

**Towards a Better Way: Notes from our day together**  
**November 1, 2017**  
**Ottawa, Ontario**

**MEETING NOTES**

**Overview**

A gathering of thought leaders from across the country was held on November 1, 2017 in Ottawa, Ontario with 26 participants from across the country representing multiple perspectives and organizations dedicated to the promotion of healthy school communities. Dina Bell-Laroche of the Sport Law & Strategy Group facilitated the session. A list of participants is included in **Appendix A**.

This meeting was co-designed by a small group of organizations who has been exploring ways to work better, together over the past 18 months. With funding support from the McConnell Foundation, PHE Canada agreed to provide the necessary logistical support to help organize a one day gathering in advance of the Healthy School Communities National Forum.

Participants were asked to review the following information to come prepared for the meeting:

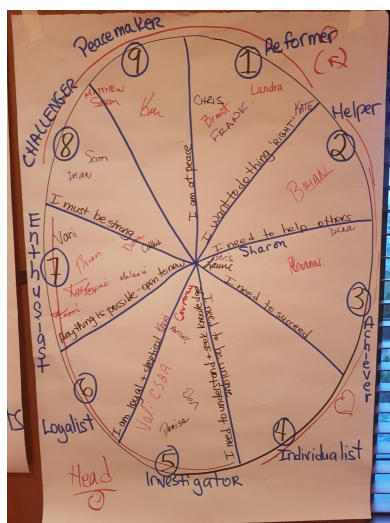
- ✓ Letter of invitation
- ✓ Insights document
- ✓ Responses to a brief survey that highlighted the participants desire to be more informed, connected, coordinated and aligned.



The workshop was designed to meet the following **outcomes**:

- ✓ Bring together thought leadership and organizations around school health
  - ✓ Continue to strengthen relationships among thought leaders to enhance knowledge exchange and generate meaningful collaboration
- ✓ Building towards a coordinated effort to convene and connect stakeholders across various school health systems and jurisdictions

PHE Canada's Director, Partner & Stakeholder Engagement Sharon Jollimore welcomed everyone and set the stage for the importance of working better, together. She then introduced Dina Bell-Laroche as the workshop facilitator as well as Brian Torrance with Ever Active Schools, Brian Storey from PHE Canada and Vani Jain of the



McConnell Foundation. The trio invited everyone to think differently, to build off the early momentum generated over the past year to come together with an open mind and with a sense of possibility around new ways of collaborating. Dina was then invited to outline the meeting norms for participants to ensure a productive conversation and hosted a “Getting to Know Myself” session using the Enneagram as a tool to increase self-awareness and build empathetic connection among participants. Dina invited participants to identify what they each sourced first as they prepared to make an important decision – their head (thinkers), heart (feelers) or gut (instinctive). These categories of personality types are

expanded upon more deeply in [The Wisdom of the Enneagram by Riso and Hudson](#) and serve as a helpful reminder that we don't all see the world in the same way. This can be a tremendous asset to a group as we look to appreciate and invite multiple perspectives to tackle complex problems. It was a different way to get to know each other and also served as a useful way to break up the small groups throughout the Gathering.

The following **meeting norms** were identified as being important in order to ensure a productive meeting: Listen to understand. Share your truth. Open to the creative process. Source multiple intelligences. Embrace diversity of perspective. Technology on breaks. Move.

Dina then introduced Jennifer Bruce, who was there to support the capturing of the Gathering and the graphic recorder, Michelle Vanderwier, who was tasked with visually illustrating the day's events.

Dina invited the participants to pair up with another person to share a proud “healthy school” moment that required the involvement of different stakeholders. Questions included:

- ✓ What was it about this moment that you were so proud of?
- ✓ What made that moment possible?
- ✓ What were the relationships that enabled this moment?

- ✓ How did you overcome barriers?

The diads then met up with two other pairs to exchange stories and to identify the essential ingredients to creating a more dynamically connected network of organizations dedicated to creating healthy school communities. The questions and responses are as follows:

***What kind of coordinated leadership approach enables the realization of great initiatives?***

- ✓ Visionary Leadership: need a champion; national scale; shared leadership role; credible; create common goal
- ✓ Courage Communicator: follow through on 'gut decisions'; communicating in a transparent manner and sharing is key
- ✓ Values orientation: follow your values and ensure this is communicated as well
- ✓ Collaborative: when it makes sense; equity in capacity is considered; be willing to give something up
- ✓ Resourceful: be a catalyst for what is possible for the system; leverage resources – financial, human and material

***What fosters a sense of shared purpose with partners and stakeholders?***

- ✓ Inclusive approach: participatory process; remove financial barriers; top down and bottom up; respecting people's contribution; bring people together who may not normally come together
- ✓ Hope-filled: people feel the commitment; fuel trust and assume good will
- ✓ Shared interest: towards a common purpose; common way forward
- ✓ Coordinated leadership: looking to find commonalities and leverage points across various populations – students, schools, community, policy/ decision makers; national/ provincial/ territorial/ local alignment is important to building "Healthy School" agenda
- ✓ Innovative: take smart risks; adopt a learning mindset

***What helped you overcome barriers and challenges?***

- ✓ Listening to understand; be flexible and open to each other
- ✓ Focus: begin with the end in mind; work on small things together, better
- ✓ Sustained commitment: to find better ways; trust the process; leverage each other's networks

- ✓ Innovate: Growth mindset; be OK to fail; adapt and then modify and move forward
- ✓ Be values driven: start with values; be smart about being inclusive (jagged edges not straight line)

## Systems view of how we are connected

Participants were then invited to share their organization's mission with each other and reveal how the organizations were working together in a coordinated and collaborative manner, defined as “bringing the different elements of (a complex activity or organization) into a relationship that will ensure efficiency or harmony”. What the exercise revealed is that different organizations have different interpretations of what working together in a coordinated and collaborative manner means.

It was suggested by some participants that it might be useful for someone to invite the various organizations to identify how they are working with each other towards building healthy school communities. The definitions proposed are the ones shared as follows:



**Networking:** Organizations have a networking relationship when they exchange information to help each other improve their activities and services. Networking requires the least amount of commitment and time.

**Coordination:** Organizations have a coordinating relationship when they modify their activities so that together they provide coordinated services to the citizens they serve. Coordination requires more organizational involvement, time and trust than a networking relationship but there is no requirements for shared resources.

**Cooperation:** Organizations cooperate when they share information and draw upon each existing capacities by sharing the resources of all organizations involved. In order to enter into



cooperative relationships organizations have to be willing to mitigate tensions surrounding organizational ownership and responsibility.

**Collaboration:** In collaborative relationships, organizations help each other identify ways to solve systemic problems. It is a long-term enterprise that requires public, private and non-profit organizations to put aside their organizational interests and give priority to the common good of the larger community. If successful, collaborative efforts allow people from different groups to accomplish larger goals, together.

### **Questions that matter**

The following summarizes some of the key solutions and insights generated from a list of questions that the participants wanted to focus on exploring following lunch:

**Question 1 & 2 combined: What can we do collectively that we cannot do singularly to advance healthy schools/ How is the whole greater than the sum of its parts? What can we do together that we can't do individually to move the needle on school wellbeing and learning?**

### ***Solutions and Insights:***

- ✓ Define the core components of healthy schools
  - Is the framework CSH or HPS?
  - We need unified language moving forward to start the conversation
  - Communications strategy – the concept of coming together is the communications strategy; Agree on 3-5 talking points
  - How would organizations' reaction to collaborative solutions differ if they were to be placed as "leader" vs "participant"/ "follower"?
- ✓ Map assets – identify our strengths
- ✓ Provide effective opportunities to share best practices; learn from others similar challenges
- ✓ Engage with international partners re lessons learned
- ✓ Reach outside the box to other sectors for solutions
- ✓ Identify one or two areas to focus our work on collectively and then evaluate our capacity and effectiveness before moving to next project
- ✓ Ensure we are inclusive of parents and students voices
- ✓ Address low hanging fruit
- ✓ Joint press release from all organization around national child day; collectively come together on awareness campaigns ... A Consensus Statement ... Sign off on a We Believe Statement

- ✓ An inventory on what organizations would give up
- ✓ Using each other's resources; share evidence and assessment that proves a resource/ practice is effective
- ✓ Fluid membership/ fluid participation: identify different ways to engage with members
- ✓ Merge organizations in the field – federated model where ONE name but have provincial/ local autonomy
- ✓ Identify themes or priorities each organization is working on so we can connect on common issues
- ✓ Change happens at the speed of trust; Relationships built today will help us move forward collaboratively in a jagged front
- ✓ How do we make sure we are reporting back and keeping each other in the loop?
- ✓ Prevents re-inventing the wheel
- ✓ We can reach every school in the country with our collective power
- ✓ Connect to TRC recommendation as a collective

***Additional questions:***

- ✓ What are we willing to do as one united voice or approach for healthy schools in Canada?
- ✓ Is one lens needed?
- ✓ How do we confirm our common goal?
- ✓ Where are the gaps and where are the limitations?
- ✓ How do we direct more resources to the benefit of students – rather than building siloed programs?
- ✓ What are we inspired to do together?

**Question 3: If CSH is the most broad framework, how can we make others identify within it?**

***Solutions and Insights:***

- ✓ Many people and organizations doing wellbeing in schools don't identify with a CSH model – or don't recognize they are actually doing it
- ✓ CSH needs to move beyond preaching to the choir to consulting with and inviting others in it
- ✓ Requires seeing the world beyond something and learning more about how people and organizations define their work
- ✓ We need to be OK that we are not saying the same thing; need to focus on similarities, not differences
- ✓ Mapping network beyond current CSH community

- ✓ Who is our champion – how to make this compelling (Who is the CSH Emma Watson or Bono)
- ✓ Facilitate learning about CSH – how it will support and sustain implementation; meet people where they are
- ✓ Make other identify with a concept does not sound collaborative

***Additional questions:***

- ✓ What are the characteristics of a healthy student/ school community?
- ✓ Should we attach ourselves to one framework? Is this an impediment to our collective action?

**Question 4: Is stakeholder collaboration the right approach?**

***Solutions and insights:***

- ✓ Good process is the goal – not everyone will be happy all the time
- ✓ Networking vs collaboration
- ✓ Have we clearly identified the problem?
- ✓ Who has the authority to oversee a national collaborative group? Who could and should be the leading voice? It should be democratic and peer elected; vested with authority by the group
- ✓ Healthy schools vs School Health: the two different concepts and different voices are involved in each; it's the approach and not the content or health topic
- ✓ The concept of a collaborative approach seems very complicated; what is there to gain from trying to collaborate: frameworks/ approaches to implementing healthy schools or comprehensive school health?
- ✓ Create better mechanism to share between JCSH and NGOs and school divisions
- ✓ Way to breakdown silos – yes but through true collaboration
- ✓ Think of the end user first
- ✓ What is our “magnetic attractor” – we can all orient around the characteristics of a healthy school community – as defined by local context
- ✓ Courageous conversations with trusted relationships
- ✓ Being open, yet strategic in collaboration initiatives
- ✓ Shaping culture be engaging the heart, mind and body
- ✓ If there is homogeneity in our goals what is heterogeneity in our organizations that can bring value?
- ✓ Schools are bombarded with health programs that may or may not do harm- need a place or someone to vet



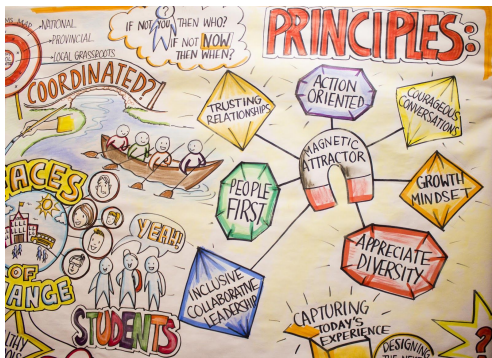
**Additional questions:**

- ✓ How is it defined/ applied differently depending on context?
- ✓ What is collaboration? Is it sharing ideas, frameworks, policies which can then lead to collaborative initiatives?
- ✓ Is stakeholder collaboration the wrong approach?

**Question 5: Can we create a bold equitable vision for healthy school communities?**

## Solutions and insights

- ✓ Need to define our words
- ✓ Need agreement – it's okay not to agree but it cannot be a barrier to success.
- ✓ Embrace diversity and dynamism
- ✓ Boldness may change our thinking and processes
- ✓ Insight: Social determinants of health could guide vision of equity
- ✓ Need better evidence on the diversity of a student and school experience- broad targeted
- ✓ Engaging and listening to diverse stakeholders; with one share vision you can lose creativity with everyone using the same approach but could approach be unique and products different?
- ✓ Hasn't the JCSH already set that vision? Solution is to rally around existing vision set by JCSH – Ministries are in agreement on that vision so the next level needs to agree as well – co-creation is key! A good start is a suitable vision may already exist, but because people weren't engaged in creating it, they may not feel an affinity to it
- ✓ If the vision is broad and generic then maybe others can see themselves and we can co-create through multiple actions



## Principles to guide how we work together, better

The group was invited to reflect on the conversation they had and to identify the top 3 principles they felt were instrumental in guiding the path forward. The following principles were clustered around this idea of a “Magnetic

Attractor” that pulled the groups together towards finding a better, way. The principles included:



- ✓ Forging trusting relationships: Assume good will; moving toward a formalized structure that is respectful and functioning and trustworthy; know thyself and be open to others; embody humility;
- ✓ Action oriented and values driven: Working together on collaborative efforts that leverages low hanging fruit; belief in a collaborative impact; linking well-being and learning
- ✓ Adopting a growth mindset: Take advantage of opportunities; learning together; think and focus on the big picture; cultivate upside down thinking
- ✓ Appreciating diversity: Prioritize equity; accept that people come from positions of skill and strength; non judgmental;
- ✓ Communicating courageously: Create a common identity; communicate openly and transparently; ask the hard questions; challenge the norm
- ✓ Putting people first: Remember who we are doing this for; involve children and youth;
- ✓ Leading inclusively and collaboratively: Be prepared to contribute and invest; be selfless; building sustained commitment; let democracy prevail; define clarity of purpose; be effective and efficient

## **Parking Lot**

Participants were invited to add their questions to the parking lot:

- ✓ Who can steward sustainability?
- ✓ Are we bold and safe?
- ✓ Are we defining health?
- ✓ Who can steward sustainability?
- ✓ Can we think outside the box in regards to future invitations?
- ✓ How far are we looking? What is quick win?
- ✓ What is collective shared distributed leadership?
- ✓ How do we address the inequity across the country?
- ✓ How might we communicate more effectively?
- ✓ How might we coordinate our efforts so that we can leverage existing resources?
- ✓ How might we identify research projects more effectively?
- ✓ What ways can we coordinate efforts to secure additional funding?
- ✓ What systems improvements can be made in the short term?
- ✓ What are the risks if we don't work toward a collaborative network of organizations committed to healthy school communities?

***The following additional organizations might be interested in joining this discussion:***

- ✓ Federally funded indigenous schools
- ✓ Canadian Deans of Education
- ✓ CAP and CTF
- ✓ Telus – do a health program called TELUS Wise
- ✓ Nova Scotia Schools Plus
- ✓ Andre Picard from Globe and Mail
- ✓ Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- ✓ Dr Dean Kriellaars – Social Circus Schools
- ✓ School Mental Health: Kathy Short, Stan Kutcher, Ian Manion
- ✓ Social Emotional Learning: Kim Schonnet Reich – Human Early Learning Partnership; People for Education
- ✓ Other: BC School Centred Health Coalition
- ✓ Keity Insitute
- ✓ Funders: Bell; Ontario Trillium Federation; Corporate; Cathy Foln

## **Maintaining Momentum**

**Step1:** Finish meeting notes, tabulate and summarize evaluations and share with group.

**Step 2:** The leadership group to review notes and begin design of second meeting in Lake Louise

**Step 3:** Identify key messages that each of the participants can use to share with their respective networks

