

spectra

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Schools for health

2 School as a healthy life setting

There are many sides to health promotion in schools, ranging from sports classes and teaching healthy behaviour to making playgrounds a health-promoting environment and offering healthy meals. Furthermore, it is something that affects teachers as well as their pupils. The Swiss government has set up various networks aimed at exploiting schools' potential to be a healthy life setting.

4 Promoting integration

Migrants experience health problems more frequently than the native population, firstly because they often have fewer health skills, and secondly language problems present an obstacle to effective treatment. The Programme on Migration and Health has been set up to address the situation, for example by providing intercultural translators or health-related information in a variety of languages. The Swiss government has now extended the programme until 2017.

4 Teaching materials

How can teachers simply and effectively incorporate “health lessons” into their classes? The Federal Office of Sport “schule bewegt” (Schools on the Move) programme is one way, providing a large number of ideas for combining learning with movement. The tried-and-tested Swiss food pyramid developed by the Swiss Society for Nutrition – now available in an interactive online version with lots of games and quizzes – is another way.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Office of Public Health FOPH

Health for schools – schools for health



Lead article. According to the National Health Report 2008, education is one of the most important socio-economic determinants of health. People with a high level of education generally behave in a healthier way, feel healthier and have a longer life expectancy than sectors of the population with little education. Conversely, healthy pupils have been shown to learn more easily and to retain what they have learnt for a longer time. There is therefore an interactive relationship between education and health.

The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) has been active in the field of education & health for about 20 years. Its original goal was primarily to improve pupils' health literacy. However, a school is not just the place where health literacy can be taught and acquired. In terms of personal development, it is also

an important learning environment that has a direct impact on the health of both pupils and teaching staff.

It's not just about "teaching health"

The school as a life setting is exposed to a wide range of social, economic and political influences. Any modern, school-based attempt to promote health has to engage with these influences. It is not just a question of "teaching the pupils about health". It is about school infrastructure, playground design, meals provided, further training of staff, working conditions, space for social contact and strategies for resolving the social problems that inevitably occur when hundreds of children use a defined space. All these factors can help a school be more than just a place where health can be taught; they can also transform it into a healthy school.

This is the backdrop against which the FOPH has increasingly shifted the focus

of its commitment. If the emphasis had previously been on behavioural prevention geared to the pupils, nowadays it is primarily about coordinating the numerous healthcare-sector stakeholders, whether experts or representatives of the authorities, who approach the schools with health-related concerns. The overriding goal is to explore and utilise the potential of the school setting to promote health, while also protecting it against inflated expectations regarding its health-promoting and preventive effect.

With this goal in mind, the FOPH has focused its commitment to developing healthy schools on the following organisations:

- Swiss education and health network *bildung + gesundheit* Netzwerk Schweiz (*b + g*).
- Swiss Network of Health-Promoting Schools (SNHPS)
- *éducation21*, specialist agency for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Swiss education and health network *bildung + gesundheit* Netzwerk Schweiz

This network is an amalgam of organisations active in the field of health promotion and prevention in schools, from pre-school to senior secondary level (see box). In this context, the FOPH supports the development of measures and projects at both the didactic-pedagogical level (e.g. assessments of teaching material) and the systemic level (e.g. devising school-development tools). At the network meetings and in the thematic working groups, participants strive to bring the special concerns of health promotion goals into line with the system-

relevant characteristics and current reforms of the school sector. The aim is to help schools perform their task as health-promoting institutions without subjecting them to undue pressures. Advice, thematic input (specific projects within the schools) and the provision of information and tools are key. Last year, for instance, the *b + g* network produced the publication entitled "Gesundheitsförderung in Tagesstrukturen für 4- bis 12-jährige Kinder" ["Health promotion in day structures for 4–12 year olds"]. The brochure aims to raise awareness in schools that have not yet addressed the issue of health promotion and to show them that, in health promotion, modest efforts can achieve a great deal. This year, another *b + g* working group will publish a report on the health of teaching staff – a topic of growing importance.

Swiss Network of Health-Promoting Schools (SNHPS)

The SNHPS exists since 2003 and was developed by the Radix foundation on behalf of the FOPH and by Health Promotion Switzerland. The objective of the network is to institutionalise health promotion in schools (see infograph). The SNHPS now covers 17 cantons and seeks to motivate and support schools so that they perceive themselves as health-promoting institutions and learn from one another by exchanging experience. Over the years, this approach has proved effective in combining structural prevention with school development in an ideal manner.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD is a global UN drive on education.

Achieving a balanced diet with the interactive food pyramid

Online food pyramid. The Swiss food pyramid and the plate model show at a glance what a healthy, balanced diet for an adult looks like. These two established models can now be accessed online as interactive graphics.

The Swiss food pyramid gives recommendations for a balanced, tasty diet. The plate model shows what a balanced main meal looks like in practice. In response to a mandate of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), the Swiss Society for Nutrition, SGE, developed the two models as interactive graphics and launched them in December 2012. By clicking on the graphics, users obtain a rapid overview of key facts concerning the different levels and fields of the pyramid and plate, information on recommended quantities and tips on how to put the recommendations into practice in everyday life.

Practical teaching tool

The interactive graphics are intended to



appeal particularly to young people, among others, and are also suitable for use in the classroom. Pupils can use the interactive features to learn all about a balanced and tasty diet, put their knowledge to the test in different games and share what they have learnt by passing it on to friends on social media such as Facebook. The tool is rounded out with links to further information, documents and services provided by the SGE, for instance on nutrition as a classroom topic. It is available in German and French, and will be expanded to include additional content in the next few months.

Links:

www.sge-ssn.ch

www.sge-ssn.ch/lebensmittelpyramide
(interactive food pyramid/plate model)

www.sge-ssn.ch/de/schule-und-bildung/
(diet in the teaching environment)

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The Swiss government has incorporated this initiative into its Strategy on Sustainable Development, and the Confederation and cantons coordinate the related activities through the Swiss Coordination Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (SK BNE). The *éducation21* Foundation, a specialist agency for sustainable development, is an example of such activities. It was developed in close collaboration between the Confederation (FOPH/Federal Office of Public Health, FOEN/Federal Office for the Environment and SDC/Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) and the cantons (EDK/Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education), and came on-stream on 1 January 2013. As a national competence centre, it operates at the nationwide, language-region, cantonal and school levels. It provides teachers, school management and other stakeholders with educationally tried-and-tested teaching material, guidance, advice and financial aid for school and class projects. In the training field, it cooperates with teacher-training colleges and other training and continuing education institutions for teachers. Its mandate in this context is to integrate health, along with other topics such as political education, human rights and economics, into its activities.

Bringing all stakeholders on board

While these activities will undoubtedly help develop health-promoting schools, they are only the first steps on the road to a healthy school system. However, the school system is not a monolith; it is driven by the diversity of its stakeholders – cantons, municipalities, schools, school management, teachers and, of course, pupils – all groups that can have

very different needs. For health to be sustainably integrated into this complex system, a participatory and sometimes laborious approach is essential. Moreover, because education is a cantonal responsibility, the Confederation can only offer supportive services. However, if schools can be persuaded that an engagement with health-related issues offers added value, then the Confederation can help ensure not only health for

schools but also schools for health. From this viewpoint, the title of the current issue of *spectra* should also be understood as an appeal, given that there is still a great deal of work to be done, particularly on a cooperative basis, if health is to be integrated into schools.

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The Swiss education and health network "b + g"

... is an amalgam of organisations that swap knowledge, desire to learn from others' experience and work together to further the cause of health promotion in schools. The member organisations of *b + g* gear their work to the principles of the Ottawa Charter: participation, empowerment to exercise more control over life choices, aligning of health services to available resources, sustainability and equality of opportunity with regard to gender and social, ethnic and religious affiliation.

The members of *b + g* currently include:

- BASPO [Federal Office for Sport]: www.baspo.admin.ch
- Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (bfu), www.bfu.ch
- Forum per la promozione della salute nella scuola [Forum for the promotion of health in schools], www.ti.ch/forumsalutescuola
- Interessengemeinschaft Hauswirtschaft an den Pädagogischen Hochschulen (IGHWPH) [Interest group for the teaching of home economics in teacher-training colleges], www.ighwph.ch
- Kompetenzzentrum Ressourcen plus an der FHNW ["Resources plus" competence centre at FHNW/University of Applied Sciences of Northwestern Switzerland], www.fhnw.ch/sozialearbeit/isage/ressourcenplus-r
- Sex Education, www.amorix.ch
- Kompetenzzentrum Schulklima an der PHZ ["School Climate" competence centre at PHZ], www.phlu.ch > Weiterbildung > Zentrum Gesundheitsförderung > Kompetenzzentrum Schulklima
- Radix [Swiss health foundation], www.gesunde-schulen.ch
- Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Ernährung [Swiss Society for Nutrition], www.sge-ssn.ch
- Sucht Schweiz [Swiss anti-addiction foundation], www.suchtschweiz.ch

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At first hand

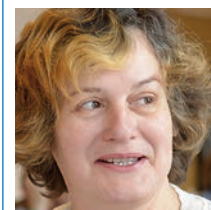
The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) has a vested interest in schools because they play an important role in public health. All children in Switzerland have the right to a basic education. During the years that children and adolescents spend at school, they also learn a great deal about their health. In the classroom they are taught the essentials of hygiene and biology, and in the corridors and during the breaks they learn behaviour and skills relating to diet, physical activity and how to deal with stress, conflict and risk situations. This stands them in good stead for the rest of their lives. We also know that a good atmosphere at school has a positive effect on performance in teachers, children and adolescents.

Thanks to school medical services, the municipalities and cantons can keep the health-related information they provide for children up to date, and they can implement measures that are important for public health. These include early identification and early intervention in cases of risk-taking behaviour, the provision of healthy canteen meals, the creation of school settings conducive to physical activity, and vaccination services.

Much that is nowadays taken for granted was not a topic for the classroom when I was at school, for instance discussions about addiction problems, how to cope with violence, or smoking. However, we did learn how fresh produce could be used to cook a healthy meal. My two daughters, now well beyond school age, benefited a great deal more from schools as health-promoting institutions – and I am very glad they did so.

The FOPH therefore wishes to support cantons and municipalities in their efforts to make the most of the school system's potential for promoting the health not only of children and adolescents, but also of teachers.

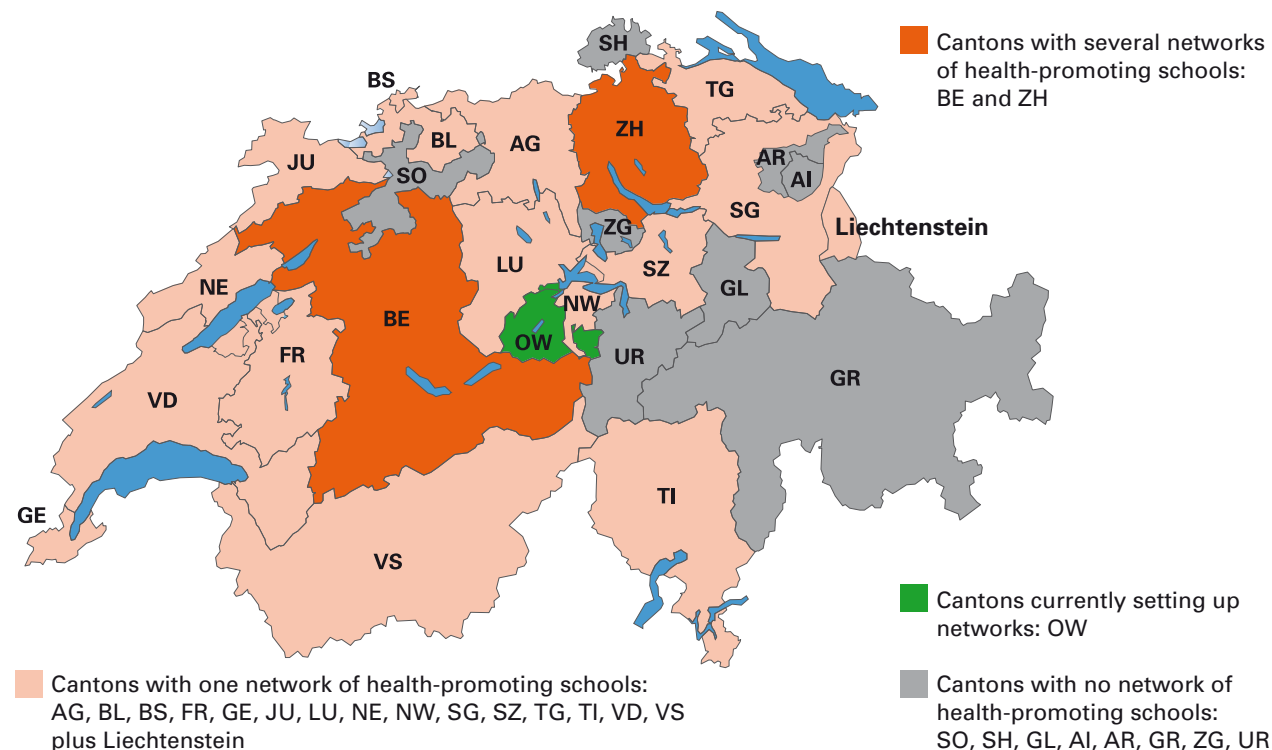
This issue of *spectra* reports on the activities of our partners in the field of health promotion and prevention in schools. I wish you a stimulating read.



Andrea Arz de Falco
Head of the Public Health Directorate
Vice-Director
Federal Office of Public Health

Infograph

Swiss Network of Health-promoting Schools



Physical activity enables learning with all senses

Physically active learning. Schools that integrate physical activity into the school routine in areas other than sport and physical education are very successful: their pupils and teachers are more concentrated and receptive during lessons and enjoy the everyday life of the school. This means that a greater amount of physical activity at school creates a setting that promotes health and supports learning, teaching and a good school climate.

Physical activity at school is about more than just teaching sports. Integrating such activity into the classroom and applying it as a didactic principle improves pupils' concentration and motivation. Physically active learning means learning with all the senses. Physical activity improves blood circulation in the brain and better networking of nerve cells, which in turn enhances mental performance.

In addition, an adequate amount of physical activity has a positive and lasting effect on the physical and emotional development of children and adoles-



cents. Flexible yet intensive promotion of physical activity and sport improves coordination skills and thus also makes an important contribution to accident prevention – and not only in schools.

A FOSPO physical activity programme

The "schule bewegt" (schools on the

move) programme of the Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO) to promote physical activity offers a possible approach to putting "physically active learning" into practice. It provides interested teachers with free-of-charge implementation ideas in the form of card sets and physical activity-related material. In return, the teachers undertake to devote 20 min-

utes a day to physical activity with their classes – in addition to the mandatory sports lessons. The "schools on the move" modules extend from physical activity breaks to relaxation breaks and group-based games, and the range is being expanded every year. The module "Physically active learning", which offers ideas for enabling specific content to be learned through physical activity, will be issued in the coming school year. It is suitable for use in kindergartens and primary schools and can be ordered at www.schulebewegt.ch.

Source: brochure entitled "Die Bewegte Schule – Erläuterungen zum Schweizer Modell. Bundesamt für Sport BASPO" [Schools on the move – discussion of the Swiss model. Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO)]

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Government prolongs the Migration and Health programme

Equality of opportunity. By extending the duration of the National Programme on Migration and Health to the end of 2017, the Swiss government (Federal Council) aims to contribute towards improving the health of Switzerland's migrant communities. A publication summarises the status of implementation of the programme and outlines the future aims and measures.

Improving the health opportunities of particularly vulnerable sectors of the population is one of the health-policy priorities that the Swiss government approved in the "Health2020" agenda in January 2013. The corresponding measures include the National Programme on Migration and Health, which is aimed primarily at migrants of low social status and with few health skills. These groups suffer more frequently from health problems and have greater difficulty making themselves understood when in contact with healthcare institutions, while poor health makes the integration process more difficult. The programme helps them improve their health status and health-related behaviour, and thus makes a significant contribution to Switzerland's integration policy.

Ensuring sustainable continuity

The results of the evaluation to date confirm that the National Programme on Migration and Health is focusing on the right areas. These are in line with the Federal Council's mandate, the legal

framework of the integration policy, international recommendations and stakeholder concerns. The Swiss government's engagement with the health of the migrant communities is uncontested by the cantons, municipalities and other stakeholders, who justify it in terms of the continuing pressure to take action, the need for coordination at national level and the necessity of federal involvement in order to raise the visibility and legitimacy of the issue. Sustainable continuity of programme activities has not yet been achieved in all areas. The further implementation of projects in which a great deal of effort has been invested in recent years could not have been secured without the involvement of the federal government from 2014 on. The aim now is to use the prolongation of the programme to achieve maximum possible institutionalisation of the projects already launched and to consolidate cooperation with the partners involved. The measures will continue to be implemented in close cooperation with the Federal Office for Migration, the cantons, the Swiss Red Cross and other non-governmental organisations. Among the measures planned are:

- in the field of "health promotion and prevention": continuation and expansion of the migesplus.ch platform (which provides information for migrants in their mother tongues), support for the cantons in drawing up health-promotion and prevention programmes that take migration issues into account, and coordination and implementation of measures

- relating to female genital mutilation.
- in the field of "training and delivery": institutionalisation of training and continuing-education tools for healthcare staff ("Interaction and Quality" e-learning tool); support for measures that improve the delivery of healthcare services to migrant communities ("Migrant Friendly Hospitals").
- in the field of "intercultural translation": promoting the training and deployment of intercultural translators; permanent establishment of the national telephone interpreting service in the healthcare sector.
- in the field of "research": inclusion of migration-specific features in national health-related data surveys and launch of research projects on topics such as healthcare delivery and access barriers.

Further information (in French and German only) is available in the publication "Nationales Programm Migration und Gesundheit. Bilanz 2008–13 und Schwerpunkte 2014–17" [National programme on migration and health. Stock-taking 2008–13 and focuses 2014–17], which summarises the status of implementation of the programme and outlines the aims and measures envisaged for the extension period.

Link to the publication and evaluation findings: www.miges.admin.ch (News/Programmverlängerung)

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