LEED Health Process - School Districts

Community Health Profile Guide

This Community Health Profile Guide contains step-by-step procedural recommendations to prepare for and facilitate community needs assessments within school construction and modernization projects. This guide is a tool to help the Health Process Coordinator and the full project team prepare for and facilitate a community needs assessment, community engagement and school observations to develop a community profile.

This guide is developed primarily with the school district Health Process Coordinator in mind, the individual(s) who leads health-promoting strategies and decision-making conversations with the rest of the project team, design team, developers, consultants and other stakeholders.

Importance of Community Health Profiles

As described in the *Roadmap to the LEED Health Process*, the goal of implementing the LEED Health Process pilot credit in school construction and modernization projects is to leverage a school's approach to green building to improve sustainability, health, well-being and social equity for the school community. When implementing the process at the portfolio scale, the Health Process Coordinator should keep in mind that each school community is unique and presents equally unique opportunities to improve population health and well-being. A community needs assessment will help the team develop a school-specific approach to promoting health through school facility design, construction and operation. During this step, the Health Process Coordinator and team members will gather public health and social equity data and information on the population affected by the construction, renovation or modernization project.

Preparing for and Executing a Community Health Profile

1. **Ask district health partners about existing school community health information.**
    A. Reach out to the school's health staff or principal to ask if demographic reports, school profiles, student survey results and other health and education service reports are available from the school.

2. **Develop a set of questions regarding baseline school and community health.**
    B. For school community questions not answered by researching available health data, prepare questions to ask school officials.
        - Some of this information may include education and health services provided, extracurricular activities, and community services, among others.
        - These questions help establish a baseline for the health and well-being conditions within a school so that modernization or renovation may create or improve upon health and well-being resources and services.
        - Use these questions to guide your approach to primary and secondary data collection.

3. **Conduct primary and secondary data collection.**
   A. Primary data collection: Gather new data directly from the school community.
      - This may look like school observations, surveys, direct community engagement either in person or virtual town halls, etc.
      - Use the school observation and community survey resources at the end of this guide to inform your approach to primary data collection.
   B. Secondary data collection: Explore readily accessible, existing, and open source community health data.
      - While very valuable information may come directly from the district, community health data is often also publicly accessible. Try using some of the external resources provided at the end of this guide to learn more about the school and surrounding neighborhoods.
      - Some suggested preliminary community information for the students, teachers and neighborhood description in the community health profile includes school district demographic information, survey reports, school profiles, etc.

4. **Use information gathered to develop a community health profile.**
   A. The Community Health Profile Assessment form included at the end of this guide can support data collection and documentation for the school project. Organizing data and insights into a community health profile will help project teams assess the most pressing health and well-being needs of the community and prioritize design and programmatic strategies to address those needs. Reference the community health profile in workshops and during goal setting to define district values and support data-informed design decisions.

Primary Data Collection

The following sections provide example questions for different types of primary data collection. Project teams may use these examples as a guide or develop new questions and methods that suit the needs of their project.

School Observation

1. **Exterior:** Take time to observe features of the school building exterior and surrounding neighborhood that may have an impact on health and well-being.
   A. Such opportunities may help to define community goals and strategies for the project. Think broadly and inclusively! Examples include:
      - School ground landscaping, outdoor recreational areas, staff parking, drop off / pick up locations, crosswalks, street connectivity, access to sidewalks, housing, nearby retail, overall strengths and limitations of the community surroundings.

2. **Interior:** As you walk through the school building, take note of the important health features already in the space and the limitations of each space.
   A. Observe and reflect on how each specific school environment affects classroom functionality, student learning and engagement and building occupant health, well-being, behaviors and abilities.

B. Suggested questions to reflect on and evaluate:
- How do you feel as you walk into the school for the first time?
- Are there already environmental design features integrated throughout the school that positively impact student success and occupant satisfaction?
- Does each school space have natural lighting? (Classrooms, library, cafeteria, gymnasium, etc.)
- How is the air flow in each school space? Do you sense staleness in the air as you walk through the school?
- Are mental health promotion signs in the school?
- Are health services locations clearly indicated?
- Are "safe zones" already present in the school?

C. In addition to qualitative observations, explore the feasibility of conducting quantitative observations to assess air and water quality as well as daylight and noise levels.

3. **Students and Staff:** Observe and track student, teacher, and staff interaction within the school spaces.
   A. Consider how school occupants interact in the spaces and with each other.
   B. Suggested questions to consider:
   - How do students and teachers interact in the spaces?
   - Do the students interact positively or negatively with each other within the school space?
   - Is bullying evident?
   - Is positive student and teacher engagement seen within the school?
   - Does the school provide fun, open spaces for students to interact?
   - How do the spaces meet school occupant needs?

Direct Community Engagement

1. **School Health Staff:** Facilitate a discussion with school nurses, physical education instructors, nutritionists, behavioral health specialists and any other health stakeholders about their perspectives on student health in the school community.
   A. Gather information on the top health and well-being priorities in the school community. If school health staff aren't available in person, contact them via email.
   B. Suggested questions for internal listening feedback:
   - What are the top health and well-being issues seen at school?
   - Have these problems increased during your time at this school?
   - In your opinion, what is the most important health and well-being issue?
   - In your opinion, what could we do better to reduce these issues in your school?

2. **School Administrators:** Facilitate a discussion with school administrators about their perspectives on student health in the school community.
   A. Gather feedback from the school administration on student, parental and community engagement and top health and well-being issues in the school community.
   B. Suggested questions to consider:
   - In your opinion, what is student engagement like at this school?
   - How would you describe the current state of engagement with the community surrounding the school building?
   - How would you describe the current state of parental engagement in your school community?
   - In your opinion, what do you think are the top health and well-being issues at your school?

- Have you had issues with bullying or misconduct?
- In your opinion, what do you think we should focus on for the school building construction and modernization?
- Have you had any problems with community, student and/or parental engagement developed as a result of this school construction or modernization project?
- How would you describe the strengths and limitations of your current school building and community?

1. **School Teaching Staff:** Facilitate a discussion with school teachers about their perspective on building occupant health in the school community.
    A. Gather feedback from a school staff's perspective on the school community, engagement and health and well-being goals that should be focused on in the building design and construction.
    B. Suggested questions to consider:
        - In your opinion, how would you describe the overall student engagement in your classroom?
        - Have you had issues with bullying or misconduct?
        - How much parent participation occurs at this school?
        - Have you experienced any setbacks during this school construction and/or modernization? (Based on both student and teacher perspective).
        - In your opinion, what do you think are the top health and well-being issues seen at your school? (Examples include: mental health, physical health, learning difficulties, access to health and education services).
        - In your opinion, what do you think we should focus on for the school building construction and modernization?

Community Surveys

Consider developing community pre- and post-occupancy health and well-being surveys for school students and staff. Community surveys help project teams develop a better overall public health assessment of the occupants' perspective and perceptions about their own community.

1. **Development:** The surveys should be unique to each population that they are intended to serve. Depending on the school population, surveys could be designed for elementary students, middle school students, high school students and staff members.
    A. The survey questions should be simple and direct. They should be based on the top public health and equity issues identified in workshops and the conditions seen during school observations
    B. Example survey questions and additional guidance are available in the **Monitoring Outcomes Guide** and throughout the main text of the *Roadmap to the LEED Health Process in Green Schools.*

2. **Distribution:** If possible, distribute pre-occupancy surveys while students and staff remain in their original school environments. Information gathered by a survey deployed at this stage can both be used to inform project design and as a baseline for monitoring impact of the new school facility. During the evaluation stage after the project is completed, surveys should be readministered to help determine the success of the chosen health strategies and inform ongoing operations.
    A. Any surveys being distributed to both students and staff will require approval from school officials, so be sure to work with school representatives to develop the surveys and administer them in the most time- and cost-effective way.

Resources to Complete a Community Needs Assessment:

Monitoring Outcomes Guide. Contains additional information on school surveys. A guidance tool to help the Health Process Coordinator and team create a draft plan to measure and observe the impact that their school project health and well-being strategies have on the population throughout the project life cycle.

Child Opportunity Index. This tool from datadiversitykids.org at Brandeis University's Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy measures and maps the quality of resources and conditions that matter for healthy development in children in the neighborhoods in which they live. Project teams may use this resource to spark conversations about unequal access to opportunity and to spur actions to increase equity.

Gehl Inclusive Healthy Places Framework. A particularly useful tool for school observations, this framework introduces tools for evaluating and creating public spaces that support health equity.

PolicyMap. This GIS tool includes demographic, health, economic, education and quality of life data available to view on a map of your community. The tool helps schools identify the challenges facing their communities and strategically target goals to address those challenges.

Community Tool Box: Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Your Community. A helpful website that covers basic public health definitions, community, concepts and ways to take action. Step-by-step guidance to increase understanding of community needs and assets.

Enterprise Opportunity360. A data-driven tool that provides holistic insights into your neighborhood. Provides census-tract ranks on key measures of opportunity, including affordable housing, education, access to jobs, transportation and healthy food, safe, green spaces for kids to play and environmental health indicators.

IES > National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). A helpful website that covers public school details, school profile links and school enrollment characteristics by grade, race and ethnicity and gender based on the National Center for Education Statistics database reports.

Example School Community Health Profile:

Students	
Demographics: 1. Age, Education Levels, Racial Distribution, Income Levels	
Percent Economically Disadvantaged:	
Survey Report Results: 1. Student Satisfaction 2. Student Expectations 3. Sense of Belonging 4. Other Study Results	
Student Progress Reports:	
Available Student Services: 1. Before or After School (Y or N) 2. Extra Curriculars (provided by school)	
Teachers	
Retention Rate:	
Demographics (if available):	
Feedback:	
Neighborhood Surroundings	
Neighborhood Description: 1. Demographics 2. Income Level	
Street / Sidewalks:	
Teacher Parking:	
Drop Off / Pick Up Locations:	
Overall Limitations:	

Community Engagement	
Student Engagement:	
Parental Engagement:	
Strengths:	
Limitations:	
School Visit: (Descriptions and Observations of Space)	
Entrance:	
Lobby:	
Auditorium:	
Classrooms:	
Gymnasiums / Active Spaces:	
Cafeteria:	
Library:	
Nurse's Suite:	
Bathrooms:	
Student Observations	
How Spaces Meet Student Needs:	
Student Interactions: 1. How do the students interact within the spaces? 2. How do the students interact with one another?	

Internal Listening Feedback	
Nurse Feedback: 1. Top health problems at the school.	
Principal Feedback:	
Teacher Feedback:	
Additional Coordinator Feedback:	

This Community Health Profile Guide is part of the series "Green Schools for Health: A District's Roadmap to the LEED Health Process." To find the main guidance document, or to access the other supplemental guides, visit this **webpage.**

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