

Globally, over 90% of children of primary school age, and over 80% of children of lower secondary school age are enrolled in school. By promoting healthy behaviour from early childhood through the school setting, it would benefit not only the children themselves but also their families, peers and wider communities. In addition, schools are strategic platforms for delivering preventive health care services and these services can act as an extended arm of primary health care. Therefore, schools provide an efficient and effective way to reach large numbers of the population.

In 1995, WHO launched its Global School Health Initiative with the purpose of encouraging the adoption of the health promoting school approach worldwide. Six key features of health promoting schools are: 1) healthy school policies; 2) physical school environment; 3) social school environment; 4) health skills and education; 5) links with parents and community; 6) access to (school) health services.

Development of global standards

The current barrier is how the education sector perceives the health sector, and that schools are seen as “settings” for the delivery of services or information. From an educational point of view, schools contribute to health by: 1) creating the conditions for pupils’ achievement through the school environment, with proven health benefits later in life; and 2) acquiring health competencies and promoting health literacy, with the aim of empowering young and future generations to make healthy decisions.

Hence, WHO and UNESCO are collaborating on the development of global standards for health promoting schools. Standards will serve as a common framework for the 2 sectors both health and education in achieving those goals based on a common understanding, shared values and tools to implement a health promoting school approach in countries.

The standards are intended to support schools in developing their health and well-being policy on the one hand, and to give the means to improve and evaluate the policy at a national/regional level on the other hand.

This project will also support Member States in the implementation of their Sustainable Development Goals agenda. For the health sector, the priority areas and indicators are outlined under "WHO's 13th General Programme of Work" (GPW13) by 2023.

Related links

[Global standards for health promoting schools](#)

[WHO guideline on school health services](#)

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