

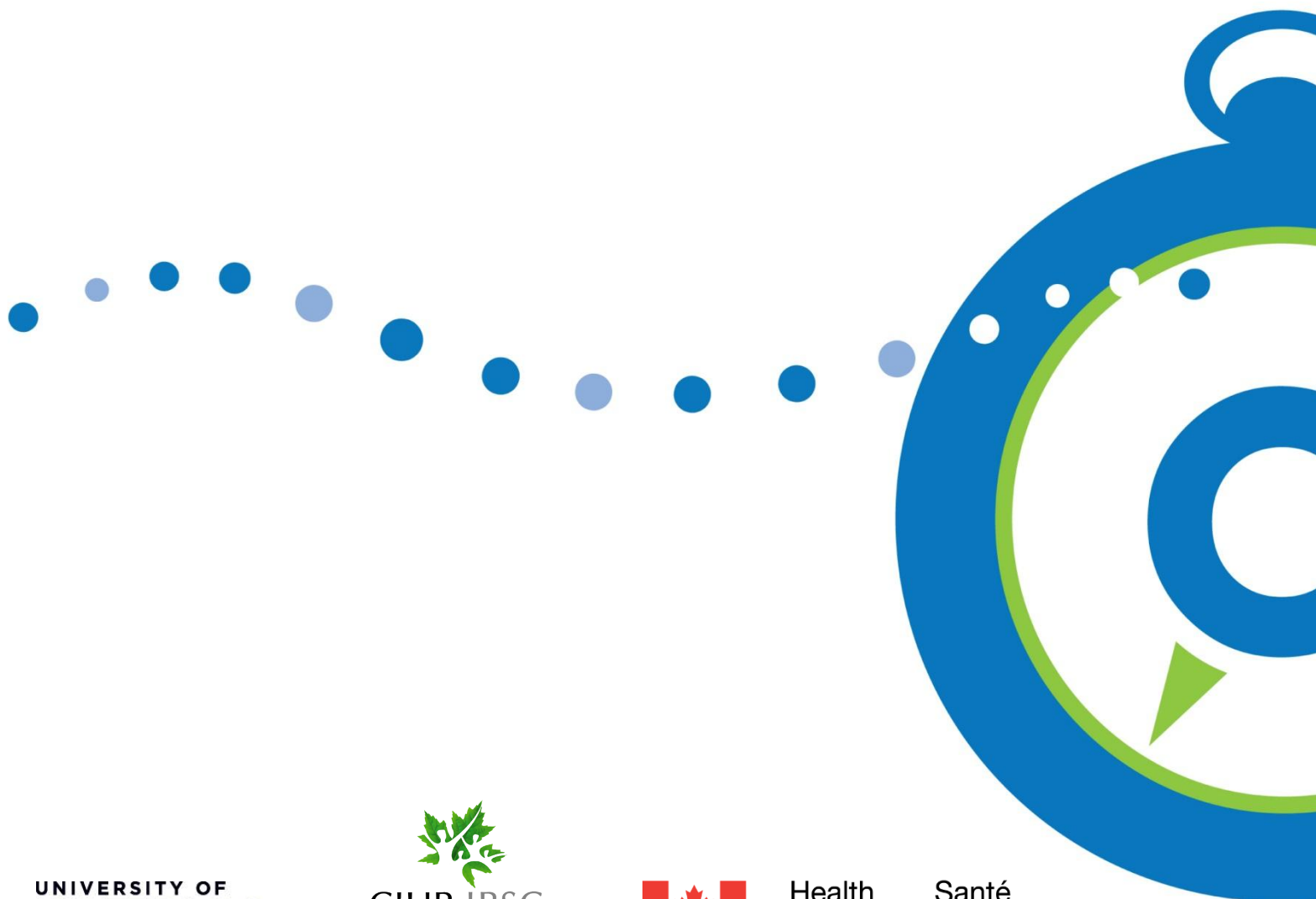


Cohort study evaluating how changes in school programs, policies, and resources impact youth health behaviours

Redevelopment of the School Policies and Practices Questionnaire (2022 to 2023)

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Acknowledgements

Brent McCready-Branch¹
Julianne Vermeer, MPH¹
Erin O’Loughlin, PhD²
Karen A. Patte, PhD³
Scott T. Leatherdale, PhD¹

1 – School of Public Health and Health Systems, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON Canada.

2 – Centre de recherche du CHUM

3 – Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON Canada.

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Contact:

COMPASS Research Team

University of Waterloo

200 University Ave West, TJB

Waterloo, ON Canada N2L 3G1

compass@uwaterloo.ca

Table of Contents

Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
SPP REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS.....	6
THE PROMESS II STUDY.....	7
SUMMARY OF CHANGES FROM THE 2022/23 SPP TO THE 2023/24 SPP.....	7
REFERENCES.....	11

Introduction

COMPASS is an ongoing longitudinal study (starting in 2012-13) designed to follow a prospective cohort of grade 9 to 12 students attending a convenience sample of Canadian secondary schools over several years to understand how changes in school environment characteristics (policies, programs, built environment) and provincial, territorial, and national policies are associated with changes in youth health behaviours [1]. COMPASS originated to provide school stakeholders with the evidence to guide and evaluate school-based interventions related to obesity, healthy eating, tobacco use, alcohol and marijuana use, physical activity, sedentary behaviour, sleep, school connectedness, bullying, and academic achievement. Based on feedback from participating schools as well as emerging issues in youth health, COMPASS expanded its topic areas to include areas such as mental health, prescription drug use, vaping/e-cigarette use, COVID-19, and gambling. COMPASS has been designed to facilitate multiple large-scale school-based data collections and uses in-class whole-school sampling data collection methods consistent with previous research [2-5].

School-level policy and program data is collected annually through the completion of a School Policies and Practices questionnaire (SPP). The SPP is completed by a school administrator(s) familiar with the existing policies, programs, or resources within their school. Over the course of the study, we have adjusted the design and administration process of the SPP in response to changing health priorities and concerns over school administrator burden and data quality [6]. The current technical report will provide further details regarding the design of the SPP and will outline the redevelopment process by providing a summary and rationale for changes made to the administration process or content of the SPP questionnaire that have occurred since the previous technical report was produced in 2023.

SPP Redevelopment Process

The administration process for the original SPP remained consistent for the 2012-13 to 2015-16 data collection cycles. Prior to the 2016-17 school year, COMPASS staff undertook a review of the performance of the SPP tool to identify key areas that needed improvement with corresponding changes included in the 2016-17 data collection cycle. In subsequent data collection years, the SPP questionnaire has been annually reviewed for question relevance and data accuracy by the COMPASS team. Subsequent reviews have been focused on changes to specific questions as opposed to the overall design or administration process. These changes are reflected in a previous technical report (Vermeer et al., 2023) available on the [COMPASS website](#) [6].

In the 2023-24 data collection year, the COMPASS team partnered with researchers from the [PromeSS study](#) to tailor the COMPASS SPP questionnaire to include questions from the PromeSS II survey. The PromeSS cross-sectional survey has previously been distributed solely to schools in Quebec participating in COMPASS. Researchers involved in the PromeSS II study have been collecting data on school characteristics and culture, along with the processes

through which schools choose and implement health-promoting interventions. The objectives of the PromeSS II study and the expertise of its research team are well aligned with the COMPASS SPP questionnaire. Through this collaboration, the COMPASS study leveraged the domain expertise of the PromeSS research group to refine and enhance the SPP questionnaire. The PromeSS study is described in more detail in Section F.

After the revised SPP questionnaire (which incorporated aspects of PromeSS) was distributed and completed by several participating schools in Ontario, feedback from school administration indicated the increase in survey length resulted in an inability to complete the entire survey. In response to school administration feedback, in March 2024, the COMPASS research team further revised the new version of the SPP survey, focused on the two newly added sections (the *Health-Promoting Intervention* questions were removed and the first section of *Health-Promoting Intervention* questions became optional to complete). This change is reflected in Section G: Summary of Changes, below.

The PromeSS II Study

PromeSS II was a cross-sectional survey distributed to principals and vice-principals in elementary and secondary schools in Quebec, Canada between 2023 and 2025 [7]. The study aimed to identify and describe inequalities in the availability of school-based health-promoting interventions (HPIs) across Quebec schools. These interventions, including activities and programs offered during the school day but outside the mandated curriculum, were designed to address important adolescent health issues such as mental health, physical inactivity, nutrition, sleep, substance use, and screen time behaviours [7]. Previous PromeSS publications also highlighted the importance of implementation characteristics of HPIs, including accessibility, frequency, reach, sustainability, and alignment with student health needs, as these factors influenced the effectiveness and equity of intervention delivery across schools.

Funding to support PromeSS II was provided by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, which was responsible for maintaining the function of health and social services in Quebec [9, 10]. As an extension of the PromeSS I study, PromeSS II aimed to investigate the current availability of HPIs and compare findings with those observed during PromeSS I [7]. In addition, PromeSS III data, also funded by the Ministry, will be available by 2029 and will provide further insight into evolving adolescent health concerns and the implementation of HPIs in Quebec schools.

Summary of Changes from the 2022-23 SPP to the 2023-24 SPP

Notable changes were made between 2022-23 and 2023-24 in terms of the titles of the SPP sections. These changes were made to align with the PromeSS II questionnaire. Questions from the *General School Health Questions* section are now distributed across three new sections titled *Your School*, *School Context*, and *Student Health Issues*. The *Healthy Eating Questions* and

Wrap-up Questions sections have been renamed to *Food Programs and Partnerships*, respectively. In addition, sections formerly known as *Physical Activity Questions* and *Mental Health Questions* are now titled *Physical Activity* and *Mental Health*, respectively. New sections present in all provinces' SPP include *Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs)*, *Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs) For Teachers*, and *COVID-19 Pandemic*. The sections formerly titled *Bullying Questions* and *Substance Use Questions* have been removed. A glossary of terms was added at the beginning of the questionnaire, and words from the glossary were highlighted and defined throughout the questionnaire.

In the former *General School Health Questions* section, Q1 became Q10 in 'Your School' section and reworded slightly, with response option 'I don't know' added. Q2 was revised to be incorporated into an existing PromeSS II survey question (Q40 2023-24) in the *Health-Promoting Interventions* section. Q3 was moved to the *Student Health Issues* section (Q 20, 2023-24) and the ranking format was revised to focus on the perceived importance of each student health issue rather than prioritizing them. Q4 was removed because the updated list of student health issues from PromeSS II was comprehensive, making an additional question to list other issues unnecessary. A question regarding the presence and level of staff training in various areas (Q.5-2022-23) was moved to the *Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs)* section and edited to focus on whether staff received training for the identified HPI (Q.62-2023-24). Q6-7 (2022-23) were removed, but both policy-related questions were included as response options in Q13 (2023-24) in the *Your School* section, with the addition of Q14 (2023-24) requesting a description of the policies indicated in Q13. In the 2023-24 SPP questionnaire, Q1-Q9 were added in the *Your School* section and were taken directly from the PromeSS II survey.

In the new section *School Context* Q15-19 were added as new items and were taken directly from the PromeSS II survey.

In the former *Physical Activity Questions* section, Q8 (2022-23) was removed, but response options regarding indoor and outdoor facility access were reworded and added as response options to Q16 (2023-24) in the new *School Context* section. Q9 (2022-23) question and response options were reworded slightly to become Q33 (2023-24) in the new *Physical Activity* section. Q10 was removed, and Q11-12 (2022-23) and Q13-14 (2022-23) were combined into Q 34 and Q35 in the new *Physical Activity* section, respectively. Q15 (2022-23) was removed, as there is a general question about school program offerings in the new *Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs)* section. A new question regarding extracurricular activities offered to student was added, taken directly from the PromeSS II survey.

In the former *Healthy Eating Questions* section, Q16 and Q18-Q22 (2022-23) were removed. Questions related to the availability of a breakfast program at school were replaced with Q21 to Q23 in the new *Food Programs* section. These questions also included special events and lunch and snack programs, which replaced Q17 in the 2022-23 version. Q23 (2022-23) in the former *Healthy Eating Questions* section was reworded and included the new *Food Programs* section, with an additional response option regarding the nutrition knowledge of school staff. Q24

(2022-23) was removed, as there is a general question about school program offerings in the new *Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs)* section. Q24, 25 and 27 (2023-24) are all new questions in the *Food Programs* section, taken directly from the PromeSS II survey.

In the former *Bullying Questions* section, two questions inquiring about resources and programs to address student health issues (Q.25,26-2022-23) were moved to the *Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs)* section. They were presented under the broader bullying response option and surveyed on the presence of HPIs that were implemented to address this health topic (Q.40-2023-24).

Similarly, four questions from the former *Substance Use Questions* (Q28-31:2022-23) section were also moved to the *Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs)* section and edited to present these key substances of interest as individual themes for HPIs (Q.37 and Q38 :2023-24). Q27, a question asking about vaping detectors, was removed from the 2023-24 version of the questionnaire.

In the former *Mental Health Questions* section, Q32 (2022-23) was slightly reworded and became Q28 in the *Mental Health* section of the 2023-24 questionnaire. Q33 (2022-23) was moved to the *Your School* section and reworded. Response options were also updated to include more school staff roles beyond mental health professionals. Q34 and Q35 (2022-23) were slightly reworded for ease of comprehension with the same response options but became Q29 and Q30 (2023-24) in the new *Mental Health* section, respectively. Q36a and Q36b (2022-23) became Q31 and Q32 (2023-24) in the new *Mental Health* section.

The questions included in the former *Wrap-up Questions* section were moved to the *Partnerships* section in the 2023-24 questionnaire. Q37 (2022-23) became Q76 (2023-24), and additional health topics were added as response options. COVID-19 was also removed as a response option. Q38 and Q39 (2022-23) became Q77 and Q78 (2023-24), respectively. Q40 (2022-23) was removed, as there is a question in the *Your School* section that inquires about school vision/mission and strategy changes.

The 2023-24 SPP questionnaire included measures that were specific to align with indicators that are unique to the Quebec COMPASS study. An additional question was included in the *Your Health* section inquiring about students' languages. A new section titled *Healthy and responsible sexuality* included two questions that asked about the availability of a youth clinic service and access to sexual health products and services inside the school. These additional questions align with Quebec's student questionnaire, where sexual health measures are permitted to be included.

In the 2023-24 SPP questionnaire, a new section – *Health-Promoting Interventions-* was added, comprising Q37 to Q68. The first group of questions, already discussed, align with questions asked in the 2022-23 questionnaire. Beginning at Q41, school administrators were asked to choose one health-promoting intervention and answer a series of questions to provide more details on that intervention. As of March 2024, these questions were made optional in response

to school administrator feedback regarding survey length. Q75 to Q103 ask school administrators to provide details on a second Health Promoting Intervention. These sets of questions were originally optional but were removed entirely after March 2024.

An additional new section titled Health-Promoting Interventions (HPIs) for Teachers was added, and included Q69 and Q70, asking whether schools offered HPIs to teachers to address mental health and wellbeing.

One question (Q71: 2023-24) was added to a new *COVID-19 Pandemic* section, directing school administration to provide relevant response options that reflect any COVID-19- related changes to HPI implementation.

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