



Executive Summary

CODE and the Ministry of Education Student Injury Prevention Initiative

In January, 2013, Deputy Minister George Zegarac introduced the Ontario Ministry of Education Student Injury Prevention Initiative to enhance student health and safety in schools throughout the province. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) was engaged to assist the Ministry with coordination of the project, and to establish a health and safety team that would identify a common set of promising safety practices in provincial technological education and science education laboratories.

Scope of the CODE Health and Safety in Schools Project

To support boards in their requirement of ensuring student health and safety and student well-being, CODE received funding to provide expertise and support to school boards in the following areas:

Establishment of a CODE Health and Safety Team to identify a common set of promising safety practices in provincial technological education and science education laboratories.

Development and Publication of Resource Guides covering:

- ◆ Student Safety in Elementary Science and Technology Grades 7 and 8
- ◆ Student Safety in Secondary Science Grades 9 to 12
- ◆ Student Safety in Secondary Technological Education Grades 9 to 12
- ◆ Student Safety: A Guide for Supervisory Officers, Principals and Vice-Principals

Preparation and Distribution of a School Board Needs Assessment Survey to gather a provincial perspective on the status of student health and safety in school technological education facilities and science laboratories.

Advisory Support and Assistance to School Boards, including a list of vendors provided by boards who provide training, inspect technological education facilities and science laboratories, and a series of questions and answers.

Development of e-Learning Training Modules to support principals, vice-principals and supervisory officers in the promotion and implementation of health and safety provisions and requirements in schools. These modules are entitled Student Safety in Elementary Science and Technology (Grades 7 and 8); Student Safety in Secondary Science Education (Grades 9 to 12); and Student Safety in Secondary Technological Education (Grades 9 to 12). (A two-part webinar, *Health and Safety in Schools: A Guide for Supervisory Officers*, has also been prepared.)

Preparing a Supplement to the 2011 *Teacher Assignment in Ontario Schools Document* scheduled to be completed June 2014.

Many of the resources listed above can be found on the CODE website (www.ontariodirectors.ca).

Support for Schools/Regional Student Injury Prevention Sessions

Through the Health and Safety Team, CODE also supported schools in areas such as staff training and the inspection of technological education and science education facilities. In addition, seven regional Student Injury Prevention Sessions, reaching key health and safety leads in 71 boards, were offered throughout the province. These sessions provided numerous opportunities for discussion, problem solving and networking.

Major themes and comments emerging from the Student Injury Prevention Sessions included:

- ◆ Safety mindedness and a change in culture should be a primary focus for any further initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Education.
- ◆ On-going discussions with Directors of Education to ensure that student health and safety and student well-being are an integrated priority for all boards.
- ◆ Sharing of best practices and effective strategies, including the development of provincially-shared management practices and online resources, especially in the area of technological education and science.
- ◆ Further development of resources for teachers in science and technology, science and technological education, including safety inspections, identification of risk and hazard, general housekeeping, teacher qualifications and safe use of chemicals and equipment.
- ◆ Support for rural, remote and Northern boards.
- ◆ More opportunities for professional development and connections among boards.
- ◆ Closer links between school administrators and Health And Safety officers
- ◆ Establishing a website to share resources and materials and to provide a forum for school administrators and teachers – a suggestion that was raised repeatedly at all the sessions.

Board participants also spoke strongly on the issue of teacher qualifications in technological education classrooms and science laboratories. Their primary concern was that some teachers did not have the necessary qualifications or the background and experience in teaching these courses to ensure student safety. One suggestion from board participants was that the Faculties of Education include within their programs a mandatory module on student health and safety and well-being.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education continue the current Student Injury Prevention Initiative and allocate appropriate funding to meet the need for additional resources and training. In addition, school boards should take an active role in instituting a culture of safety mindedness and shared responsibility for student health and safety.
2. Consideration should be given to the development of resources to help teachers teach safely in these specific areas.
3. One system-wide professional activity day per year be designated for student safety and safety mindedness in schools.
4. The Ministry of Education and CODE consider strategies to reinforce with Directors of Education and Superintendents their responsibilities in terms of ensuring student safety, and for building a culture of shared responsibility for student safety in all elementary and secondary schools.
5. Develop a health and safety website, accessible to all boards, for collecting management practices, student safety materials, resources, activities, plans and policies.
6. Have Faculties of Education include health and safety programs for teacher candidates.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The CODE Health and Safety Project was successful in heightening awareness and understanding among school boards about their responsibilities and requirements for student health and safety. It also furthered an important discussion on supporting student well-being and building a culture of safety mindedness in schools.

The work to prevent student injuries and to ensure student health and safety is by no means complete. The recommendations and key Health and Safety themes contained in this report are provided to initiate further conversations about the critical importance of these issues.

Overall, it may be time for boards to undertake development of a strategic plan for student success that integrates academic achievement along with student health, safety and well-being, i.e., a holistic approach to student learning that recognizes all of the critical factors (including health and safety) that lead to student success.

Among the many positive outcomes of the CODE Health and Safety in Schools project was the creation of more partnerships and connections among school boards, and with key health and safety organizations.

Going forward, these major areas are identified as being of primary importance:

1. A continued focus on the importance of health and safety for students with sustained and ongoing funding;
2. Establishment of provincial templates and best practices for the management of health and safety practices in boards;
3. Provisions for professional development and additional resources for teachers; and
4. Building a climate of safety mindedness along with a school culture where everyone has responsibility for health and safety of students and staff.

(For complete details regarding the Deputy Minister's Ontario Ministry of Education Student Injury Prevention Initiative memorandum, along with updated resources and information regarding CODE's ongoing role in student health and safety, please refer to the CODE website www.ontariodirectors.ca)