Health Promoting Schools gather momentum

The 2013 year got off to a quick start with a wave of early years settings and schools signing up to the Health Promoting Schools initiative across the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula region. Peninsula Health is now supporting over 30 early years and 40 schools in applying a whole school approach to health and wellbeing. Many schools have their health and wellbeing audit underway and have begun to identify the needs of their school community.

This newsletter contains tips on how to become a health promoting school as well as information about the support that is available from Peninsula Health.

Don’t forget that Josh and Kristen are available to support your school in its journey towards becoming a Health Promoting School.

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**Hearing it our way**

Encouraging student voice is a crucial component of the Health Promoting School process. The importance of children and young people being able to voice their opinion about things that affect them is outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Young people have a unique perspective on the things that matter to them and can assist to develop and improve teaching practices, curriculum content and assessment methods. Encouraging student voice has been shown to improve teacher/student relationships and to increase educational achievement.

**Why should schools listen to students?**

Young people’s experience of school has a significant impact on their learning outcomes. Schools also play a key role in the formation of student identity, their ability to establish healthy relationships and setting goals and aspirations for the future.

*Effective Schools are Engaging Schools – Student Engagement Policy Guidelines* state that “meaningful involvement of students involves validating and authorising them to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge and experiences throughout education in order to improve our schools.”

**Student voice at Banyan Fields PS**

As part of the schools strategic review process, Banyan Fields Primary School has adopted a method for including student voice in exploring classroom practices.

The school’s leadership group developed a checklist set of criteria based on the Practice of Learning and Teaching (POLT) principles that best encompassed the qualities they felt should be reflected in the classroom.

Students from the Student Leadership Body were trained in how to conduct the checklist before visiting classrooms to observe teacher/student interactions and make notes.

Teachers were provided with feedback based on their interactions with their students, teaching methodology and the general setup of the room and surrounding area. The school leadership group also received collective data around students’ perceptions of the classroom environment.

“The students really enjoyed it and it gave them a sense of responsibility and a constructive way to talk about teachers” says the school principal Cecilia Stone. “For the teachers, it reinforced positive practice and gave them ideas on how to better engage with their students in the classroom.”
Health needs assessment, why is it important for schools?

“Improving the health of staff, students and their families is a key outcome for schools who undertake a Health Needs Assessment (HNA)” says Kristen Young, Health Promotion Practitioner at Peninsula Health.

HNA is a specific systematic process where schools review the health issues affecting their school community. The process assists schools to profile priority health areas and to plan whole school actions aimed at positive change and health improvement.

It is important for staff, students and families to be involved in the needs assessment consultation process at your school. This key step will help your school form an accurate and holistic picture of health priorities. Involving the whole school community also enables students, their family and the wider community to feel a sense of ownership over the process.

Benefits for schools undertaking HNAs include:

- Greater “buy-in” from students and their parents into decision making
- Improved partnerships with support agencies within the community
- Professional development needs identified for staff, capacity building opportunities identified for families
- Improved communication with the school community
- Efficient use of school resources.

Before undertaking a HNA it is important to determine the information your school has already collected. This will help your school avoid unnecessary work. It is also important to determine the following prior to starting the needs assessment:

- What do you want to know?
- Why do you want to know it?
- What information is already available?
- What will you do with the information when you get it?
- How will you get the information?
- What questions should you ask?
- Who are you going to ask?
- How will you feedback the findings?

A variety of needs assessment tools are available to schools to assist in gathering this information.

The Health Promoting school workshop delivered by Josh, Kristen and Courtney from Peninsula Health on 30th April will explore some of these tools and support your school to undertake a HNA.

Please register your interest at www.surveymonkey.com/s/hpsw3
School Health and Wellbeing Conference Success

Over 200 enthusiastic representatives from schools and agencies attended the Schools Health and Wellbeing Conference on the 21st March at Mornington Race Course. The Conference was collaboration between Peninsula Health, Peninsula Headspace, DEECD, FMPLLEN and the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula School Focused Youth Services with funding also provided through Anglicare.

Conference workshops encouraged creative thinking about whole school strategies to support health and wellbeing and were designed to provide practical skills and tools to enhance student learning and health and wellbeing outcomes. For those schools already working towards becoming a Health Promoting School, the conference provided opportunities to develop strategies and actions in priority health areas. For school not currently working through the Health Promoting Schools approach, the conference provided an ideal opportunity to establish links to key community agencies.

A big ‘Thank You’ goes out to schools who attended the 2013 Schools Health and Wellbeing Conference. “It is very encouraging to witness the passion and support that schools have for supporting the health of young people in the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula region “said Josh Pereira, Health Promotion Practitioner at Peninsula Health.

Clearing the Air

24 FMP Schools have shown their commitment to “Clearing the Air” by signing the Frankston & Mornington Smoke Free Charter. The Charter is an initiative of the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula Smoking Prevention and Cessation Strategy.

This local strategy focuses on Quit Smoking Support Services, the promotion of Smokefree Environments and the denormalisation of smoking (making smoking less normal and visible). The Smoke Free Charter enables schools to publically show their commitment to addressing smoking related harm. The aim of the Charter is to showcase the organisations and settings on the Mornington Peninsula working towards this common goal.

There are currently 67 signatories to the Smoke Free Charter including early years, primary schools and secondary schools.

If you are interested in becoming a Smoke Free Charter signatory please contact Kristen or Josh. Alternatively drop us a line at healthpromotingschools@phcn.vic.gov.au
From the HPS Library

Young and Physically Active – a blueprint for making physical activity appealing to youth
World Health Organisation 2012

This report identified key ingredients for a successful physical activity initiative. Specifically;

- Accessibility – the activity must be quick and easy to get to
- Cost – AS soon as there is a fee attached to the activity there is a risk of creating inequity in participation
- Young people enjoy being outdoors surrounded by nature
- Walking and cycling offer young people who do not enjoy organised sport, an alternative way of being physically active.
- Healthy competition - building a culture of cooperation, integration and positive attitudes, rather than activities being based solely competition, promotes participation.
- The opportunity to meet new people, make friends and develop social skills is a very important aspect of physical activity for young people

The Australian Government has just released the newest version of the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating which is used as a broad tool for describing a healthy, nutritious diet.

Here is a summary of the differences between previous versions:

- ‘Extra’ foods are renamed ‘discretionary’ foods and referred to as not being needed at all for health.
- Stronger evidence around limiting sugar-sweetened drinks to prevent excessive weight gain in both children and adults.
- Changes in serves needed for some core food groups (e.g. dairy, breads and cereals and meat).
- An increase in serves of dairy, fruit, vegetables and meat for children and adolescents.
- Daily food requirements now available for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.
- A greater emphasis on the importance of eating different colours of fruit and vegetables.
- A greater focus on health benefits of wholemeal grains/cereals.
- Replacing foods high in saturated fat with foods that are predominantly poly and monounsaturated fats, instead of just limiting saturated fat.

A full version of the guide can be found at www.eatforhealth.gov.au
Terrific Teeth for Teens on the menu at Mount Erin

Year 7 students have taken the lead at Mount Erin College to improve oral health as part of their schools approach to health promotion.

As part Mount Erin College’s journey towards becoming a Health Promoting School, an audit was undertaken to determine what they are currently doing to support health and wellbeing. This process identified an opportunity for the school to undertake planning and action to promote oral health.

What did they do?

Mount Erin College staff, students and Peninsula Health formed the Terrific Teeth working group. Students gathered information from the school community about their oral health knowledge, values and health status.

A Health Needs Assessment was undertaken with students and their families to further examine what was working well and what initiatives could be developed at the school that were realistic and achievable.

Year 7 students lead the collation of information obtained from parents and the wider student population. They developed and delivered Powerpoint presentations to the whole school at student assemblies which showed that 25% students do not get dental check-ups, perception of cost, lack of time and pain prevent students from going to the dentist. In addition, a gap in oral health knowledge was identified with 50% of students unsure about what causes gum disease.

Onsite dental screenings

As a result of the health needs assessment Peninsula Community Dental Program provided two onsite dental screenings for 120 students.

As part of participating, students received an oral health kit containing a tooth brush, tooth paste, dental floss, tooth brush travel case and a plaque disclosing tablet. To ensure that oral health remains on the agenda at Mount Erin College, the school is committed to:

- A review of their existing health and wellbeing policy to include oral health promotion initiatives
- Frequent communication with staff, students and their families about what the school is doing in this area
- Peninsula Health and Mount Erin College work together to develop oral health curriculum content
- A review of the schools physical environment to support oral health
- Building a school culture that supports oral health care

“...Its great that the school is interested in our teeth.
The dentists from Peninsula Health that come to our school made me feel really comfortable.
I will definitely go to the community dentist to receive free treatment in the future.”
Sarah, year 11
No more huff and puff at Patterson River!

“Revisit your schools tobacco control approach” suggests Monique De Roche, school nurse at Patterson River Secondary College. Recently the College undertook a review of its own tobacco control approach and with some creative thinking developed a whole school model to tobacco control which the school hopes will support the health of the wider school community.

“We have started to implement this approach at Patterson River” said Monique “and can see a positive impact on teachers and students already”. The school is committed to continual improvement and will review this priority again during the Health Promoting Schools Audit process.

**Key learning:**

- Maintain momentum – consider ways to highlight the importance of tobacco control, for example a regular email quiz or as a regular agenda item at staff meetings
- Find the balance between a punitive approach and individual support – continue to review your approach…what is the objective? What is working and what could be improved?
- Broaden your schools tobacco control response to a range of key staff members to reduce the “bottle neck” effect and allow for greater student support. Consider appointing key QUIT mentors.
Useful links and resources

- Achievement Program Registration page http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Registration-Form-for-Schools

Key contacts

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Want to share?

Share your health promotion stories and successes in the next HPS Newsletter.

If you have something you would like to include in the Newsletter or would like to provide some feedback, please contact the Health Promotion Team: healthpromotingschools@phcn.vic.gov.au

References

1. ‘Promoting Health in Schools: From Evidence to Action’, International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE); 2010.