members, Ad Hoc Committee members and interested stakeholders of the ACHSC network, this Strategic Plan would not be a reality. We especially acknowledge the collective efforts of Shelley **Barthel**, Vel **Thompson**, Mary Anne **Venner**, Sharon **Boechler**, Jennifer **Sundberg**, Bill **Gordon**, Doug **Gleddie**, David **Casey**, Kay **Selin**, Marg **Schwartz**, Christine **Bouchard**, Cheryl **Macleod**, Kim **Schmidt**, Darcy **Fleming**, Cynthia **Smith**, Alison **Goffin**, and Maryanne **Doherty**. For further information please see www.achsc.org

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A. INTRODUCTION

The school setting for health promotion is gaining momentum as people from all walks of life are seeking ways to address health issues of school-aged children. The school is an important setting because

- * children's health status affects their ability to learn, and
- * educational attainment affects health status.

The Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities (ACHSC)¹ is a registered non-profit society representing a

network of individuals and organizations committed to promoting and fostering healthy school communities.

The ACHSC is affiliated with the Canadian Association of School Health, which is a national association comprised of 12 provincial/territorial collations whose members promote the health of children and youth through school-based health promotion.

Since 1990, the ACHSC network has hosted annual forums and currently maintains a website (www.achsc.org) for knowledge exchange and network development. Other notable activities include presentations to the Alberta Learning Commission, College of Alberta School Superintendents, and Council of Medical Officers of Health; writing of grant proposals to Health Canada; and drafting resolutions to the Alberta Public Health Association and Alberta Home and School Council Association.

In 2003, stakeholder consultation meetings were convened and it was determined that a strategic plan was needed to

- * Strengthen the network and increase participation

- * Facilitate partnership development for collaborative action
- * Provide a framework for knowledge exchange and advocacy.

An Ad Hoc Committee drafted a plan in the spring of 2004 and a Project Coordinator (funded by Health Canada, Population Health Fund) prepared the final plan in fall of 2004. The intent is to use this plan to help the ACHSC network increase collaboration and knowledge exchange about creating and sustaining healthy school communities in Alberta. We envision the long-term benefit will be enhanced health and educational attainment of children and youth.

We invite you to join the ACHSC network to share and explore how we can better work together to support healthy school communities.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

VISION	Every school-aged child or youth is part of a healthy school community.
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MISSION	To promote and foster healthy school communities through a <i>comprehensive school health approach</i> that enhances the health of Alberta children and youth.
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Comprehensive School Health Approach

Comprehensive school health (CSH) is an approach to health promotion in the school setting and is comprised of several key components:

- * a 'whole' school approach is adopted where students, teachers, parents,

¹ See list of acronyms with descriptions in Appendix.

- school staff, community groups, agencies, and institutions work together on key priorities for improving health and educational attainment.
- * Priority health issues are addressed through integration, coordination, and enhancements to a) curriculum and teaching methods, b) social and physical environments, and c) home, school, and community partnerships and services.
 - * Identified champions of the CSH approach provide leadership in schools.
 - * Facilitation of coordinating processes in schools helps assure success.
 - * Strategies or interventions that are implemented are evidence-based or have a strong indication that they are promising practice.
 - * Evaluation methods are utilized to report on the benefits or desired outcomes for school communities

Eight Guiding Principles

The ACHSC believes that creating and sustaining healthy school communities requires

1. understanding of the broad factors that affect health: not simply risk factors such as poor diet and lack of exercise but also risk conditions such as lack of financial resources and lack of sense of belonging.
2. emphasizing proactive approaches that work to address root causes of poor health by focusing on the conditions and environments in which people live, learn, work, and play.
3. ensuring the participation of individuals and communities whose health is to be influenced
4. strengthening collaboration through broad-based, multidisciplinary, intersectoral partnerships.
5. respecting skills, values, and experiences of diverse people and cultures.

6. developing policies which are supportive of health.

7. pursuing social justice to reduce health disparities.

8. recognizing that “it takes time”.

Alignment with Alberta Healthy Living Network

The ACHSC network is well positioned to act as the coordinating body to facilitate knowledge exchange, partnerships for action, and advocacy for creating and sustaining healthy school communities. We believe that success relies on shared knowledge and collaborative work with a broad range of people and initiatives.

Therefore, this strategic plan is specifically designed to integrate and coordinate with the Alberta Healthy Living Network (AHLN)². The AHLN mission is “to provide leadership for integrated, collaborative action to promote health and prevent chronic disease in Alberta”. One key outcome of the AHLN is to encourage provincial stakeholders to develop action/strategic plans that address and align with priority strategies outlined in their framework.

The seven strategies of the AHLN framework are as follows:

Partnership Development & Community Linkages
Awareness and Education
Surveillance
Best Practices
Research and Evaluation
Health Disparities
Healthy Public Policies

² see www.health-in-action.org/AHLN for The Alberta Healthy Living Framework: An Integrated Approach

**B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC PLAN:
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

GOAL 1 **The Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities (ACHSC) network is recognized as the provincial leader for comprehensive school health (CSH).**

Objectives

- 1.1 Effective *partnerships and community linkages* are established to maintain the ACHSC network as the provincial leader for CSH in Alberta.
- 1.2 There is strong *awareness and education* among Alberta school communities of ACHSC network and the supports available to help implement CSH.
- 1.3 The ACHSC network participates in *research, evaluation, and surveillance* with respect to school-aged child health and creating and sustaining healthy school communities in Alberta.
- 1.4 The ACHSC network strengthens understanding of *health disparities* among children and youth, families, and communities and provides supports to help address these issues through CSH.
- 1.5 The ACHSC network provides school communities with the support they need to develop and implement *healthy school policies*.

GOAL 2 **A comprehensive school health (CSH) approach is adopted in every school in Alberta.**

Objectives

- 2.1 Effective *partnerships and community linkages* are established at the provincial, regional and local levels to advocate for the adoption of CSH in every school in Alberta.
- 2.2 Effective *awareness and ongoing education* opportunities regarding CSH and evidence-based practices are accessible to every school community in Alberta.

**C. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC PLAN:
OUTCOMES**

- ❑ The ACHSC network includes key government departments and organizations and the strategic direction of the ACHSC are addressed in business plans.
- ❑ Participation of the ACHSC network is evident in provincial, national and international school health initiatives.
- ❑ There is increased and broad based membership in ACHSC.
- ❑ Appropriate sectors, organizations, and individuals are part of the ACHSC network and participate in direction setting.
- ❑ The ACHSC network coordinates annual conferences that meet the needs of school communities.
- ❑ The ACHSC network participates in the development and implementation of research, evaluation, and surveillance studies.
- ❑ The ACHSC network is a learning organization that effectively meets the needs of school communities.
- ❑ School communities have a strong understanding of the determinants of child, family and community health disparities and have access to supports to help them address these issues.
- ❑ Health disparities in children and youth will be addressed through comprehensive school health (CSH) approaches.
- ❑ School communities are aware of strengths and areas for improvement in healthy school policies.
- ❑ School communities have the support they need in developing, implementing and evaluating healthy school policies.
- ❑ Effective network partnerships and community linkages result in increased number of schools adopting a CSH approach
- ❑ The ACHSC network has the data and research in order to act as knowledge brokers for CSH
- ❑ Decision/policy makers, school-based professionals, and community members implement evidence-based practices for CSH that promote health and academic success in children and youth.

D. ACHSC STRATEGIC PLAN

GOAL 1 The Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities (ACHSC) network is recognized as the provincial leader for comprehensive school health (CSH).

Objective 1.1 Effective partnerships and community linkages are established to maintain the ACHSC network as the provincial leader for CSH in Alberta.

Strategies

- 1.1.1 Secure long term sustainable funding to maintain the ACHSC network as a dedicated provincial support that provides school communities with the help they need to effectively advocate for and implement CSH (e.g., from a cross-ministry initiative).
- 1.1.2 Maintain linkages to appropriate granting agencies and seek special project grants for short term priority projects.
- 1.1.3 Establish interdependent key partnerships (e.g., AHLN, EAS, SCA, RHAs) to strengthen the network and be recognized as the provincial support that provides school communities with the help they need to effectively advocate for and implement CSH.

- 1.1.4 Strengthen network partnerships and community linkages through broad-based and geographically representative membership on ACHSC Executive Committee (e.g., CoMoSH, CASS).
- 1.1.5 Link with relevant national and international school health initiatives to advocate for and advance CSH (e.g., CASH, DASH, WHO).

Outcomes

- ❑ The ACHSC network includes key government departments and organizations and the strategic direction of the ACHSC are addressed in business plans.
- ❑ Participation of the ACHSC network is evident in provincial, national and international school health initiatives.

Objective 1.2 There is strong awareness and education among Alberta school communities of the ACHSC network and the supports available to help implement CSH.

Strategies

- 1.2.1 In collaboration with network partners, develop and implement an ongoing communication plan to increase knowledge of the ACHSC and the supports available to help implement CSH.
- 1.2.2 In collaboration with network partners coordinate an annual provincial forum/conference on CSH.
- 1.2.3 Develop and implement a plan to expand the ACHSC network and memberships

Outcomes

- ❑ There is increased and broad-based membership in ACHSC.
- ❑ Appropriate sectors, organizations, and individuals are part of the ACHSC network and participate in direction setting.
- ❑ The ACHSC network coordinates annual conferences that meet the needs of school communities.

Objective 1.3 The ACHSC network participates in research, evaluation, and surveillance with respect to school-aged child health and creating and sustaining healthy school communities in Alberta.

Strategies

- 1.3.1 In collaboration with network partners, explore the development of a comprehensive school-aged child health surveillance/monitoring system linking data across sectors (health, education and children’s services) in order to exchange and build upon knowledge.
- 1.3.2 Partner in research and evaluation projects with respect to school-aged child health and creating and sustaining healthy school communities.
- 1.3.3 In collaboration with network partners, explore the development of a provincial research agenda for healthy school communities to facilitate links between researchers and school communities.

- 1.3.4 Develop and utilize an evaluation framework for ACHSC that offers direction for an annual assessment of organization’s capacity (e.g., shared vision resources, leadership, critical reflection, communication) in order to build upon successes and areas for improvement.

Outcomes

- ❑ The ACHSC network participates in the development and implementation of research, evaluation, and surveillance studies.
- ❑ The ACHSC network is a learning organization that effectively meets the needs of school communities.

Objective 1.4 The ACHSC network strengthens understanding of health disparities among children and youth, families, and communities and provides supports to help address these issues through CSH.

Strategies

- 1.4.1 In collaboration with network partners, develop knowledge exchange strategies to strengthen understanding of the socio-economic determinants of child, family, and community health in school settings.
- 1.4.2 Provide school communities with CSH evidence-based practices to address health disparities.

- 1.4.3 In collaboration with network partners advocate for more intensive, targeted CSH programming to high needs school populations and geographic areas.

Outcomes

- ❑ School communities have a strong understanding of the determinants of child, family and community health disparities and have access to supports to help them address these issues.
- ❑ Health disparities in children and youth will be addressed through CSH.

Objective 1.5 The ACHSC network provides school communities with the support they need to develop and implement healthy school policies.

Strategies

- 1.5.1 In collaboration with network partners, explore the development of studies of existing provincial, regional and local school community policies and assess policies as to the extent they are supportive for health.
- 1.5.2 In collaboration with network partners, explore the development of position papers to address areas for improvement and areas where new policies should be considered.

- 1.5.3 Act as a provincial resource for school communities who are seeking support in policy development, implementation, and evaluation.

Outcomes

- ❑ School communities are aware of strengths and areas for improvement in healthy school policies.
- ❑ School communities have the support they need in developing, implementing and evaluating healthy school policies.

GOAL 2 A comprehensive school health (CSH) approach is adopted in every school in Alberta.

Objective 2.1 Effective partnerships and community linkages are established at the provincial, regional and local levels to advocate for the adoption of CSH in every school in Alberta.

Strategy

- 2.1.1 Strengthen network partnerships and community linkages through timely and effective advocacy for the adoption of CSH in every school in Alberta.

Outcome

- ❑ Effective network partnerships and community linkages result in increased number of schools adopting a CSH approach

Objective 2.2 Effective awareness and ongoing education opportunities regarding CSH and evidence-based practices are accessible in every school community in Alberta.

Strategy

- 2.2.1 In collaboration with network partners, develop and implement knowledge exchange strategies that facilitate the sharing of evidence –based practices for policies and programs for CSH.

Outcomes

- ❑ The ACHSC network has the data and research in order to act as knowledge brokers for CSH
- ❑ Decision/policy makers, school-based professionals, and community members implement evidence-based practices for CSH that promote health and academic success in children and youth.

E. APPENDIX: LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHSC	Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities <i>network of individuals and organizations committed to promoting and fostering healthy school communities through comprehensive school health approaches.</i>
AHLN	Alberta Healthy Living Network <i>provides leadership for integrated, collaborative action to promote health and prevent chronic disease in Alberta.</i>
CASH	Canadian Association for School Health <i>A national association composed of 12 provincial/territorial coalitions whose members promote the health of children and youth through school-related health promotion (comprehensive school health).</i>
CASS	College of School Board Superintendents <i>A voluntary association of school superintendents and other certified central office educational officer (those excluded from local bargaining units of the ATA and who are appointed by their respective boards).</i>
CoMosh	Council of Medical Officers of Health <i>an association of Medical Officers of Health who collectively are responsible for the Public Health Act in Alberta.</i>
CSH	Comprehensive School Health <i>an approach to health promotion in the school setting.</i>
DASH	Directorate of Agencies for School Health <i>promotes a comprehensive school health framework for school health issues for children and youth in British Columbia.</i>
EAS	Ever Active Schools <i>Funded by Alberta Health & Wellness, AB Community Development and AB Learning; contributes to the development of healthy children and youth by fostering social and physical environments that support active living; encourages and identifies and recognizes schools that value and promote positive healthy behaviours and practices.</i>
RHA	Regional Health Authorities <i>Nine governing and administrative bodies that provide the full spectrum of health care services to residents of Alberta.</i>
SCA	Schools Come Alive <i>Funded by Alberta Parks, Recreation and Wildlife Foundation through HPEC; provides professional development and resources for schools; supporting the active living concept on schools since 1990.</i>
HPEC	Health and Physical Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association <i>a professional organization of teachers, advocates for quality health and physical education programs and provides opportunities for professional growth and development of its members.</i>
WHO	World Health Organization <i>WHO has developed a focus on Health Promoting Schools, which is a similar term to comprehensive school health.</i>