



## School Health Action, Planning and Evaluation System

The *School Health Action, Planning and Evaluation System* – SHAPES – can be used to create health profiles of students and school environments. SHAPES collects data from local elementary or high schools on topics such as smoking, eating and physical activity. The survey data are then used to generate profiles to help schools, public health, and communities take action and improve the health of young people. Data can be compiled across regions, provinces, or the country to identify trends for policy and planning, and develop strategies for intervention. See [www.shapes.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.shapes.uwaterloo.ca) for details.

### Our Vision

Healthier Canadian youth today.  
Healthier Canadians tomorrow.

### Background

SHAPES was developed by the Centre for Behavioural Research and Program Evaluation (CBRPE) and colleagues at the University of Waterloo.

The SHAPES system can collect data from every student in a school, grades 5 to 12, (using a machine readable questionnaire) and provides a quality control process to produce research quality information. Parallel school-level questions, answered by school staff, help characterize the school "health" environment using the Comprehensive School Health framework.

In return for their participation, schools receive an individualized report or profile to let them know their status and identify strategies to help them take action. The online version of school-level assessment generates a report immediately on completion of the assessment.

Four phases comprise a SHAPES study (Figure 1). The modules plus tailored feedback constitute phases 1 and 2. But simply getting the tailored, timely evidence isn't sufficient for action. Phase 3 consists of a four-step process to work with the local community (e.g., school) to identify their priorities, strengths and plans for action. Phase 4 involves reflective practice to learn from the previous phases and adapt for the future. The four SHAPES phases are also closely aligned with "local" strategies and contexts. That is, the particular content of the modules, the type of feedback and processes for action are adapted to fit with priorities and experiences in the setting where the study is occurring. Sound research underpinnings offer users confidence that each component of SHAPES can be trusted. SHAPES is a cybernetic system, continually seeking improvement both in itself and the communities where it is implemented.

Figure 1: SHAPES Theory of Action



Canadian Cancer Society  
Société canadienne du cancer



National Cancer Institute of Canada

Institut national du cancer du Canada



The Centre for Behavioural Research and Program Evaluation is funded by the Canadian Cancer Society and is located at the University of Waterloo.

At present, SHAPES has four modules ready for application: Tobacco, Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, and Mental Fitness. Since 2000, these modules have been administered to over 1,500 Canadian schools with over 350,000 students. The following table highlights the modules available and the information covered through individual and school-level questionnaires.

		Module								
		Tobacco		Physical Activity		Eating Behaviour		Mental Fitness*		
Level		Available	Testing	Available	Testing	Available	Testing	Available	Testing	
	Individual	Behaviours	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2	✓	1	✓	1, 2
		Attitudes	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2	✓	1	✓	1, 2
		Knowledge	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2	✓	1	✓	1, 2
		Contextual Influences	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2	✓	1	✓	1, 2
	School	Programs	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2		
		Policies	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2		
Facilities				✓	1, 2	✓	1, 2			

\* A school-environment survey for Mental Fitness is not yet available

<sup>1</sup>content has been pilot tested

<sup>2</sup>content has been tested for validity/reliability

SHAPES plans to expand beyond the existing modules, including new modules on UV (sun) exposure, bullying and media literacy. Users can choose single or multiple modules. Modules can also be customized to meet user needs.

### Benefits of Using SHAPES

- The system uses standard items to enable comparisons with provincial and national norms.
- Questionnaire items have been scientifically tested.
- Student surveys are completed in one class period using procedures developed for SHAPES.
- Feedback can be returned to the school quickly – student-level reports are generated within 8-10 weeks of data collection, while school-level reports can be generated immediately online.
- The feedback report provides a useful point of contact with school administrators, teachers and students.
- Saves on staff time for development, analysis and reporting when compared to “do it yourself” surveys.
- Schools, boards of education, public health departments, provincial ministries, the federal government and researchers have successfully used SHAPES.

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