

# Niagara Region Public Health and Niagara School Boards Declaration of Commitment 2025–2030



School Boards and Public Health Units are both required by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Public Health Standards to work collaboratively to support and promote the health and education of children and youth. This collaboration extends to engaging parents, students, school staff, administration and community partners across the province to foster healthy, supportive school environments.



## Objective

The purpose of this Partnership Agreement is to define the terms and shared commitments under which the school boards and the Public Health Unit will collaborate to support the well-being of students in Niagara. This agreement formalizes a joint commitment to fostering healthy school environments with school administration that promote the well-being and learning potential of children and youth. It establishes a strategic foundation for sustained collaboration and the achievement of mutual goals.

## Goals

### Shared Priorities & Collaboration

Strengthen collaboration by identifying shared student well-being priorities and aligning efforts across partners. Leverage the unique expertise of each organization to ensure students have access to high-quality programs and services that support their health and well-being.

### Evidence-Informed Practices & Resources

Jointly identify, develop, and promote evidence-based educational supports and resources that reflect school board values and address health-related themes and priorities relevant to schools.

### Data-Informed Decision Making

Use local community and school board data to guide equitable allocation of Public Health services and inform planning and implementation of school health initiatives.

### Focus Initiatives to Promote Student Health

Work collaboratively to advance shared priorities in student health promotion with a particular emphasis on mental health, substance use and addictive behaviours, human development, and infection prevention. Additional focus areas will include physical activity and nutritious eating.

### Monitoring & Evaluation

Support joint research, data collection, monitoring and knowledge exchange to evaluate progress toward student well-being outcomes. There will be consideration by all parties to create a data sharing agreement that will identify shareable data, the level at which data can be shared and the process for extracting and transferring data when appropriate.

The partners are committed to ongoing evaluation of programs and services to ensure they meet the needs of educators, support high-quality delivery and achieve intended impacts for students.

## Guiding Principles

The planning and implementation of collaborative health and well-being initiatives will follow best practice guidelines using multi-pronged strategies consistent with the [Foundations for a Healthy Schools Framework](#). This Ministry of Education framework emphasizes the integration of school policies, programs, initiatives and curriculum into school and school board planning and implementation process and include the following five interconnected areas which include:

1. Curriculum, teaching and learning
2. School and classroom learning
3. Student engagement
4. Social and physical environments
5. Home, school and community partnerships

By integrating these five interconnected areas, schools, school boards, parents and community partners can work collaboratively to establish a comprehensive, cohesive approach to the development and implementation of healthy school policies, programs, and initiatives.

## Terms of Collaboration and Expectations

### Capacity Building & Knowledge Exchange

- All parties will participate in joint planning of health-related initiatives at both the system and school levels. Collaborative planning will promote greater efficiency by reducing duplication and will enhance service effectiveness, ultimately improving the health and well-being of youth in schools.
- When working with Catholic partners, Niagara Region Public Health will commit to providing resources and information that are respectful of and aligned with the Catholic worldview. These materials will support school-based actions that promote student well-being and reflect the priorities of Catholic school boards, fostering meaningful collaboration and culturally responsive health promotion.
- The common resources developed by Niagara Region Public Health will be based on the Ministry of Education's Foundation for a Healthy School, the mission and vision of each board as well as the Ontario Ministry curriculum
- Niagara Region Public Health will engage in collaborative discussions regarding the allocation of Public Health resources in schools, using available data and insights to inform planning for the upcoming school year
- Scope of Support & Community Collaboration
- Niagara Region Public Health will provide support using a population health approach on topics within the scope of the Ontario Public Health Standards

- For topics that fall outside this scope, Niagara Region Public Health will collaborate with credible community partners to promote coordinated support at the school level
- Niagara Region Public Health will share funding opportunities with the boards/schools relating to well-being priorities and will collaborate on grant submissions when appropriate

## **Enhance Communication**

The Niagara Region Public Health school health program staff:

- Will commit to meeting regularly with board leads with the purpose of reviewing roles and accountabilities prioritizing well-being topics, resources and communications, as well as any arising school-health related need
- Will commit to attending principal meetings as needed to convey health information including providing information related to Public Health services. Public Health staff will work with principals to attend staff, parent and student meetings when appropriate.
- Will act as a liaison between schools and Public Health services such as the dental team, vaccine-preventable diseases, and infectious disease, health promotion and environmental health teams, ensuring streamlined access to these essential public health supports
- Will communicate dental and immunization clinic dates in the late summer/early fall and will work closely with schools to determine the best dates for schools to be able to accommodate optimal attendance and space needs
- Will work with communication officers and superintendents to align time and messaging of any health-related communications including immunization letters
- Will provide health-related materials for distribution to parents, including parent/guardian letters and vaccine consent forms. The School Board agrees not to edit or revise them in any way unless granted permission from Niagara Region Public Health. All letters the School Board receives from parents with respect to Public Health services, including those refusing services, will be forwarded to Niagara Region Public Health in accordance with established practices.

At the operational level, the school board and Public Health staff will meet to contribute to each other's planning, identify areas of mutual interest, share appropriate data and identify opportunity for collaboration.

- All parties will provide lists of staff by mid-September and clarify who to contact for various needs.

To meet the mandate of the two French-language school boards in Niagara, all documentation shared with English-language school boards will be translated into French within a reasonable timeframe to ensure timely and equitable communication with all parents.

# Public Health Support for Schools

## Elementary Schools

Niagara Region Public Health will work with board curriculum consultants to increase capacity and provide consistent evidence-based resources across schools in Niagara. Niagara Region Public Health will work with board leads to identify if there are extenuating circumstances where more targeted elementary support by a school nurse is required and to increase capacity for Healthy Schools' initiative and health promotion activities.

All inquiries related to programs, services, or support from Public Health staff (e.g., school nurses or health promoters) should be directed to **healthyschools@niagararegion.ca** ensuring coordinated and timely assistance.

## Secondary Schools

Each secondary school will continue to have an assigned Public Health school nurse who will collaborate with school staff, students, and families to support health and well-being.

Public Health school nurses may provide support on a variety of topics aligned with the Ontario Public Health Standards, including but not limited to mental health, substance use prevention, sexual health and healthy relationships.

Designated private spaces will be made available within schools to facilitate student access to confidential, supportive health services provided by Niagara Region Public Health staff, such as one-on-one consultations, counselling and health promotion activities.

Public Health school nurses will serve as resources for school staff, providing support in health-related education, referrals, and collaborative initiatives – such as Healthy Schools programming – that promote student well-being and foster a healthy school environment.

## Renewal

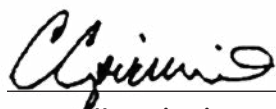
This agreement will be reviewed annually and renewed every five years, if deemed appropriate at the time of each review. Signed: December 15, 2025.



Dr. Azim Kasmani MD, MSc, FRCPC (he/him)  
Medical Officer of Health and Commissioner  
Niagara Region Public Health and Emergency Services



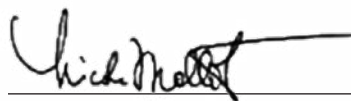
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