

## THE INTERVENTION OF THE SCHOOL HEALTH NURSE IN HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** Health Promotion and Education (PES) in schools is a continuous process that aims to develop skills in children and young people, so that they can build a life project and are capable of making individual, conscious and responsible choices.

In this investigation, the following objectives were defined: to present the projects developed by the school health team at the Community Care Unit (UCC), in health promotion and education and to contribute to increasing the level of health literacy in the educational community;

This study can be classified as a qualitative study, since the case study methodology was used.

The work developed by the school health team is based on the project methodology based on the manual proposed by the School for Health in Europe, and contains a methodology that covers all steps of the planning process: identification of needs, definition of priorities, development of actions and process evaluation.

This study aims to highlight the contribution of the school health nurse in the different projects developed by the UCC school health team.

Regarding ethical procedures, the participants involved in the study will not be identified.

Within the scope of school health, nurses develop their activity in the following areas of intervention:

- Mental health and socio-emotional skills;
  - Education for affections and sexuality;
  - Healthy eating and physical activity;
  - Body hygiene and oral health;
  - Sleep and rest habits;
  - Postural education;
  - Prevention of substanceless consumption and addictive behaviors.
- Thus, school health intervention contributes to achieving health gains

through the promotion of health-friendly school contexts, helping to raise the level of health literacy and trying to improve the lifestyle of the educational community.

**Keywords:** nurse, school health, health promotion.

## INTRODUCTION

The school contributes to the development of skills in health education by bringing together, in the same environment, people in full growth and development. Thus, school education is considered to promote the individual's formation.

Therefore, the school can be a strategic environment for the development of various actions aimed at improving the health conditions of children and adolescents, through health promotion (BARBOSA, 2014) stimulating healthy growth/development and the establishment of constructive and functional relationships.

The National Association of School Nurses in the United States defines school nursing as a specialized practice that promotes health and health education throughout the life cycle, thus promoting healthy development and self-confidence, acting in the prevention of disease and health promotion, discussing cases and contributing to the care and self-perception of students and their families (BACKES, 2008).

This way, the socio-emotional learning to be implemented at school influences the school environment and optimizes facilitating learning environments, which translate into health gains and promotion of school success in the medium/long term (CARVALHO, 2019).

The concept of school health, in parallel with the concept of health, has been undergoing changes over time, currently the concept of health depends on each person's life project, their sense of happiness, their specific way

of being in the world and their solidarity effort to understand and respect the universe (BACKES, 2008). Following this paradigm shift, the concept of traditional school health, focusing essentially on disease prevention, was transformed, now focusing on health promotion, underlying the integral vision of the person inserted in their family, social and community environment.

The transformation of these two concepts resulted from the Ottawa Charter, which defines the concept of health promotion as: *"...the process aimed at enabling individuals to exercise greater control over their health and the factors that may affect it, reducing those factors that may result in risk and favoring those that are protective and healthy... health develops and is generated within the framework of everyday life: in educational, work and recreation centers. Health is the result of the care that each individual gives to themselves and others, the ability to make decisions, control their own lives and ensure that the society in which they live offers all its members the possibility of enjoying a good state of health."* (LOPES, 2010). Health education is, therefore, the form of excellence for obtaining gains in individual health and, consequently, in the community, in the medium and long term. There is a consensus that its field of action involves the entire community. Anyone, whatever their age, gender and economic condition, must benefit from health education (DOS SANTOS, 2020). School Health Education programs must enable children and young people to take care of their own health and that of their peers, adopting lifestyles that allow for the overall development of their capabilities (ROCHA, 2016).

The School Health Team is a multidisciplinary team that operates the National School Health Program (PNSE) whose purposes are:

- Promote and protect health and

prevent disease in the educational community;

- Support the school inclusion of children with special health and educational needs;
- Promote a safe and healthy school environment;
- Strengthen protective factors related to healthy lifestyles;
- Contribute to the development of the principles of health-promoting schools.

This way, the PNSE is developed in the Education and Teaching Establishments (EEE) of the Ministry of Education: School Groups and Non-Group Schools (AE) with activity in Kindergarten, Basic and Secondary Education (EBS), Private Solidarity Institutions Social (IPSS) with intervention in the school population and, whenever human resources allow, in private institutions with a cooperation agreement.

Therefore, school health teams have a fundamental role in raising awareness and strengthening the skills of other health technicians, parents, educators and teachers. At school, health promotion agents must have knowledge about the determinants of health and their consequences on each person's life and on society in general (AMANN, Von, et al, 2015).

With this article, the following objectives were defined: to present the projects developed by the school health team of the Community Care Unit (UCC) of a Health Center in Alentejo - Portugal, in health promotion and education, as well as to contribute to increase the level of health literacy of the educational community.

All projects carried out by this team will be exposed, based on the PNSE.

## METHOD

This article is based on a case study methodology, this methodology is based on the research of a social phenomenon, through the analysis of a specific context of that reality.

The case study constitutes a predominantly qualitative approach, often used in educational research (HOLLWECK,2015). Researchers Yin (2011) and Stake (2009) characterize the case study as a methodological approach, which allows the in-depth analysis of a phenomenon, situation or problem, that is, the case (HOLLWECK,2015).

In order to analyze the phenomenon, that is, the nurse's intervention in school health, all projects developed by this school health team were studied in the period between September 2022 and June 2023, corresponding to the academic year 2022/2023, which will be exposed in the results of this investigation.

The school health team is part of the community care unit, which covers a population of 57,190 users enrolled in the municipality's Family Health Units (USF) / Personalized Health Care Units (UCSP). This team responds to 23 private pre-school Education and Teaching Establishments (EEE) or Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS) to the 4 groups of schools existing in the municipality, to a private school (from nursery to secondary) and to a professional school, resulting in a total of 9600 students and of these 65 have Special Health Needs (NSE), requiring school health intervention at school.

In order to operationalize the school health projects in the EEE mentioned above, the team has 132 hours of nursing, which, in accordance with the ratios recommended by the opinion of the board of the college of the specialty of child and pediatric health nursing 14/ 2013 of the Order of Nurses is insufficient, as according to the same opinion: *"(...) considering the need to develop all the*

*activities recommended in the National School Health Program and the focus placed on health promotion, we are of the opinion that the ratio must be changed to one nurse for each group of 1500 healthy children (...)"*, which would give a total of 224 hours of nursing.

## RESULTS

The projects developed by the UCC Évora school health team during the 2022/2023 academic year were:

- **My lunch box** – Its main objective is to raise awareness among children and parents/guardians of the importance of healthy snacks, as healthy eating contributes to general health, improves concentration and school performance. It is a project designed for 1st cycle students, across the 4 years of schooling, with different activities for each year of project intervention, in which the first session was aimed at those in charge of education. This project won first place in the obesity prevention category of the Hospital do Futuro Awards, in the 2011/2012 edition and winner of the 2015 Edition of the Missão Continente Sorriso initiative;
- **Smiles growing** – With the aim of promoting health literacy, particularly in the areas of oral health and nutrition, enabling students to make choices and practices that promote better oral health, this project was aimed at students in the 2nd, 5th and 8th years of schooling. The respective years of schooling were chosen, as these are the majority of students covered annually by the PNPSO (7, 10 and 13-year-old cohort). This project consists of organizing a session in the classroom, per class and year of schooling, where, through playful activities, information on this topic was transmitted. Whenever possible, sessions

are carried out in partnership with Oral Hygienists from the Public Health Unit;

- **Beginning of life** – This is a project to promote socio-emotional skills, which aims to reinforce/promote information about adolescence, the dimensions of human sexuality, growth, peer pressure, interpersonal relationships and emotions. This project aimed to complement the curricular contents of the 4th year of schooling, of the participating classes, articulating with the work carried out by teachers. It thus intended to support schools in a more structured and continuous way, in the development of the class sexual education project, privileging the current curriculum. It consisted of 1 session of 90 minutes, in a classroom context with active, participatory and dynamic methodologies, addressing the topics in question through games, debates, films, guided discussion, among others;

- **Change school** – This project is based on the promotion of socio-emotional skills and aimed to prepare and train students who transitioned from the 4th to the 5th year of schooling, helping them to understand what changes are implicit in this situation, what are the most predictable risks and providing resources so that adaptation to the new environment is easier. The integration of these students becomes more complex if changing schools also involves a change of location, which happens quite frequently. The project used active, participatory and dynamic methodologies, addressing the themes in question through games, debates and guided discussion. When choosing the content, the main changes to life at school were taken into account;

- **AdolesSer** – This is a project to promote socio-emotional skills, which

aimed to reinforce/promote information about adolescence, the dimensions of human sexuality, growth, peer pressure, interpersonal relationships and consumption. It was proposed to complement the curricular contents of the 6th and 9th year of schooling, of the participating classes, articulating with the work carried out by the teachers. As in the “*Start of Life*” project, it also intended to support schools in a more structured and continuous way, in the development of the class sexual education project, prioritizing the curriculum. It consisted of 3 90-minute sessions, in a classroom context, using active, participatory and dynamic methodologies, addressing the topics in question through games, debates, films, guided discussion, among others;

- **Pés em movimento** - “PES” is an on-the-go health education project aimed at all children, aged 6 to 12 and their families, with the aim of promoting healthy habits and lifestyles. Throughout the school year, 4 sessions per week of physical and sporting activity were carried out, guided by the municipality’s sports science technician, health awareness and informative actions for those in charge of education, families and children, promoted by health technicians, every two months., and technical support in nutrition, psychology and oral hygiene for students with these needs.

In addition to the health promotion projects mentioned, the school health team in the 2022/2023 academic year carried out several health education sessions and nursing interventions that covered 65 children and students with SES who attend the municipality’s EEE, training the school community (teaching and non-teaching staff) to provide and supervise care for students

with SES. This way, the school health team collaborated in creating the Individual Health Plan (PSI) for each student, in conjunction with health service resources and parents/guardians.

## CONCLUSION

School health is an interdisciplinary project of great scope and great importance, which prepares the child/young person in particular and the community in general to intervene in the construction of their life project, optimizing their well-being. This

proactive vision for health involves awareness, responsibility, motivation and solidarity, so that all physical, mental and social capabilities can be fully achieved.

Assim, a intervenção da equipa de saúde escolar nos EEE, através de sessões de educação e promoção para a saúde, contribuiu para a obtenção de ganhos futuros em saúde através da escolha de contextos escolares favoráveis à saúde. Por outro lado, a educação para a saúde em meio escolar eleva o nível de literacia em saúde, tentando melhorar o estilo de vida da comunidade educativa.

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