

Stories from the Field

Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health

The accounts below are just a few of the innovative and varied approaches and commitments to student achievement and student health in Canada.

Yukon

MINDUP

The MINDUP program has been shown to help children/youth become focused and mindful learners, fostering confidence and a better sense of self and others.

The MindUP program is a K-Grade 8 social emotional learning program based on the brain research of Dan Siegel and the Hawn Foundation. The curriculum provides students with background information on the brain, including brain facts, and basic brain physiology and functions. It assists children in learning how to calm themselves in moments of stress, focus attention, and thereby regulate themselves.

Here in Yukon we have provided training to over 120 educators and the program is available in all Yukon elementary and some of our secondary schools. We embarked on a program such as MINDUP because we were looking for a program that focused on the development of internal assets. We wanted to help make sustainable changes in our children by taking a developmental approach and by providing children with opportunities to become more mindful and reflective of their choices and thus to own and internalize these choices.

The program consists of teaching students how to become mindful of their breathing through a Core Practice of belly breathing and attentive focusing on their breath three times a day. The students become more observant of their own learning process, and understand how to respond to the world reflectively instead of reacting or acting without thinking. There are also lessons about optimism and empathy, as well as kindness and generosity.

British Columbia

Healthy Schools BC

Healthy Schools BC (HSBC), a key initiative of the province's health promotion strategy, strengthens health-education partnerships and builds the capacity of both sectors to support the implementation of the Comprehensive School Health (CSH) approach in BC schools. The initiative involves a partnership between the ministries of Health and Education, and [DASH BC](#).

A joint leadership table with health and education sector representation has been convened to help guide the provincial healthy schools agenda. At the regional level, health authorities and

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education partners are consulting on how to work together most effectively using the CSH approach.

On the ground, HSBC supports schools and districts in a step-by-step process to complete healthy schools assessments, and develop and implement customized action plans across the pillars of CSH. How-to guides and online learning sessions are being used to promote CSH knowledge and skills among both the health and education sectors. The [Healthy Schools BC Portal](#) consolidates news, programs, resources, and tools into a new “one stop shop” for healthy schools information. A student-led action research model has integrated youth leadership into the initiative and a Healthy Living Youth Council has been established to provide leadership training and support to student-driven healthy schools initiatives.

Alberta

High Schools: Making the Wellness Connection

At Central Memorial High School lineups are common at the hydration station where students fill up their water bottles; the counter on the station tracks the number of bottles filled. Students now carry their bottles to school and the station has become a teaching tool for teachers to talk about hydration, recycling, land fill use and body chemistry.

At Lethbridge Collegiate Institute, the Health Incentive Program has students earning points for doing anything that impacts one or more dimensions of their wellness. The online tool allows students to set and track their wellness goals. The impetus HIP came from the school’s Student Wellness Action Team (SWAT). To prepare for the HIP launch, staff spent professional learning time considering the importance of wellness, the dimensions of wellness, and where it can be embedded in the curriculum.

The new food cart, prepared by the culinary arts students at Centennial High School, is stocked with healthy options for snacks and lunch. All the food sold off the food cart meets the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth and sells for under \$5.00. The marketing campaign and all the daily running of the cart is planned and handled by students. The added bonus, many of the students stay on campus for lunch now, and the students who were often late and absent after lunch, are now on time.

Across Alberta, High School Wellness Projects are strategically embedding wellness into the daily lives of students and staff.

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New Brunswick

Nord Ouest Francophone School District embraces a mental fitness approach!

The Nord Ouest Francophone School District in collaboration with the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities through the NB Wellness Strategy has been implementing a whole school approach to promote mental fitness and resilience by offering workshops to all school employees.

Schools identified comprehensive interventions that met the psychological needs (competence, autonomy and relatedness) of students according to the self-determination theory that are now used throughout the school (not limited to one program or the classroom). Evaluation indicated that participating schools saw increased performance on the provincial evaluations as well as positive impact on student behaviour and significant decreases in suspensions.

Schools are attaining the learning outcomes set out in their curriculum while satisfying the psychological needs of students and adults in the school. Students have the chance to apply what they learn to the daily reality of life, and the school becomes a living environment that encourages promotion and development.

"I include the concepts of mental fitness and resilience in my code of conduct and my disciplinary code, my daily contact with the students, as well as my work/teaching plans for the students. It is an approach that works well with my teaching style and my philosophy of education. I am pleased to see that these concepts have been presented to all teaching staff because we have a student population that is more and more demanding because of today's society and the life experiences that the students have faced in the past few years" (Feedback from an educator involved in the Nord Ouest Francophone School District approach).

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Nova Scotia

Envisioning HPS

Regional Health Promoting Schools (HPS) Co-Chairs and staff from the NS Departments of Education and Health & Wellness gathered to envision HPS in NS and develop the best possible structure to move work ahead. There was a compelling need to do this type of work right now: an evaluation report highlighted room for improvement, there are different people involved, and there are changing contexts such as resources, initiatives and strategies. The sands had shifted over the years and it was time to envision what HPS should be in NS and then use that vision to guide the work of everyone involved, from all corners of the province and from all levels of partners.

The diverse group came up with several similar draft vision statements which will be crafted into one statement to be used for years to come as a compass to guide the work and how that work is done. A number of key areas such as communication, partnership and leadership were identified to ensure the vision is carried out in ways that are grounded in evidence and that respect local needs and resources. Next, a new structure will be put into place to ensure these efforts move forward, engaging all the right people to make things happen.

It's fair to say that the leaders of HPS in NS are excited at this new, explicit direction and are as passionate as ever in making a positive difference in our school communities.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Western School District

5210 Campaign

This year, schools in Western School District were encouraged to participate in the 5210 campaign. These four simple numbers can help educate and encourage families to eat healthy and be active with a daily intake of:

- 5 or more fruits and veggies
- 2 hours or less of TV & screen time
- 1 hour of physical activity

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- 0 sugary drinks.

Schools participating in the campaign were provided with a variety of resources to promote good health including posters, newsletters for parents, lesson plans, student challenges, and a cash grant to implement a Nutrition Month activity in March. Response from schools in the District has been excellent.

Eastern School District

Let Them Be Kids

Last year, four schools in Eastern School District were awarded *Let Them Be Kids Playground Grants*. These grants provided funding for school communities, who may not have other play areas, an opportunity to build safe play spaces. Each school community held a *Build Day* which brought together the school community to complete and officially open their facility.

A Treadmill in the Classroom

When Peter Ardis spotted a manual treadmill being thrown out with the garbage, he knew it could complement his students' learning, development, and overall physical activity levels. Mr. Ardis's Grades 3&4 students use the treadmill as part of their mathematics Numeration, Measurement and Data Relationships units. Students use the treadmill to improve physical activity levels while recording and comparing individual and class distances through graphing, tables and chats.

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