# Wellness Policy Creation Process

There are many different ways to create a Wellness Policy.
Below are the steps Ever Active Schools uses –
take them as a guide, as a starting point or simply as inspiration.

Ever Active Schools facilitators are also available to support communities in this process – if interested, contact Melissa at melissa@everactive.org

## 1 Set the Stage

- Begin with the BIG PICTURE or Vision for your Policy – The overarching goal this Policy will Achieve.
  Why are we here?
  Why is this worth doing?
- Discuss what to expect – approximate timelines, how meetings will look, who needs to officially approve the Policy and eventual Implementation Guide
  (e.g. Superintendent? Policy Review Committee? When are those meetings, and when does content need to be approved by?)

Place the Policy in the larger context of your school/community goals and current challenges, knowing that the content of the Policy will come later in the process

**TIP**

Your committee should represent the diverse voices and perspectives of your school community, especially those responsible for implementing the policy.

e.g. Elders, Students, Parent Advisory members, Principals, Teachers, Guidance Counsellors, Cafeteria Supervisor, Dietician, Wellness or Recreation Coordinator, Athletics Director, Indigenous Language Coordinator, HR Director, other Senior Admin

## 2 Generate Ideas Grounded in Your Community

*Begin to Brainstorm:*

- What needs to be included in our Policy to ensure it is reflective of our community, not transplanted from somewhere else?
  What does local culture teach us about Wellness?
  When you think of "Wellness", what comes to mind?
  When we think of "Wellness Policy" what are the first things we think to include?

There are no bad ideas!

- People may be interested in seeing other Wellness Policies, not to replicate them, but to help generate ideas about how the policy they are helping create could be similar or different. Consider providing examples of a few different policies for people to read ahead of your meeting, and allow time at your meeting to review, debate and discuss the examples. Ever Active can provide samples, or call nearby schools to compare policies.

**TIP**

In this stage, value quantity of ideas over quality. Allow divergent thinking. Ensure all voices are heard, and keep good notes of the conversations that take place – you never know what you may want to circle back to afterwards.

## 3 Determine Key Priorities

Here we move from many ideas to a few key priorities.
What aspects of wellbeing for staff and students should be the most central in our Policy?

- Look through the ideas generated in Step 2. What common themes arise? What is most important to us? These become your key priorities, and form an outline of your Policy.
- Consider breaking into groups to debate, or using facilitation techniques like "sticky wall technique" or "dot method"

## 4 Begin Drafting Policy

- Clarify the current policy environment (likely Superintendents or HR Director can share this) Policies that already exist related to wellness (e.g. Drug and Alcohol Policy)
- Note framework of other policies – do they all follow a similar format? Should this one be the same format?
- Begin with the Big Picture/Vision for your Policy – go back to the very first conversation you had about WHY the policy. This should be clear to your Policy audience from the start.
- Using your Key Priorities as a guide, draft your Policy.

Many groups will choose to draft a basic outline as a group, identifying key priority areas, tone and sample language.
Then one or two people will sit to write it, and the large group will edit at a later date.

TIP

Remember: Keep it simple! Clear language and examples help people understand how to implement.

## 5 Edit the First Draft, Considering Implementation

- Ensure everyone has time to read through it, either by emailing it, allowing time to read it at the meeting, or reading aloud at the meeting.
- Open or small group discussion: What are people's first impressions of the draft? What do you like and dislike about it? What is missing, or what is included that shouldn't be?
- Second brainstorm: Who will be responsible for implementing this Policy? Is everything we've written possible to implement? What do we think the biggest challenges will be to implementing? How will we overcome these?

Revise your draft, recognizing that the Policy may change significantly after careful consideration of the Implementation Strategy

TIP

Common challenges include: engaging parents to be a key partner in their children's success; changing food menus without "taste testing" food with students first

## 6 Think About Next Steps

- A successful Policy is about more than just writing – it needs to have a strong Implementation Plan. Consider writing a Handbook to accompany your new Policy, outlining what is expected for each priority area, who is responsible, and when it will happen.
- You may choose to create or find Evaluation Rubrics for your Policy or even for each Priority Area. That way, you can gauge how well the Policy is working!

## 7 Connection and Support

Ever Active Schools staff, including the Resiliency Coordinator, may be available to support your school in creating your Wellness Policy. This could include idea generation, meeting facilitation, writing, and implementation strategies. If you'd like to explore more hands-on, active support, don't hesitate to contact us!

For sample policies, rubrics, and in-depth free toolkits and guides, check out www.resilientschools.ca