

## Chapter 40

### St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20—Promoting Good Student Health and Physical Fitness

#### 1.0 MAIN POINTS

St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 has generally improved its processes to promote good student health and physical fitness.

By February 2019, St. Paul's set clearer expectations for promoting student physical activity, and making school-level decisions about which health and physical fitness initiatives to select. However, principals in schools were not consistently using this guidance. Schools not consistently following guidance increases the risk that the Division will not meet its strategic goal of promoting good student health.

Also, St Paul's established a way to centrally monitor partnerships and community relationships in which individual schools had entered. Furthermore, it was more actively monitoring initiatives used (division-wide and at individual schools) to promote good student health and physical fitness. Active monitoring will help it focus on initiatives that contribute to student health and fitness. Healthier and fit students are better positioned to learn.

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

##### 2.1 Background

Research indicates that students who are physically active and properly nourished are better learners.<sup>1</sup> Healthy diets and physical activity are well-established factors that reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.<sup>2</sup>

Promoting and supporting the healthy growth and development of children and youth is a shared responsibility among family, school, and other agencies. Schools serve as an important access point for nutrition, education, healthy eating practices, and the modeling of healthy lifestyles.<sup>3</sup>

*The Education Act, 1995* states that every school shall make provision for instruction and activities to promote the good health and physical fitness of its pupils.<sup>4</sup> The Education Sector Strategic Plan includes the following as a statement of strategic intent for students:

<sup>1</sup> Veuglers and Schwartz, *Comprehensive School Health in Canada*, in Canadian Journal of Public Health, *Supportive Environments for Learning: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity within Comprehensive School Health*, July/August 2010, p. s 7.

<sup>2</sup> Candelas, Armstrong, and Xuereb, *Diet and Physical Activity in Schools: Perspectives from the Implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, in Canadian Journal of Public Health, *Supportive Environments for Learning: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity within Comprehensive School Health*, July/August 2010 p. s 28.

<sup>3</sup> Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Nourishing Minds—Towards Comprehensive School Community Health: Nutrition Policy Development in Saskatchewan Schools*, (2012), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Section 188 of *The Education Act, 1995*.



“I am ready to learn—I am safe, healthy and hopeful.”<sup>5</sup> Good student health and physical fitness directly supports this strategic intent.

As one of Saskatchewan’s 27 school divisions, St. Paul’s Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 is responsible for promoting good student health and physical fitness.<sup>6</sup> With 50 schools and over 19,000 students, the Division is Saskatchewan’s largest Catholic school division and serves the city of Saskatoon and surrounding area.<sup>7</sup> One of its strategic priorities is “Improving Student Learning and Achievement.” One of its goals is “to commit to increasing the health and fitness of all students by ensuring a culture of student engagement and participation as foundational in our curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students.”<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our follow-up of management’s actions on the recommendations we made in 2015.

In 2015, we assessed St. Paul’s processes to promote good student health and physical fitness. Our *2015 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 40 concluded that St. Paul’s had, other than in the areas reflected in our five recommendations, effective processes to promote good student health and physical fitness.

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate St. Paul’s progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. St. Paul’s agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To carry out our audit examination, we interviewed management at St. Paul’s. We conducted observations and interviews of principals at schools. We examined and assessed the Division’s policies, reports and other relevant documentation.

## 3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at February 28, 2019, and St. Paul’s actions up to that date.

<sup>5</sup> [publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/11/100620-ESSP%20Level%201%20Cycle%203%20Matrix%20-%20FINAL.pdf](http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/11/100620-ESSP%20Level%201%20Cycle%203%20Matrix%20-%20FINAL.pdf) (4 March 2019).

<sup>6</sup> *The Education Act, 1995* (s.188) specifies that schools are to provide instruction and activities to promote the good health and physical fitness of students.

<sup>7</sup> St. Paul’s Roman Catholic School Division No. 20, *2017-18 Annual Report*, p. 7. [www.gscs.ca/board/Documents/2017-2018\\_Annual\\_Report-Ministry\\_of\\_Education.pdf](http://www.gscs.ca/board/Documents/2017-2018_Annual_Report-Ministry_of_Education.pdf) (5 March 2019).

<sup>8</sup> St. Paul’s Roman Catholic School Division No. 20, *Board of Education Priorities and Goals 2016-2020*. [www.gscs.ca/board/Pages/PrioritiesGoals.aspx](http://www.gscs.ca/board/Pages/PrioritiesGoals.aspx) (5 March 2019).

### 3.1 Expectations for Promoting Student Physical Activity Set

***We recommended that St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 set its expectations for promoting student physical activity.*** (2015 Report – Volume 2, p. 284, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 14, 2016)

**Status** – Implemented

In February 2017, the Division implemented a policy (i.e., administrative procedure) setting out its expectations for promoting student physical activity.

The policy aligns with Ministry of Education guidance entitled *Inspiring Movement – Towards Comprehensive School Community Health: Guidelines for Physical Activity in Saskatchewan* (2010).<sup>9</sup> This document outlines Ministry expectations on daily physical activity, and inclusion of daily physical activity in all subject areas.

St. Paul's communicated the new policy and expectations to school principals through their bi-monthly forum in January 2017. It makes the policy available to all schools and the public on its website.<sup>10</sup>

Having a policy for physical activity that takes into account the needs of all students and includes physical activity strategies and targets for improvement shows the Division's commitment to promoting student physical activity.

### 3.2 High Schools Not Consistently Following Division Guidance

***We recommended that St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 provide principals with criteria to guide their assessment and selection of health and physical fitness initiatives at the school level.*** (2015 Report – Volume 2, p. 288, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 14, 2016)

**Status** – Partially Implemented

St. Paul's has provided guidance to schools to assist in the assessment and selection of health and physical fitness initiatives; however, its schools are not using it.

The Division gave schools guidance, through related policies, to help schools select initiatives that align with its strategic goal—to commit to increasing the health and fitness of all students by ensuring a culture of student engagement and participation.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/11/85697-inspiring-movement.pdf](http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/11/85697-inspiring-movement.pdf) (25 April 2019)

<sup>10</sup> [www.gscs.ca/about/policies/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.gscs.ca/about/policies/Pages/default.aspx) (3 March 2019).

<sup>11</sup> The Division's Strategic Plan is available at [www.gscs.ca/board/Pages/PrioritiesGoals.aspx](http://www.gscs.ca/board/Pages/PrioritiesGoals.aspx) (8 April 2019).



Its Nutrition Policy, which the Division amended in February 2017, includes expectations for schools to serve students healthy food options and promotes water consumption. It also states that vending machines are not to sell regular or diet carbonated soft drinks, milks and water with flavors or sweeteners, sweetened juices, fruit drinks with less than 100% juice, or sports drinks.

Its Physical Education Policy, which came into effect in February 2017, includes expectations to engage students in daily physical activity and to incorporate physical activity into all subject areas.

In addition, the Division uses weekly bulletins to communicate opportunities for schools to engage in various health and physical fitness initiatives. For example, its bulletin for the week of January 10, 2019 included opportunities to register for winter sports programs provided by the City of Saskatoon.

School principals told us that they regularly discuss opportunities with their superintendents to obtain feedback and assist in selecting initiatives for schools. School principals also use the guidance in the partnerships guide to help select initiatives that promote good student health and physical fitness. They recognized that the Division's Nutrition Policy and Physical Activity Policy included considerations to use in making initiative decisions (e.g., making healthy food choices, promoting daily physical activity).

During our visits to two elementary schools and two high schools, we noted that schools offered many opportunities for students to engage in regular physical activity consistent with the Division's Physical Activity policy. Examples included the use of body breaks, intramural activities, recess, open gym times, ping-pong tournaments, and fitness centres.

However, our visit to two high schools found that each high school did not comply with the Nutrition Policy. Vending machines at both high schools contained sports drinks, flavoured water and carbonated drinks. The Division told us that it offers these options to reduce students leaving school during school hours.

Schools not consistently following guidance increases the risk that the Division will not meet its strategic goal of promoting good student health.

### 3.3 Partnerships and Community Relationships Sufficiently Monitored

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***We recommended that St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 monitor partnerships and community relationships related to nutrition and physical activity initiatives.*** (2015 Report – Volume 2, p. 290, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 14, 2016)

**Status** – Implemented

In May 2018, St. Paul's established a policy (i.e., administrative procedure) and a partnership guide to help school staff decide about entering into partnerships and community relationships.

When schools enter into new partnership arrangements, the policy expects them to register this information centrally with the Division.

We found schools reported their partnerships (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters, University of Saskatchewan) to the Division in May 2018 as expected. We also found the Division's Executive Council (e.g., Director of Education, Superintendents) reviewed and discussed the partnership data in November 2018. In addition, the Division reports information on partnerships to the Board annually.

Having complete information about partnerships helps schools avoid working with inappropriate partners, minimizes competition among schools for partners, and increases opportunities to coordinate efforts.

### **3.4 Performance of Initiatives Monitored and Reported**

***We recommended that St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 establish a process to track and report to its Board of Education on the performance of its initiatives to promote good student health and physical fitness.*** (2015 Report – Volume 2, p. 291, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 14, 2016)

**Status** – Intent of Recommendation Met

Consistent with St. Paul's Board new annual reporting requirement, senior management and the Board receive information on key initiatives the Division implemented during the school year. We found they received sufficient information to monitor the Division's initiatives to promote good student health and physical fitness.

Management first presented this report to the Board in March 2018. The report highlights the activities undertaken by the Division during the past year, such as healthy eating initiatives (e.g., learning where food comes from), and implementing a common menu across elementary schools.

Receipt of information about student health and physical fitness initiatives will help the Division determine which schools require revised initiatives or assistance to comply with policy and support student health and physical fitness. It will also help the Division achieve consistent results in promoting student health and fitness across the Division.

### **3.5 Process to Review and Update Policies Established**

***We recommended that St. Paul's Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20 establish a process to review and update policies on a regular basis.*** (2015 Report – Volume 2, p. 285, Recommendation 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 14, 2016)

**Status** – Implemented



In March 2017, St. Paul's established a policy requiring that the Division renew its administrative procedures every five years. The Division has assigned responsibility for certain administrative procedures to members of its Executive Council (e.g., Superintendents). Members are to update one-fifth of their policies each year. The Division updated its policies related to promoting good student health and physical fitness in February 2017.

Having a well-defined process to review policies periodically helps keep policies current and relevant.