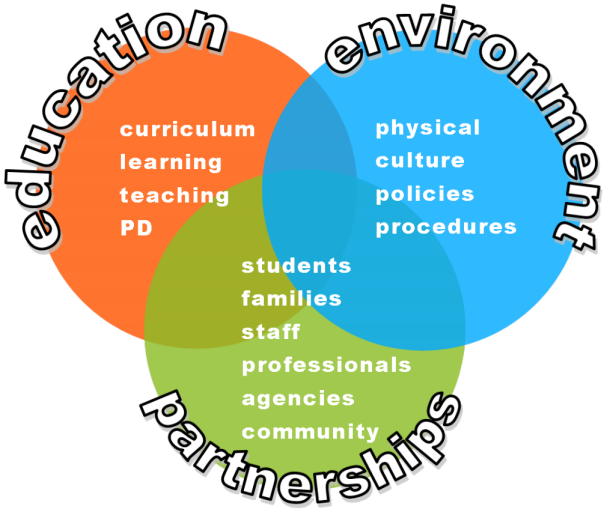
Growing and Developing Healthy Relationships (GDHR) strongly promotes and advocates the Health Promoting Schools Framework (HPSF) as a way of supporting a comprehensive approach to improving Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) outcomes.



What is a health promoting school?

A Health Promoting School is a school is one that considers the broad health needs of all school community members and is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.[1] [3]

A health promoting school:

- promotes the health and wellbeing of students, school staff, families and community members
- provides a safe and supportive environment
- upholds social justice and equity concepts
- implements practices that respect an individuals wellbeing and dignity, provides opportunities for success and acknowledges efforts, intentions and personal achievements.
- involves student participation and empowerment
- collaborates with parents and local community and helps them understand how the community can contribute to (or undermine) positive health education.
- integrates health into the school's ongoing activities, curriculum and assessment standards
- links health and education issues and systems
- engages with health and education officials, health providers, teachers, parents and community to strive to improve health outcomes
- sets realistic goals built on accurate data and sound scientific evidence
- seeks continuous improvement through ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

- implements policies to sustain a healthy environment and support ongoing improvements to the school environment, education and services. [2] [3]

Health promoting schools focus on:

- caring for oneself and others
- making healthy decisions and taking control over life's circumstances
- creating conditions that are conducive to health (through policies, services, physical/social conditions)
- building capacities for peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable ecosystem, equity, social justice and sustainable development
- preventing leading causes of death, disease and disability: tobacco use, HIV/AIDS, STIs/BBVs, sedentary lifestyle, drugs and alcohol, violence and injuries, unhealthy nutrition
- influencing health-related behaviours: knowledge, beliefs, skills, attitudes, values, support.[1]

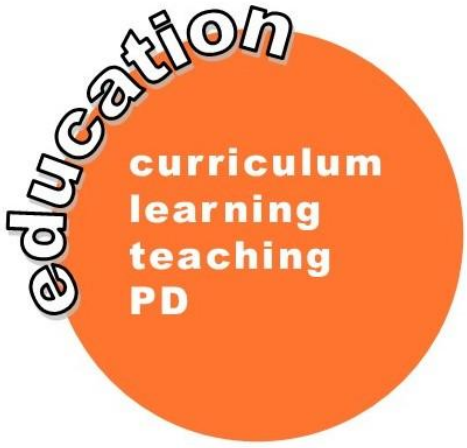
The Health Promoting Schools framework

The Health Promoting Schools Framework[2] developed by the World Health Organization encourages a whole school approach to addressing health issues, including Relationships and Sexuality Education. The framework consists of three interrelated areas:

- **Curriculum, teaching and learning (education)** - formal content of lessons; pedagogy; sequential, scaffolded nature of programs; resources; formal and incidental learning; etc
- **School, ethos and environment (environment)** - school policy; philosophical support for the health curriculum; school community relationships; the school's physical environment; etc
- **Partnerships and services (partnerships)** - family consultation and involvement; community based programs; development of community links; accessing local services; etc[3]

Health promoting strategies for RSE

This framework is a useful planning tool for addressing sexual heath education needs within a school. The following strategies can be implemented to improve Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).



Curriculum, teaching and learning

- Make use of the GDHR resources.
- Share resources between neighbouring primary and high schools e.g. Magno-mate reproductive kit.

- Provide an adequate specific budget for RSE resources and professional development.
- Encourage input of students, parents and teachers into relationship and sexual health education.
- Ensure programs and teaching materials consider all students' learning styles and needs.
- Model interactive attitudes and values strategies for collaborative learning (for students and PD).
- Plan a whole school RSE focus.
- Integrate learning areas across the curriculum, e.g. Maths - statistics, Humanities and Social Sciences - consent laws, marriage equality, English - books, plays and movies.
- Promote health education strategies, resources and information on staff noticeboard.
- Make use of the SHQ library to borrow resources.
- Arrange for students to provide presentations on RSE to peers and parents.
- Assist students to organise panel discussions on RSE topics. Invite guests to join.
- Utilise positive peer role models.
- Arrange for Health Studies students to give health reports at assemblies.
- Provide professional development for teachers on GDHR materials via The Curtin RSE Project.
- Provide professional development for staff on affirming diversity and inclusive language via Inclusive Education.
- Increase funding for RSE (Apply for school RSE grant).
- Review class/school timetables to increase health lesson times.
- Take an inventory of the RSE resources in the school, cull out-dated resources, promote the resources that are available and advocate to purchase new, evidence-based resources.

School organisation, ethos and environment

- Develop, implement and review school sexual health guidelines/policies.
- Get feedback from parents, teachers and students on school health policy development.
- Collaborate with local feeder schools to develop school policies.
- Integrate health services, including student counselling.
- Identify a specific 'health' room within the school.
- Set up a 'hang out' room to display messages and posters that display RSE health messages and celebrate diversity.
- Organise Sexual Health Week activities.
- Involve parents (caregivers/guardians/significant role-models) and community members in sexual health education.
- Add RSE information snippets to school social media and newsletters.
- Hold a parent and student RSE health quiz.
- Develop critical incident plans e.g. for imaged-based abuse incidents.
- Create a personalised directory of local services for parents and staff.
- Use inclusive language in newsletters and other correspondence.
- Create a student photographic display which highlights positive relationships and youth.

Partnerships and services

- Organise relationship/sexual health education courses for parents.
- Encourage parents to work with their children on the GDHR take home activities.
- Network with neighbouring schools.
- Involve parents in school relationship/sexual health education guidelines/curriculum decisions.
- Hold stalls at fetes/festivals providing 'show bags' with information about RSE - safer sex, support agencies, STIs/BBVs, relationships.
- Collaborate with community organisations to hold a 'building respectful relationships' camp.
- Provide copies of WA Department of Health resources in the school office for parents (e.g Talk soon. Talk often.)
- Include relationship/sexual health education information in school newsletter.
- Conduct a health conference for high school students. Make use of external agencies/presenters, e.g. Freedom Centre, SHQ, WA AIDS Council.
- Have young people model some of the strategies from the GDHR materials for parents at the P & C meeting.
- Conduct a parent survey on current sexual health knowledge and present a follow-up parent information night.
- Put health displays/ student made models in local library.
- Create an urban art wall with an RSE theme.
- Add useful websites to school newsletters and social media. (See Resource section for a list of helpful websites on various topics).

How and why to become a health promoting school

What is a health promoting school? from the WA Health Promoting Schools Association is a resource to assist schools to implement a whole school approach. It outlines how:

- why to become a Health Promoting School
- how to get started
- who can help
- case studies for inspiration.

Relevant resources

Websites

WA Health Promoting Schools Association (WAHPSA)

The WA Health Promoting Schools Association advocates and supports a whole school and community approach to health and wellbeing. The Association achieves this through education, coordination and collaboration with school communities and health agencies.

Australian Council of Health and Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER)

The professional association representing teachers and other professionals working in the fields of health and physical education. ACHPER provides programs and services that support continuing development of knowledge, skills and professional practice.

References

1. World Health Organization. *Promoting Health Through Schools – The World Health Organization's Global School Health Initiative*. Geneva, 1996.
2. World Health Organization. *What is a Health Promoting School?* Geneva, 2011.
3. WA Health Promoting Schools Association (Inc). *What is a health promoting school?* Western Australia, 2011.

This Background Note relates to the following Learning Activities

- Puberty part 1
- Puberty part 2

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