

Purpose

To provide information about the findings of the Health Unit's school-based screening program from the last school year: September 2013 to June 2014.

Methodology

Publicly funded elementary schools and three private schools participated in the school-based screening program. Students in Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten, and Grade 2 at publicly funded schools were screened in accordance with the [Oral Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol](#) of the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Based on the screening results of the Grade 2 students at each school, the school was categorized into the following levels of screening intensity: "Low", "Medium", or "High", as per the Protocol. Increased screening intensity level requires that additional grades be screened.

The parents of the students in these grades who decline to have their children screened advise their school administrators who then pass this information on to Health Unit staff. Children whose parents have consented to screening but who are absent on the day of screening may be screened on a subsequent screening day.

Student level data was collected by five Registered Dental Hygienists employed by the Health Unit. The need for and urgency of dental care was recorded and the parents advised of the required follow-up. As well, indicators of previous dental caries were recorded. Data was collected and stored in accordance with the Oral Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Oral Health Information Support System was used to generate summary statistics from the student level data. Historical aggregate data was accessed from archived Health Unit spreadsheets. These data were further analysed using Microsoft Excel.

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Key Findings

Participation. Of the 18,902 students who were offered dental screening at the schools that participated in the school-based dental screening program, 15,797 or 84% were screened (Figure 1). For the 2013-2014 school year, the Health Unit did not have parental consent to screen 1,928 (10%) students and 1,177 (6%) were absent on the day(s) that staff were screening at their schools. The percentage of excluded and absent students is lower than the previous year's percentages which were 12% and 7% respectively.

Screening intensity. Among the 125 elementary schools with Grade 2 in the Health Units jurisdiction, 98 (78.4%) were categorized as Low intensity, 13 (10.4%) as Medium intensity, and 14 (11.2%) as High intensity as per the Oral Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol which is described in the sidebar (Figure 2).

Dental caries. The percentages of Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten, and Grade 2 students screened who were caries-free, (i.e. have never had tooth decay or the removal or filling of a tooth because of caries) were 80%, 70%, and 57%, respectively (Figure 3). This demonstrated a drop from the proportions from the previous school year which were 81%, 72%, and 60% respectively. Almost 6% of Grade 2 students screened had two or more teeth with tooth decay (Figure 4).

Urgent dental needs. Six hundred and thirty-two (632) students or 4% of those screened were found to have Urgent dental needs which deem them clinically eligible to receive Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) funding for their dental care (Figure 5). Five hundred and seventy-eight (578) students or 92% of those found to have Urgent dental needs were referred to and accepted at local dental offices for treatment. These percentages are similar to the findings and outcomes from the previous school year.

Next Steps

- The Health Unit is currently implementing strategies to improve the percentage of eligible students screened such as working with the school staff to redesign consent forms and revising consent collection processes, developing brochures to promote school-based screening program.
- In response to the declining caries-free rate as students move from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 2, the Health Unit is implementing a pilot fluoride varnish program in eight high screening intensity schools.

Results

Figure 1. Percentages of students screened, absent and refused for the 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years

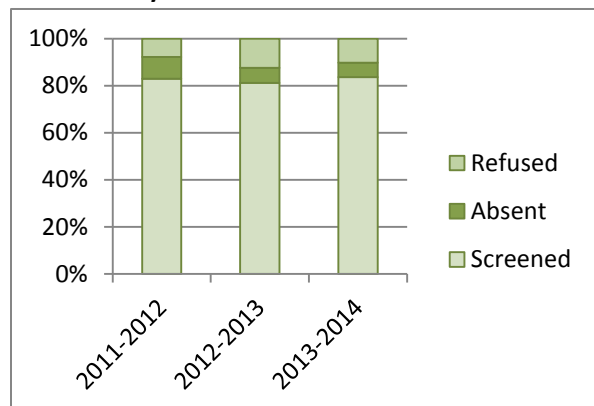


Figure 2. Screening intensity of schools by school year

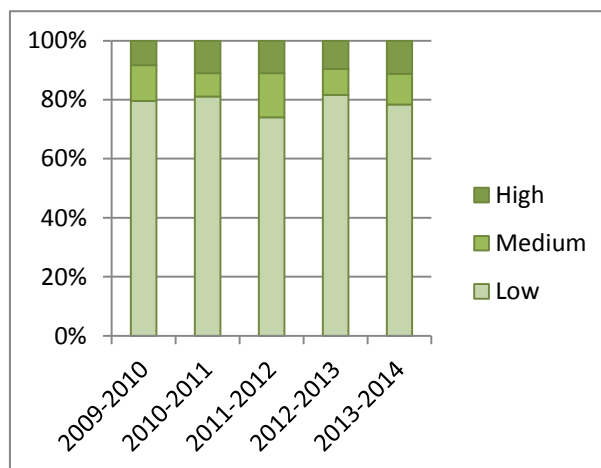


Figure 3. Percentage of students screened who were caries-free by grade for the 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years

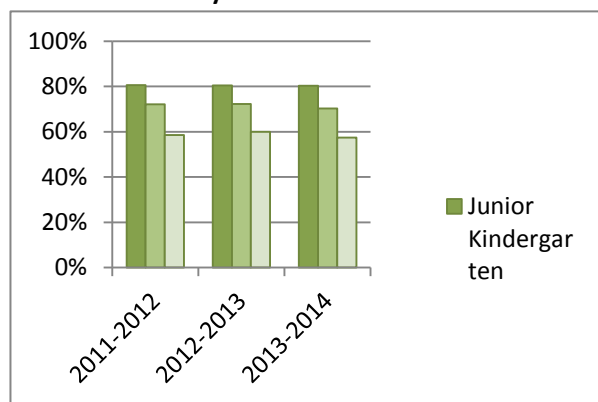


Figure 4. Percentage of Grade 2 students screened with two or more teeth affected by caries (decay, removals, or fillings) by school year

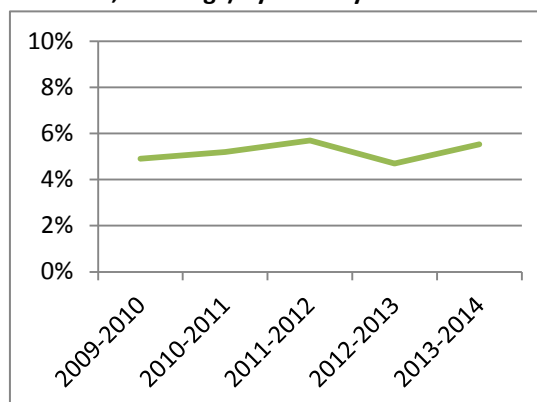


Figure 5. Percentage of students screened with Urgent dental needs by school year

