



## Message from the Executive Director

School may be out for the summer but here at the Joint Consortium our thoughts have already turned towards September. We've been putting the finishing touches on a number of new tools and resources designed to help promote and support healthy school environments.

These include the Healthy School Planner – a web-based tool that any school can use to assess, plan and implement improvements in all four areas, or pillars, of comprehensive school health. Developed in partnership with the University of Waterloo, the Planner covers three key topics: healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco use. In addition to supporting schools directly, the HSP will allow for reporting on aggregate environmental school health data, reflecting the extent to which the comprehensive school health framework is being implemented. First introduced as a pilot project, the Healthy School Planner is now available, free of charge, on our web site at [www.jcsh-cces.ca](http://www.jcsh-cces.ca).

Also new and available for download from the Consortium website is a comprehensive toolkit entitled Addressing Substance Use in Canadian Schools. The toolkit summarizes the latest research evidence and includes modules specifically designed for use by teachers, administrators, counselors and health workers, and school and community leaders respectively. The toolkit is available in both French and English.

School health practitioners may also want to download a recent special edition of the [Journal of the Canadian Association](#)



Alberta's Healthy for Life - Cool Moves project is one of many innovative partnerships underway across the country to encourage students to make healthy lifestyle choices. Turn to page two to read more in our Federal/Provincial/Territorial Exchange.

[of Principals](#). Created in partnership with the Joint Consortium, the publication features articles by some of Canada's leading school-health researchers. Copies have been distributed to principals and school administrators nation-wide. To download your own version click on the tab marked Resources on our home page.

Stay tuned for more updates and other developments as the new school year approaches. And don't forget to check our website any time for news, tools, resources and connections to the comprehensive school health community.

–Claire Avison

## Alberta

### Investing in Healthy School Communities

Since 2007, the Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund has supported school communities that show a commitment to healthy choices. The wellness fund was established by Alberta Health and Wellness in partnership with the School of Public Health and the Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities to provide financial support to school communities that demonstrate a collaborative, coordinated response to promoting physical activity, healthy eating and positive social environments. As of June 2009, 57 projects (involving 339 schools and 372 community collaborators) have received funding from the wellness fund. Two of these projects are the West Lethbridge Healthy Living Pilot and Healthy for Life – Cool Moves.



Participants in the West Lethbridge Healthy Living Pilot Project learn about the types of foods they need for different types of activities.

### ***West Lethbridge Healthy Living Pilot – creating youthful enthusiasm for health***

If you're on the west side of Lethbridge, don't be surprised if kids peer into your grocery cart at the store and comment on the contents of the groceries you have selected, or shout words of

encouragement when they see you out for a bike ride with your family.

These events are a positive result of the first year of the West Lethbridge Healthy Living Pilot, which was funded by the Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund.

Under the project, a specialized teacher offered students at three west side elementary schools unique lessons in health and physical education. Students had the opportunity to wear heart monitors while doing activities, learn about the types of foods they need for different types of activities, and discover new activities they could do at home with little or no equipment.

Initially the project aimed to improve the nutritional content of lunches being brought to school. But this quickly expanded to all three schools providing healthy snacks, healthy hot lunches and milk programs.

The project also worked to increase out-of-school activity in children to a minimum of 60 minutes per day. Not only have the students learned to be more active outside of school, but the variety of school events to encourage these activities has increased. Running clubs after school and on weekends resulted in about 150 students participating in a Kids Marathon! A Winter Walk Day logged more than 50,000 minutes of total walking time by participants. Parent information nights have been held where parents could direct questions to a panel of health and wellness experts. Students receive fruit snacks on Fruit Fridays and an online recipe exchange program has been established.

### **Healthy for Life - Cool Moves at Edmonton's Boys and Girls Club**

Healthy for Life – Cool Moves, an initiative of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton, introduces healthy lifestyle choices to its members. Healthy after-school snacks and dinners are provided daily and members are encouraged to participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. The young members are learning about healthy eating, which are evident by the responses from two young members:

"There are four basic food groups to be included in a healthy diet," recites one 11-year-old member of the club. "Meat, vegetables, grains and dairy." When asked about his favourite meat, he responds with "Peanut butter!" After a questioning look, he goes on to explain, "Well, it's in the same food group."

A nine-year old, names carrots as his favourite food because, "I need really good eyes to keep up when I'm playing Dance, Dance Revolution. My feet are moving so fast, that sometimes my eyes get behind."

They both giggle when they're asked about the top physical activities at the club. There are a lot of choices, including basketball in the small gym, football

outside, limbo (a demonstration of amazing agility), skipping, and dance competitions ("Not with the girls – yuck!").

And when asked about how they feel about Boys and Girls Clubs in general? "Cool Moves," they both chime in with mischievous grins.

Funded partially through an Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund, the initiative includes other activities such as a flag football camp with the Edmonton Eskimos, participation at the Young Chefs Academy, and monthly family events to promote healthy eating and active living.

## **British Columbia**

### **Health Schools Network**

The BC Healthy Schools Network, a voluntary organization of public and independent schools modeling a comprehensive approach to school health, celebrated its 3rd year of activities in June 2009. Network action research projects included areas of teaching and learning (health and career education, physical education, daily physical activity), school environment (school policy, school connectedness, physical environment, healthy eating, tobacco free living, active



An eager participant in the Young Chefs Academy funded by the Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund.



living) and Community partnerships. More details on each school's action research projects will be posted on the Healthy Schools website over the summer – visit [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/hsnetwork/).

### Daily Physical Activity

In September 2008, the Ministry of Education implemented the Daily Physical Activity initiative for all public and independent schools in BC. All K-9 students are required to complete at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day and grades 10-12 are required to complete at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week.

In support of the DPA initiative, Daily Physical Activity for Families booklets were distributed to all schools in January 2009. Each booklet includes basic information about DPA, safety tips, and age appropriate suggestions for getting students and their families more physically active. The booklet series is now available online, in 13 different languages, at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dpa/dpa\\_family\\_booklets.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dpa/dpa_family_booklets.htm).



Walking school bus at Ecole Pauline Haarer in Nanaimo, BC. (Photo courtesy of Janis Chung.)

### Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train Program

BC's Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train Program was launched on International Walk to School Day 2008, to support school communities in planning safe routes to school, increasing daily physical activity and reducing their carbon footprint. [Program resources](#)

include guides for how to set up active transportation programs, interactive training webinars, mapping tools, and road safety tips, in addition to free starter kits and incentives.

As of May 2009, over 3,700 students were participating in the Walking School Bus and Bicycle Train Program. The program will continue this fall as schools across BC gear up for International Walk to School Week 2009.

## Newfoundland and Labrador

### Active School Playgrounds in Western School District

*Submitted by: Bill Allan, School Health Promotion Liaison Consultant, Western School District*

Research suggests play can be very important to a child's academic experience. Regular recess, fitness or nature time can influence behaviour, concentration and even grades. Children who had more than 15 minutes of recess a day showed better behaviour in class than those who had little or none (Barros, Paediatrics Journal, 2009).

With this research in mind, in spring 2009, Western Health, Labrador-Grenfell Health and the Western School District partnered to offer a new initiative to K – 6 schools, Active School Playgrounds. This initiative was designed to help get students more active during recess and lunch. We felt an active school playground would help students become physically active every day returning to classes ready to learn, become independent and creative in directing their own play activity and, demonstrate less aggressive behavior on the playground. This focus on physical activity supports and builds on the work of Healthy Students Healthy Schools.

Western School District principals were invited to send interested teachers to one of four half-day training sessions. Forty-eight elementary schools sent representatives to the training with most schools sending physical education

teachers as they are in an ideal situation to demonstrate playground games and activities in physical education class. Topics at the training sessions included planning a schedule, preparing a playground area, recruiting student leaders, addressing safety issues and sharing traditional and innovative games.

Each participating school received a playground kit with resources to help get students active (skipping ropes, basketballs, flying discs, soccer balls, bean bags, playground balls etc). In addition, stencils were made available to schools to paint school playgrounds making them more attractive for active play (hopscotch, four square). T-shirts were also available for schools who wished to highlight student leaders on the playground.

Participants completed a pre-training survey to identify their perceived obstacles to the establishment of active playgrounds. Responses indicated that in some schools the obstacles may be one or more of the following: insufficient amount of playground equipment, lack of time and scheduling difficulties, insufficient amount of play space and, the possibility of increased instances of conflict between students.

Since this initiative, schools have been very creative increasing their play areas to include town halls, staff parking lots (barricaded from traffic), abandoned tennis courts and school walls. What a wonderful sight to see areas once deserted now filled with students skipping, playing hopscotch, four square and kitty in the corner. Students are also developing their own creative games!

In the 2009 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card, Dr. Mark Tremblay states "... being active feeds the brain giving active kids an academic advantage over their peers who are sedentary... and active kids perform better in the classroom and get better grades ...". With only 13% of Canadian kids getting the recommended 90 minutes of physical activity per day, it is hoped Active School Playgrounds in the Western School District will help students benefit academically from this increased activity.

## Northwest Territories

### Together for Healthy Learning

An interesting partnership has led to increased support for school nutrition and physical activity within the NWT. In 2008, three boards of education supported by territorial government health and education staff prepared a proposal to the federal government's Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (ADI). The proposal followed a "comprehensive school health approach" outlining activities that would be undertaken to support teaching and learning, social and physical environment (including policy) and partnerships and services.



With funds obtained from ADI, the boards hired a half time staff School Nutrition Coordinator (with dual background in education and nutrition) to develop a variety of resources including:

- grade 5 nutrition lessons built upon a Dene Kede (northern aboriginal) 'world view',
- resources for schools/communities to host a nutrition-themed "family fun night", and
- directories of northern nutrition personnel and potential funding supports.

Paul Hepditch, physical education teacher at C.C. Loughlin School in Corner Brook, Newfoundland helps students with a playground game.

The NWT Teachers Association also partnered by funding the Coordinator to host a workshop on preparation of traditional foods at the NWT Educators' Conference last February. Three aboriginal





The Together for Healthy Learning project helps students in the Northwest Territories make better choices for their health and learning.

elders helped teachers to better understand the cultural significance of harvesting and preparing traditional foods and how to host sessions for students in their schools. All thirty-two spaces in the two half-day sessions were snapped up by teachers who enjoyed the elders' humour-filled guidance in learning to prepare moose, caribou and local fish.

A proposal for 2009-10 has recently been approved by ADI that will support implementation of the newly developed resources. The second year funding also allows schools 'seed money' for activities

such as starting after school cooking programs and helping students' councils to undertake nutrition related projects directed by their students.

A 'bigger ticket' project for year two is an attempt to repeat the results of the Saskatoon City Park Collegiate recently featured last April as the "Brain Gains" on the news program The National ([www.cbc.ca/national/blog/special\\_feature/brain\\_gains/brain\\_gains\\_2.html](http://www.cbc.ca/national/blog/special_feature/brain_gains/brain_gains_2.html)). City Park is an alternative school and many of its students struggled academically and behaviourally. Using the research of John Ratey as documented in the book "SPARK", teacher Allison Cameron had students exercise at specific intensity levels prior to their learning time. After only four months, she and the students noticed amazing results. Students' attention span was significantly increased, many students no longer needed their Ritalin-type medications, and all students improved, on average, a full grade level in reading, writing and math scores. "We're very excited to have a chance to repeat these results", enthused Lois Phillip, principal of Deh Gah School. The school is also starting a new lunch program this fall making low cost, healthy lunches available to students.

Whether the impact will be noticeable in short or longer term, all activities in "Together for Healthy Learning" project are about helping students make better choices for their health and learning. And partnerships are key. As Mel Parry, assistant superintendent of Yellowknife Education District No. 1, observed, "As major issues in today's youth, nutrition and physical activity are everyone's concern, so there needs to be a shared approach. Consequently this partnership of funding, support and expertise really makes sense in the north. No one level has enough of any of these resources to make a big enough difference, but together, we can make an impact".

## Research Briefs

### Green School Grounds and Physical Activity Levels

*Grounds for Action* presents the findings of a national survey that explored the relationship between green school grounds and physical activity at elementary schools across Canada. The 2006 report, prepared by the Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds Program was funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, under the Physical Activity Contribution Program. View the complete report at [www.evergreen.ca/en/lg/pdf/PHACreport.pdf](http://www.evergreen.ca/en/lg/pdf/PHACreport.pdf)

### Mental Health Survey Results

Results of the *International Survey of Principals Concerning Emotional and Mental Health and Well-Being* indicate that School principals worldwide agree about the importance of promoting the mental and emotional health of their students and staff. Over 1,100 principals from 25 countries completed the *International Survey of Principals Concerning Emotional and Mental Health and Well-Being* developed

by the International Alliance for Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Schools (InterCamhs) in partnership with the International Confederation of Principals (ICP). View the *Report of Major Findings* as well as the *Canada Country Level Report* at [www.intercamhs.org/index.html](http://www.intercamhs.org/index.html)

## Resources/Related News

### ***Achieving Health Promoting Schools: Guidelines to Promote Health in Schools***

This document, produced by the International Union for Health Promotion and Education, provides a blueprint for improving the evidence base to promote health in schools, including the principles of health promotion in schools; and support to plan and implement school health promotion. It is available under the Resources tab of the JCSH web site at [www.jcsh-cces.ca](http://www.jcsh-cces.ca).

