

Executive Summary

The Hampton High School initiative has served as a model for enhancement of health behaviours and tobacco control in New Brunswick. Three years following the initial implementation of this project, Health Canada in conjunction with the University of New Brunswick, completed a research investigation designed to assist in formally documenting the Hampton High School experience, and the key elements and processes that contributed to the reported outcomes of this initiative. The majority of data for this study was gathered from research participants who had direct experience with or who were part of the implementation of this initiative.

The preliminary development of the initiative was prompted by staff and student concerns regarding environmental tobacco smoke and a renewed commitment to fulfil the mission statement of the school- “to provide a safe and nurturing environment.” Critical aspects of the initiative that were reported across participant groups included the role of teacher champions in leading the strategy, the sustained commitment of students and staff, the creation of smoke-free social spaces, and the provision of positive support for student smokers in reducing tobacco use.

At the time of data-gathering, rates of daily smoking among students at Hampton High School were slightly below the documented average rates of other secondary schools in New Brunswick. In this regard, there was general agreement among all research participants that efforts to reduce smoking had contributed to helping students not to smoke and to enhancing the overall health of smokers and non-smokers

With respect to tobacco control awareness, almost twice as many students at Hampton High School were aware of specific support available to them to reduce tobacco use as compared to other New Brunswick high schools. Teacher participants also affirmed the role of the tobacco control strategy in extending health knowledge among students, and for encouraging increased student openness to discussing a wide range of health-related behaviours and lifestyle issues. The implementation of the school smoke-free policy was also viewed as beneficial for limiting the number of students regularly congregating in smoking areas, and for reducing incidences of oppositional or disruptive behaviours on school property.

With respect to school connectedness, teacher participants provided feedback that the initiative had contributed to strengthening teacher-student relationships and for enhancing the overall learning climate at the school. Consistent with this observation, data collected among students indicated a greater degree of school connectedness in regards to academic study and participation in structured activities among those who had made decisions not to smoke.

The overall results of this research effort provided a range of participant perspectives and feedback supporting the positive outcomes of this initiative. In particular, the lessons learned arising from the initial implementation of the Hampton High School project may provide valuable insights for other educational jurisdictions that plan to undertake similar school-based tobacco control policies or activities.