

# healthy schools ALBERTA

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Supporting Healthy School Communities!

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Teaching Mindfulness in the Classroom**

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# IN THIS ISSUE

**This issue is finding itself in your hands right before summer break! Flip through to read articles on school and community partnerships, weight bias, Teaching Dance for Understanding and mindfulness training. Enjoy!**

~ The Ever Active Schools Team



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# ADVERTISING

Please contact  
[megan@everactive.org](mailto:megan@everactive.org) for rates.



## RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Ever Active Schools develops a number of resources that support wellness education and comprehensive school health. Learn more:

[www.everactive.org/resources-1](http://www.everactive.org/resources-1)







# MEET OUR STAFF

**Photo:** Ever Active Schools staff at Shaping the Future 2015.  
**Photo credit:** Unique Perspectives.

## The Ever Active Schools Team

**We asked: What is one thing you've done in the past 24 hours to support your personal wellness?**

*Caught up on my favourite podcasts and made time for a good book. Supporting my intellectual well-being!*

**KERRI MURRAY**, Healthy School Communities  
Provincial Projects Coordinator



*Did an intense spin class and got a great night's sleep!*

**MICHELLE MANN**, Administrative  
and Project Support



*Went for a swim with a friend.*

**KATELYNN THEAL**, After School  
Hours Coordinator



*Enjoyed a walk with my mom on a sunny afternoon!*

**RHONDA SCHILBERG**,  
Administrative Assistant



*Went for a run, laughed with friends and ate a healthy meal!*

**HAYLEY DEGAUST**, Assistant  
Provincial Projects Coordinator



*Got outside and hiked Grassi Lakes with the kids. Epic adventure!*

**BRIAN TORRANCE**, Director



*Shut down all technology!*

**MEGAN MCKINLAY**,  
Physical Literacy Coordinator



*Went for a brisk walk with my dog, Sadie, while listening to upbeat music. Always a great way to get my (dance) steps in!*

**TRACY LOCKWOOD**,  
Education Coordinator



*Spent quality family time with my parents and husband in the desert. I was also able to road bike every day!*

**KIM HLEWKA**, Comprehensive  
School Health Coordinator



*Went for a morning hike with family in the mountains.*

**CHRIS FENLON-MCDONALD**,  
Healthy School Communities  
Education Coordinator



*Stayed hydrated and went to the gym.*

**MEGAN HUNKA**,  
Communications Coordinator



## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### Ever Active Schools Projects Updates

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

**MAY 1 & MAY 4**

Physical Activity Forum

**JUNE 7, 2015**

Active Kids Triathlon

**JUNE 13 - 16, 2015**

International Physical Literacy Conference

**JUNE 18 - 20, 2015**

Vitalize 2015

**OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2015**

Healthy Active School Symposia

*Above photo: Students presenting their school's wellness initiatives at the Red Deer Healthy Active School Symposium (HASS) on October 16th, 2014.*

The **HEALTHY SCHOOLS HUB** is a new virtual tool in development at Ever Active Schools. It is designed as a space where school health teams can interact with each other, walk through the comprehensive school health approach and connect to a seamless interface of local and provincial supports. The Hub is currently being tested with about 60 users and is scheduled to launch for widespread use in the 2015-16 school year.

Features you'll love:

- A star chart to mark your team's progress
- An action planner that auto-fills with your inputs
- A snazzy reflection and summary report that you can share with parents, staff and administrators.

Ever Active Schools provides **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** across the province. Our workshops support healthy school communities through a "research to action" approach and participants always leave with practical ideas and tools for all types of classrooms. Our focus is on connecting 21st century competencies with a variety of intersecting active living and health promotion topics, such as physical education, building healthy relationships, physical literacy, becoming a healthy school community, daily physical activity, student mental well-being, staff wellness and more! Our fee-for-service opportunities are provided at a low cost. To find out more or to schedule a professional learning opportunity, please check out our website at [www.everactive.org/professional-learning-opportunities](http://www.everactive.org/professional-learning-opportunities) or email [info@everactive.org](mailto:info@everactive.org). Check our website often, as we'll be adding new professional learning opportunities soon!

Visit [www.everactive.org/projects](http://www.everactive.org/projects) to discover other Ever Active Schools projects.

### Alberta Education Update

Alberta Education is currently revisiting curriculum changes to ensure Alberta school curriculum includes the basics—reading, writing, arithmetic—and incorporates essential 21st century competencies such as innovation, communication and critical thinking that are to be developed in all subject areas. Alberta's Curriculum Redesign initiative is multi-faceted and involves working with education partners to review and modernize provincial curriculum and to reflect the vision for K-12 education provided by Albertans: Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens, with an Entrepreneurial Spirit. As a next step in Curriculum Redesign, Alberta Education is looking at how it will engage in the next round of discussions with education partners and the broader community. The objective is to ensure that stakeholders understand and support the strategic direction for curriculum changes. These discussions will inform next steps for Curriculum Redesign, in particular the development of future provincial programs of study. ■



## Strategies to Initiate School and Community Partnerships

SUBMITTED BY KATELYNN THEAL, EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS, AND JENNIFER TELFER, TRANSALTA TRI-LEISURE CENTRE

**Creating a healthy school community requires expertise and resources from both schools and community organizations, however, navigating these partnerships can be challenging. Where is the best place to start? How are trusting relationships built?**

There are so many champions throughout Alberta working together on exciting projects, including greenhouses, breakfast clubs, run clubs, after school programs and more, and we wanted to share one of these stories with you.

Meet Jennifer Telfer, Wellness Program Coordinator at the TransAlta Tri-Leisure Centre in Spruce Grove, Alberta. She believes school and community partnerships begin by meeting that one key person. For her, that person was Felicia Ochs, Youth Resiliency Coordinator for Parkland School Division. She admits that just meeting Felicia wasn't the answer to creating the partnership, but it was a great starting point.

「School and community partnerships begin by meeting that one key person.」

Their initial meeting resulted in a plethora of ideas, but their higher-ups quickly told them that it was a futile exercise and that the partnership wouldn't work. Jennifer and Felicia continued to discuss ideas and started with a few small projects to test the waters.

Fast-forward to today and Jennifer and Felicia can take credit for a group called Physical Literacy and You (PLAY) Parkland, which is a community group advancing physical literacy in Parkland County. Some exciting things have come from this group including after school programming, school packages, a program on wheels, resource sharing and whatever Jennifer and Felicia dream up next!

Despite their success, challenges are still present. These programs and services cost money and funding is always a discussion point. Different organizations work on different timelines and within different constraints. Staying on the same page and working together on common objectives is an ongoing task to ensure this partnership and its projects can be maintained.

Jennifer's advice on getting these partnerships started is to begin with the "why." Your values and mission will drive practices and decision-making. Make sure your desired outcomes align with your partner's.

Next, examine the "who." Identify the people who should be involved to make your desired outcomes happen. Make time in your schedule to network—this is where you find the right people. Do your homework to find out about past experiences and projects to learn from mistakes and build on successes.

Lastly, Jennifer says it helped her to be passionate, persistent and positive. Great things can happen from an optimistic conversation over a cup of coffee.

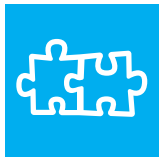
For more school and community partnership success stories, visit: [www.everactive.org/a-focus-on-partnerships-and-services](http://www.everactive.org/a-focus-on-partnerships-and-services). ■



Photos: Students participating in PLAY Parkland activities.



**Above photos:** Courtesy of the Canadian Obesity Network Image Bank.



# BE WELL

## Health Comes in All Shapes and Sizes: Promoting Positive Social Environments by Reducing Weight Bias

SUBMITTED BY DR. SHELLY RUSSELL-MAYHEW AND DR. ANGELA ALBERGA, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**“Weight bias is the stigma, prejudice, teasing, bullying or negative attitudes or behaviours towards people based on their weight,” explains Dr. Shelly Russell-Mayhew, Associate Professor at the University of Calgary, where she is a registered psychologist and a researcher on weight-related issues. Weight bias can negatively affect the physical, mental and social health of children and youth.**

This stigma exists in many environments, including schools. “Weight bias has been observed between students, teachers and in teacher-student relationships,” Dr. Russell-Mayhew explains. It can take the form of verbal teasing or physical abuse but can also be seen in more subtle ways like exclusion. Those at the receiving end of weight bias may experience depression, anxiety and stress or turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as restrictive dieting or avoidance of physical activity.

In schools, teachers are often expected to be key agents of health promotion, but their university education doesn’t ready them for this role. To see just how prepared our teachers are to deal with health-related issues such as weight bias

in the classroom, Dr. Russell-Mayhew, Dr. Angela Alberga and Ms. Alana Ireland from the University of Calgary conducted a study that analyzed the health and wellness curriculum in Bachelor of Education programs at seven universities across Canada. They found that four of the seven B.Ed programs had some health-related content in required courses, totaling only six courses across the country. Their findings

were consistent with previous research suggesting teachers do not receive adequate health or wellness training.

It’s incredibly important to address this gap in education programs, and to equip our teachers and the public at large with the knowledge and confidence to be health champions and to deal with health-related issues such as weight bias. >

Weight bias is the stigma, prejudice, teasing, bullying or negative attitudes or behaviours towards people based on their weight.

The Werklund School of Education, under the leadership of Dr. Russell-Mayhew and Dr. Alberga, is working to close the gap with support from the Faculty of Kinesiology at the University of Calgary, but it will take a continued team effort.

So, how can school staff, teachers, parents and students affect the social environments where they live, learn, work and play? Experts offer the following suggestions:

- **Be critical consumers of information.** Examine the content of lessons, stories, books and resources, as well as media sources for portrayals of negative stereotypes, 'thin ideals' and 'fat phobia.' Find alternatives or teachable moments.
- **Be sensitive.** Language can reinforce or break biases. When you must discuss the variance in body size, use people-first language to emphasize the person before the label. For example, "people living with obesity" versus "obese people." It is a similar nuance to "students on the autism spectrum" versus "autistic students." In choosing our words, let's maximize the potential of the person and minimize the impact of the label.
- **Expect acceptance.** Teach early and often that body size is like skin colour, age, gender or cultural beliefs. Diversity is natural, even wonderful, and all students have a right to belong.

- **Acquire information.** Seek out personal and professional development opportunities. Some learning opportunities are available online (see Health Resources for Schools below).
- **Know yourself.** "We should be all be aware of our own attitudes and behaviours about weight so we do not reinforce weight-based negative stereotypes," says Dr. Angela Alberga. "Health comes in many shapes and sizes."

A simple self-check for weight bias is to ask yourself to what degree the content of this article makes you uncomfortable. Do you find it challenging to consider that a person should not be judged for their weight? Are you developing arguments in your head about eating less and moving more? If so, the basis for those beliefs may be something to explore.

To find out more, contact Dr. Angela Alberga and Dr. Russell Mayhew by email: [aalberga@ucalgary.ca](mailto:aalberga@ucalgary.ca) or [mkrussel@ucalgary.ca](mailto:mkrussel@ucalgary.ca).

## HEALTH RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

- The Student Body: A six-module course complete with background information for teachers and excellent classroom-based activities that also utilize technology: <http://thestudentbody.aboutkidshealth.ca/>
- Kids Health: Links to a variety of health and well-being topics for elementary students: [http://kidshealth.org/kid/index.jsp?tracking=K\\_Home](http://kidshealth.org/kid/index.jsp?tracking=K_Home)
- Kids Health: Links to a variety of health and well-being topics for junior and senior high students: [http://kidshealth.org/teen/index.jsp?tracking=T\\_Home](http://kidshealth.org/teen/index.jsp?tracking=T_Home)
- The Body Image Project: Great for teachers as well as junior and senior high school students: [www.facebook.com/bodyimageproject](http://www.facebook.com/bodyimageproject)

## WEIGHT BIAS RESOURCES

- Rudd Centre: [www.yaleruddcenter.org/what\\_we\\_do.aspx?id=191](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what_we_do.aspx?id=191)
- Weight Bias at Home and School Videos: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxzejNEoRT8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxzejNEoRT8)
- Health at Every Size: [www.haescommunity.org/](http://www.haescommunity.org/)

## ARTICLES OF INTEREST

- "Preventing a continuum of disordered eating: Going beyond the individual" [www.onehealth.ca/r\\_alberta\\_nwt/video\\_conferences/E110404A-HOB.pdf](http://www.onehealth.ca/r_alberta_nwt/video_conferences/E110404A-HOB.pdf)
- BRIDGE: A tool for parents and professionals: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16864369](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16864369)
- BRIDGE 2: Interventions and transitions: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16864370](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16864370)

## References:

- Russell-Mayhew, S., Peat, G., & Ireland, A. (2012). *The Impact of Professional Development about Weight-Related Issues for Pre-service Teachers: A Pilot Study.* *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 58(3), 314-329.
- Russell-Mayhew, S., Williams, E., Alberga, A.S., Gabriele, T., Murray, K., Peat, G., Sunada, J., and Tkachuk, M. *Piloting Professional Development for Pre-Service Teachers in the Areas of Health and Weight.* Poster presentation at the *Shaping the Future Conference*, Kananaskis, AB, January 30, 2015.
- Russell-Mayhew, S., Ireland, A., and Alberga, A.S. *Health and wellness curriculum in teacher training programs.* Poster presentation at the *Shaping the Future Conference*, Kananaskis, AB, January 30, 2015. ■





Photo: Byron Abalos and Andrea Mapili

# This Couple Has Discovered the Secret to Having a Great Day, Every Day

SUBMITTED BY SARA SMEATON, ACTIVE FOR LIFE

**As teachers you're probably very aware of the positive connection between students' physical activity and increased focus, improved grades and better behaviour at school.**

In a perfect world, all students would get the opportunity to move in the morning before coming to school but sadly not everyone is able to walk or bike to school and many kids don't get this advantage.

Now there's something you can do at the beginning of each day with your students that is fun, will get their hearts pumping and will leave everyone feeling happy. It's time to get down and boogie; or rather, it's time to wake up and dance.

Byron Abalos and Andrea Mapili are an infectiously positive and positively adorable young married couple living in Toronto. They didn't intend to make dancing in the morning a daily practice. They certainly didn't intend to start a movement. But that's exactly what's happening.

A year ago, they were getting ready for work in the morning when Alicia Keys' *Wreckless Love* started playing on one of their

phones. They started to dance and ended up grooving to the entire song. Then they went their separate ways for the day.

When they came back together that evening, they realized that they had both had great days. They wondered if starting their day with a dance might have improved the rest of the day. So they did it again the next morning, and had awesome days. They danced again on the third day, and every day since then, always dancing to a different song. Andrea and Byron have even named this daily routine "Wake Up and Dance" and started posting about it on their Facebook pages.

Inspired by the weekly videos and playlists, people have started to form a community around Wake Up and Dance. They have built a loyal following and everybody dances right along, suggesting songs and sharing memories that the song choices stir up. It's been a way for Andrea and Byron and

their fellow dancers to "connect with [their] youth, with [their] nostalgia and to share with others," because as Andrea hilariously notes, "dance isn't just for drunk adolescents at midnight."

The fact that it's catching on is affirmation for Byron and Andrea that Wake Up and Dance is a good thing. It also confirms for the couple that "art can transform our lives every day," and the idea that "dance is the quickest path to joy."

Not everyone in the Wake Up and Dance community has made it a daily practice like Byron and Andrea. Some people have started off slowly, waiting for the weekly videos to be posted to YouTube and dancing to those. Others tell the couple that they dance to part of a song because that's all they have time for. Sometimes, if they're running late, Andrea and Byron will dance while they brush their teeth. The dancing is not meant to be a ➤



burden, it's supposed to add to their lives, so they have a relaxed attitude about it.

In September, Andrea suffered a concussion, and while she was recovering they weren't jumping around, but they didn't give up on the idea of their morning dance. Some days it was just lying on their backs and moving their hands around. As Byron explained, "It's about the intention to move. You're giving yourself the space to think about your body and be in your body for a while." So even if you're not always able to go all out you can still dance, whatever that looks like for you.

On the odd day when they haven't been able to dance in the morning, they do a wind-down dance at night because they say they "definitely feel the difference if we miss a day. We don't connect, we don't start off feeling happy or grateful or joyful, all those kinds of feelings have really become a part of that Wake Up and Dance routine.

Those feelings come now all the time, every morning. So when we don't have those feelings, we notice it, especially during the dreary cold months."

To celebrate their year of joy and gratitude, at the end of January the couple hosted a Wake Up and Dance party one Saturday morning in downtown Toronto. They played every song they had danced to in the previous year. It was a huge success, and they were surprised by the number of families that came with their kids. The couple is working on making the Wake Up and Dance parties a regular event.

If you're outside of Toronto you can follow along on social media ([www.facebook.com/wakeupanddance](https://www.facebook.com/wakeupanddance), <https://instagram.com/a.plus.b/>, [www.youtube.com/channel/UCTrh76od4dBueDloDxNdZnA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTrh76od4dBueDloDxNdZnA)), send Andrea and Byron your song requests and perhaps even organize a Wake Up and Dance party in your own city or town.

We can't think of anything better than schools getting on board with this movement that's all about moving. Teachers can get kids collaborating and helping put together weekly playlists or you can use Byron and Andrea's. Either way, it's 3.5 minutes that might mean the difference between an okay day and a great day.

And if you do Wake Up and Dance with your students, please post your pictures, song choices and videos on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, and use the hashtag #wakeupanddance. We want to see your moves and hear your stories.

*Active for Life is a non-profit organization committed to helping parents raise happy, healthy, physically literate kids. For more articles like this one, please visit [activeforlife.ca](http://activeforlife.ca).* ■

## Be Active, Alberta

SUBMITTED BY ALBERTA CULTURE AND TOURISM

**Remember when you were a kid? Were you the kind of kid who, when your parents took you to an open field on a sunny afternoon, ran as far and as fast as you could until your little lungs felt like they would explode? Didn't that feel great? Can we ever get there again?**



In a series of two new videos, Culture and Tourism's recreation folks are asking just that, and they're working on ways to get everyone in Alberta moving like they did when they were kids.

Presented under the banner of Active Alberta, the idea is to bring together

communities, schools, non-profits and other government organizations to take as comprehensive an approach to active living as possible. Their vision is to change Alberta to a province where "Albertans enjoy a high quality of life, improved health and wellness, strong communities, economic benefits and personal fulfillment through recreation, active living and sport."

The first video lays out the basics of Active Alberta. As it states, the ultimate goal is to get "more Albertans active more often." It's a pretty simple goal, but it has some pretty far-reaching consequences.

The second video goes into further detail about how Active Alberta is designed to work across multiple sectors to create healthy environments no matter where you are. The ultimate takeaway, though, is that creating

an Alberta with a healthier population is not just an individual thing or government thing. It's a provincial thing, requiring input and participation from everyone.

Find out more about Culture and Tourism's contribution to a more Active Alberta (<http://culture.alberta.ca/recreation/active-alberta/active-albertans/>) and the Alberta Sport Plan (<http://culture.alberta.ca/recreation/sportplan/>). ■



## Hosting Healthy Sporting Events: Electronic Toolkit Tour

SUBMITTED BY KATELYNN THEAL AND MEGAN HUNKA, EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS



Too often, the foods served at school or community sporting events are unhealthy options like chips, pop, poutine and candy. Our environments shape our eating habits and healthy food should exist in settings that promote physical activity, to properly fuel our young athletes, coaches, spectators and parents.

Healthy food should exist in settings that promote physical activity.

*Above photo: The electronic toolkit available on [www.everactive.org](http://www.everactive.org).*

In 2012-13, Ever Active Schools conducted an online survey with key stakeholders and found that 86 per cent of respondents would support only healthy options at their school sporting events. As a result, we developed an electronic toolkit (pictured above), hosted on our website: [www.everactive.org/toolkit](http://www.everactive.org/toolkit).

The toolkit is a fun and interactive way to discover supports for hosting healthy sporting events in your school or community.

It is organized into five sections to assist you in planning or gaining buy-in for healthier events. You'll find everything you need, including policy examples, sample menus, posters and success stories. One of the success stories in the toolkit is featured on the next page. For more information, please contact Katelynn Theal at [katelynn@everactive.org](mailto:katelynn@everactive.org). ■



# The Terwillegar Riverbend Soccer Association Concession Makeover

SUBMITTED BY KAREY STEIL, TERWILLEGAR RIVERBEND SOCCER ASSOCIATION U10 TOURNAMENT VOLUNTEER

As part of registering your child in the Terwillegar Riverbend Soccer Association, you must either volunteer or pay an additional fee. I chose to volunteer for the soccer tournament and a few days later it dawned on me that I could use this opportunity to tie in my current work project—healthy eating environments in community events, sporting events and recreation facilities.

I contacted the organizers of the Terwillegar Riverbend Soccer Association and asked about ‘making over’ the concession at the U10 tournament, which hosts approximately 100 teams and 1,000 players. The organizers were enthusiastic and supportive from our first conversation. This was the perfect opportunity to provide healthy snacks at a reasonable cost for the athletes and spectators.

Our U10 tournament volunteer team got to work. Leading up to the tournament weekend, we emailed coaches and parents about the healthy concession, made signage and prepped the menu. We decided to serve fruit kabobs, veggie bags with hummus, 100% fruit Popsicles, homemade pita chips and more (full menu pictured to the right).

The day before the tournament I did all of the shopping in about two hours, purchasing bulk items at Costco and the remainder at Real Canadian Superstore. Later that day, we did some of the food prep—cutting the fruit, preparing veggie bags and portioning cracker bags.

The next day—the first day of the tournament—we brought cutting boards, knives and food storage supplies to the concession kitchen and did the remaining food prep. We made pita chips, baked oat cookies and assembled the fruit kabobs. We priced everything for easy math and then teams began arriving. The tournament flew by, and we were incredibly busy. Overall, parents were thrilled, kids were excited and the tournament organizers asked us back next year. Our concession was a huge hit!

Visit [www.everactive.org/success-stories-hhse](http://www.everactive.org/success-stories-hhse) for more information, to find the letter to parents and coaches, as well as more details and tips from Karey. ■

Healthy Choices Menu		
Fresh Fruit		
Fruit Kabobs: An assortment of fresh, delicious fruit on a stick		\$1.00
Assorted Fruit snacks: Fruit Cups, Fruit Source Bars, and Fruit-to-go		\$0.50
Frozen Juice Bars: 100% Fruit Juice, 100% refreshing		\$0.50
Need Something More Filling?		
Homemade Crunchy Oat Cookies: A classic cookie to help refuel athletes and spectators.		\$1.00
Veggies and Crackers		
Fresh Veggie Bags: Crisp veggies perfect for dipping or on their own	\$1.00	
Pita Chips: Lightly seasoned, homemade, crispy chips	\$1.00	
Crackers: Perfect for Dipping	\$0.50	
Cheese and Crackers: The classic combo	\$1.00	
Hummus or Tzatziki: Great with the veggies, crackers or pita chips	\$0.50	
Grab & Go		
Dad's Oatmeal Cookies: An old favourite	\$0.50	
Assorted Granola Bars: Oatmeal to go, Quaker Chewy, Kashi	\$0.50	
Cheese Strings: Fun and with crackers or on their own	\$0.50	
Beverages		
Water	\$0.50	
Juice: 100% fruit juice	\$0.50	
Coffee:	\$2.00	
Brought to you by TRSA & Ever Active Schools		

Photo: The menu used at the Terwillegar Riverbend Soccer Association U10 Tournament.



# Twenty-first Century Spaces for 21st Century Students

SUBMITTED BY KERRI MURRAY AND CHRIS FENLON-MACDONALD, EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS

**“Walk please.” “Stop fidgeting, sit still!” These words may echo in the hallways and classrooms of yesterday, but educators are recognizing they have less value in the learning spaces of tomorrow. In a changing educational landscape, with engaged, ethical and entrepreneurial students a priority, the social and physical environments of schools must keep pace.**

The environments we operate in provide cues, nudges and incentives that influence our actions in subtle but profound ways. Think of the effects of a posted speed limit on your driving speed versus a speed bump. The sign provides you with information that you may choose to obey or ignore, whereas the speed bump is a physical modification that makes speeding uncomfortable.

In a similar way, health-promoting environments make the healthy choice the easy choice, automating or rewarding healthy behaviours. For example, a well-placed and beautiful staircase will enjoy more use than a sign pointing the way to the stairs, hidden behind a prominent elevator bank.

There are many opportunities to create healthy environments in classrooms (including gyms and music rooms), hallways, common areas, staff rooms and even beyond the school walls to outdoor spaces.

To assist schools in making this change,

Ever Active Schools is embarking on a 21st Century Spaces Project. It is based on four initiatives: “Don’t Walk in the Hallway,” “Don’t Sit Still in Class,” and two more that are in development and being informed by ongoing school consultations. Inspired by grassroots changes to learning environments, the three year project will begin by working with pilot sites to scale up local successes and work toward influencing school modernizations and the building of new schools.

Chris Fenlon-MacDonald began Don’t Walk in the Hallway at Panorama Hills School with the Calgary Board of Education. Knowing that physical activity can improve cognitive

functioning and concentration in addition to various health benefits, he taped patterns on hallway floors to encourage playful movement. With further support from colleagues, positive student response and encouragement from the school community, coloured tiles were installed permanently, in math-appropriate patterns.

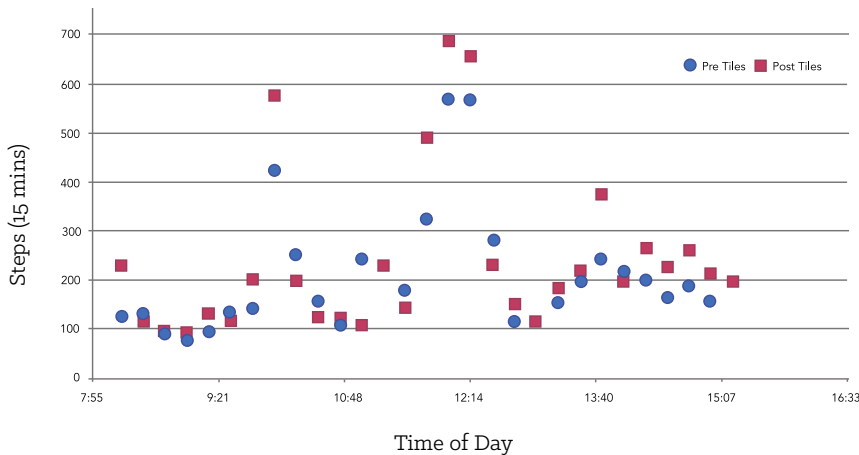
Use of activity trackers demonstrates an increase of roughly 900 steps per day for students, with some evidence to suggest increased on-task behaviour during class periods.

Today, students jump, hop and play in the colourful hallways with two questions in mind: “Am I being safe?” and, “Am I being respectful?” This scaffolds choice, decision-making and controlled risk, while promoting critical thinking. The benefits continue to multiply, many of which are in line with competency goals of the Ministerial Order on Student Learning. Active hallway transport is already catching on throughout the Calgary Board of Education. ➤

Use of activity trackers demonstrates an increase of roughly 900 steps per day for students, with some evidence to suggest increased on-task behaviour during class periods.



## SCHOOL DAY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



To extend the reach more broadly, Ever Active Schools will offer a Don't Walk in the Hallway resource package, available in September 2015, which will include semi-permanent decals to place in hallways, facilitation ideas with lesson plans and professional learning opportunities to support the change.

In another promising practice, a teacher at Delisle Elementary School in Saskatchewan raised students' desks to create a standing classroom in Grade 1. This example can challenge classroom arrangement norms and instructional strategies to combat the adverse health risks and behavioural outcomes that accompany too much sitting for students. It is also the inspiration for Don't Sit Still in Class, an initiative that will install mobile, standing desks to replace sedentary workstations in multiple pilot sites across Alberta. The aim is to enable collaboration, reduce sedentary time and allow students to define what their space looks like.

With these initiatives and others, the 21st Century Spaces Project will support school communities to achieve new educational

outcomes and catapult success. Twenty-first century competencies require 21st century spaces and the learning environments of tomorrow must be recognized for their impact on health and learning outcomes. By re-thinking space-use norms, making temporary or semi-permanent modifications to existing spaces and updating school designs, everyone can contribute to healthy learning environments, starting today.

### GET INVOLVED!

We invite your involvement in the 21st Century Spaces Project. Take a brief survey at [www.everactive.org](http://www.everactive.org) to tell us what your ideal healthy environment for learning looks like.

Want to help further? Contact Kerri at [kerri@everactive.org](mailto:kerri@everactive.org) to become a pilot site for an upcoming initiative. ■



「 We need to create environments that support belonging and inclusiveness that are safe for the most marginalized students in the school. 」

**Above photos:** A graph showing the effects of tile installation on student physical activity, and a hallway at Panorama Hills School, showing its new floor tiles.



## TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

# Teaching Dance for Understanding

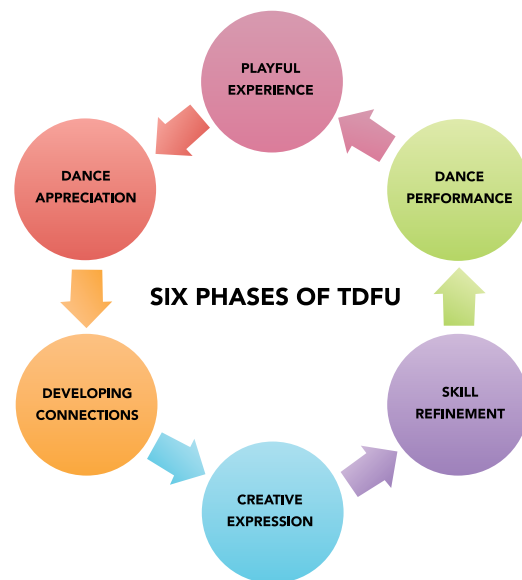
BY MELANIE GUERTIN, FOUNDER AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF DANCE PL3Y INC.

**Teaching Dance for Understanding (TDFU) is a new pedagogical model that shakes up the traditional methods of teaching dance. It is designed to offer a more learner-centered, foundational approach to dance education.**

Inspired by Teaching Games for Understanding (Bunker and Thorpe, 1982), the 'rules' of dance—choreography and technique—are modified to allow students to experience success with various dance movement vocabularies, rhythms and fundamental movements skills. Through six key phases, learners explore various styles of music and dance genres to develop connections to music, build self-confidence, learn self-expression and perform co-created dance routines to their peers. As a cooperative learning model, Teaching Dance for Understanding focuses on developing interpersonal skills, creating group cohesion through the creative process, engaging in interactive group formations and using inquiry-based teaching strategies.

### THE SIX PHASES OF TEACHING DANCE FOR UNDERSTANDING

- **Dance as a Playful Experience** – students experience dancing as an activity in a playful context, without worrying about the traditional 'rules' of dance (choreography and technique).
- **Dance Appreciation** – students learn about the elements of dance and gain an understanding and appreciation for different genres of dance music styles.
- **Developing Connections** – through listening, self-reflection and large-group movement activities, students learn to connect to music, gain a sense of self-awareness and develop interpersonal skills.
- **Creative Expression** – students explore various ways of expressing their thoughts, opinions, ideas and stories to different styles and genres of music by applying the creative process.
- **Skill Refinement** – students contextualize the Elements of Dance (body, action, space, time and energy) and refine the techniques and movements that will be required to execute a dance performance as an individual or as a group.
- **Dance Performance** – students perform a dance routine as an individual or group, integrating various elements of technique, choreography and artistic elements. >





# Dance as a Playful Experience Lesson Plan

Try this lesson plan from Melanie Guertin at Dance Pl3y!

By the end of this activity, students will:

- a) learn simple dances inspired by a mix of music styles
- b) participate actively as they learn new movements.

## SONG SAMPLE: DARK HORSE BY KATY PERRY

**Teacher introduces the moves:** The second move is step-step-bounce-bounce. Each time you take a step, I want you to move to a new spot in the space. I also want you to show me different ways of bouncing with your body. Every time you bounce, I want you to do something different.

**Teacher Prompt:** What are different ways that I can 'bounce' my body?

**Student Response:** Jump twice with both feet, bounce my shoulders, lift one leg and bounce my leg in the air.

**Teacher Prompt:** What do I have to do with my body so that it shows a 'bounce' energy?

**Student Response:** Relax my arms. Bend my knees. Be soft in my knees. Move like a bouncy ball.

## SAMPLE CHOREOGRAPHY

Time	Move	Coaching Cues
0:00	Bounce	Hand up in the air, bounce your shoulders and your body.
0:15	Step-step-bounce-bounce	Step-step-bounce-bounce. Move somewhere else and bounce-bounce. Relax your shoulders and elbows to let your body bounce. Every step takes you somewhere new in the space.
0:44	Watermelon Tai Chi	Pick up a watermelon, slice it down the middle. Push one half to the side. Then the other side. Pick up a piece, take a bite. Pick up another piece. Take as many bites as you can. Pretend to spit out the pits!
1:18	Tap and Leap	Step on a bug then jump over it! Squish a bug and leap! Tap, then leap. There are bugs in the whole room—squish a bug and leap somewhere new! Squish and leap!
1:49	Watermelon Tai Chi	(Same as 0:44)
2:19	Step-step-bounce-bounce	Step-step-bounce-bounce. I want to see you do a different kind of bounce every time. Add your own style to the bounce-bounce. It should look different than anyone else! Try criss-crossing your arms. Try lifting up one leg. You look awesome!
2:48	Tap and Leap	Step on a bug then jump over it! Tap, then step. Move through the space. Use your arms when you step. Open your arms when you leap. Tap then open.
3:02	Watermelon Tai Chi	(Same as 0:44)



## LESSON ENHANCEMENTS

Teacher asks students to make links to prior knowledge on the Elements of Dance.

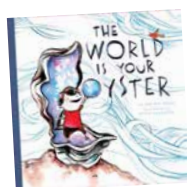
**Teacher Prompt:** Can you identify the Elements of Dance that were present in the dance we did today?

**Student Response:** Bouncing is from the element 'energy.' When we do the Watermelon Tai Chi we are moving slowly, that's from the element 'time.' When I leaped over the bugs I was using my 'body.'

To view a tutorial and access four more songs that you can use to deliver a playful dance experience, visit: [www.pl3yinc.com/ophea-resource-videos](http://www.pl3yinc.com/ophea-resource-videos). ■

# Building Positive Social Environments Through Literature

These two books support a comprehensive school health approach and would make a good addition to your lesson planning. Just find your grade level and see which book we recommend!



## **THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER** by Tamara James

**Grade Level:** Divisions 1-2

An inspirational book full of animal idioms that help encourage resiliency and perseverance.

**21st Century Competencies:** to gain knowledge and understanding, communication and personal growth and well-being.

**Subject Areas:** Language Arts, Health and Life Skills, Art, Drama.



## **THE GAME** by Teresa Toten

**Grade Level:** Divisions 3-4

This book speaks to teens about betrayal and anger. It addresses the importance of friends and family during the healing process.

**21st Century Competencies:** problem solving, knowledge and skill development, critical thinking and creativity.

**Subject areas:** Language Arts, Visual Arts, Drama, CALM, Media Arts. ■

# Move & Play the Inclusive Way

SUBMITTED BY AMANDA EBERT, STEADWARD CENTRE

**The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement at the University of Alberta has collaborated with the Be Fit For Life Centres to create Move & Play the Inclusive Way resource cards.**

Based on the popular Move & Play cards developed by the Be Fit For Life Centres, this inclusive expansion pack provides tips, tricks, tools and theories to turn any game or activity into something that can enhance the physical confidence and competence of any child, regardless of ability. The cards cover important topics such as strategies to adapt games, suggestions on how to modify games already included in the original Move & Play deck, critical reflection questions, do's and don'ts of language, guided discovery questions and much more!

Cards can be purchased for \$30 each or \$60 for both sets. For more information or to order your Move & Play the Inclusive Way cards, please contact the Steadward Centre at [free2bme@sports.ualberta.ca](mailto:free2bme@sports.ualberta.ca) or check out the website at [www.steadwardcentre.ualberta.ca](http://www.steadwardcentre.ualberta.ca). ■







*Photo: High school students participating in a well-being session at Camrose Healthy Active School Symposium.*

# Teaching Mindfulness in the Classroom

SUBMITTED BY MEGAN HUNKA, EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS

**When it comes to training teachers in mindfulness—understanding how to regulate your emotions, be resilient, quiet your mind and be attentive and focused—we can learn from British Columbia’s and Ontario’s education systems.**

Vancouver School District teachers, for example, are educated in the MindUP program, which provides knowledge around social and emotional literacy, particularly emotional regulation and mindfulness. The program was initiated by Goldie Hawn, who drew on a team of neuroscientists, psychologists, teachers and experts in mindfulness education to bring it to fruition. As part of the curriculum, students participate in gratitude journals, take brain breaks, learn about brain function, do breathing exercises and focus on sensory interactions.

Head east to Ontario, where the Toronto Catholic District School Board is using Mindfulness Without Borders. This program is offered in Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Israel, Jamaica, Botswana, the U.S. and Canada. It targets teenagers and is often seen as in-school councils, and encourages leadership, mindfulness, social and emotional learning and community-building. Students learn a three-minute

breathing exercise called TUZA, a body scan technique as well as relaxation and attention-focusing exercises, some of which are available on the website as free podcasts (<http://mindfulnesswithoutborders.org/media/>). The Mindful Edge, another program used in Toronto, teaches stress relief and emotional regulation to teens.

In Alberta, mindfulness education is not in the curriculum, but some self-motivated teachers are incorporating it in their school communities. CBC reported that Grandview Heights School in Edmonton is one of them. After Principal Doug Allen and several teachers travelled to California for the training, they began implementing it in fall of 2014. They use the ‘mindful minute’ every day as a form of meditation, and the students say the technique helps them inside and outside of school. ➤

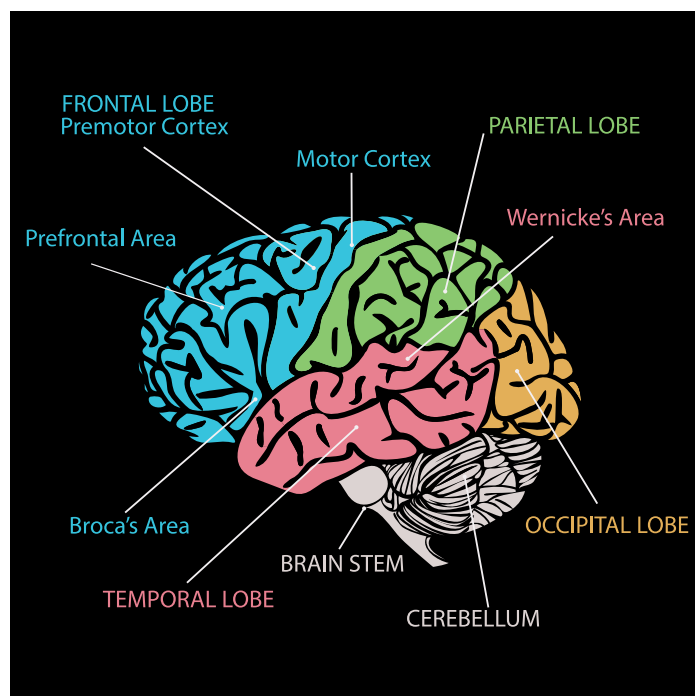
Although many studies show the positive impacts of mindfulness in the classroom, not everyone feels the same way. Some parents and educators think it's a waste of time or hedges on religious instruction, because it incorporates some aspects of meditation. It also takes time and patience to learn the skill.

"Mindfulness gives you a new vocabulary to use with your students, which can save time and allow you to cover more content," says Dr. April Elliott, Paediatrician and Adolescent Medicine Specialist and Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Calgary. "Imagine if your students were more contemplative, empathetic and compassionate—think of how many more positive interactions you would see in your classroom."

Kim Hlewka, Provincial Comprehensive School Health Coordinator at Ever Active Schools, and a long-time teacher says, "Educators deal with so many expectations, but I firmly believe that as a teacher, my most important job is to create an environment where students feel safe, cared for, welcomed and respected. I absolutely see the value in mindfulness. It helps me achieve the 21st century competencies outlined by the Ministerial Order on Student Learning. Strategies like mindfulness support my students' creativity, critical thinking, problem solving ability and their resiliency."

Dr. Elliott describes an ideal world where the Alberta education system builds a foundation of teaching children and youth about their emotions and how to effectively manage them. She sees this cultural shift beginning in kindergarten classrooms and being built upon in each consecutive grade, preparing students to prosper in university and work settings.

Similar to the students at Grandview Heights who use mindfulness outside of the classroom, Dr. Elliott incorporates it in all aspects of her life. As a professor at the University of Calgary, she'll begin lectures with a mindfulness activity. As a doctor at her clinic, she'll greet late-comers with the offer to take a moment to compose themselves. "I can tell right away if they're frustrated or stressed. Maybe traffic was bad or they couldn't find parking," she says. "Scolding them when they know they're late isn't going to accomplish anything. >



Mindfulness is interesting because it engages the prefrontal cortex. When children and youth engage in mindfulness activities, they're activating a part of the brain that isn't firing yet.

I'm not going to get the best information from someone I just scolded." As a parent, she taught her sons that it's okay to feel a wide range of emotions, but your reaction doesn't have to be equal to how you feel.

So how do you get to be so good at mindfulness that you can incorporate it in all aspects of your life? Dr. Willoughby Britton, a neuroscientist at Brown University, uses experience-dependent neuroplasticity to help answer those questions: "Our brains change with experience and we get good at what we practice. If you exercise your physical body, certain muscle groups get stronger and certain movements get easier. The brain is no different. The neural networks that you exercise get stronger. Eventually, the thought patterns and mental habits that are being represented by those neural networks get stronger and become effortless and automatic."

The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain that is responsible for attention and self-control. It regulates our limbic system, which is the emotional control-centre. This part of the brain doesn't fully develop until we reach our mid to late twenties, meaning children and youth have an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex. This explains why teens tend to be emotionally reactive and why adults seldom understand their behaviour.

Mindfulness is interesting because it engages the prefrontal cortex. So when children and youth engage in mindfulness activities, they're activating that part of their brain that isn't yet firing. Research shows that mindfulness education helps increase attention, emotional regulation, stress management, self-esteem, sleep, as well as the sense of calmness. It also decreases hyperactivity and impulsiveness, anger problems, anxiety and depression.

We've all heard the saying, "All I really needed to know, I learned in kindergarten." So why aren't we incorporating this very basic and foundational skill of mindfulness in Alberta schools? Generation Z is faced with a level of stress and expectation that other generations haven't experienced and mindfulness is a research-backed mechanism for changing the way we regulate our emotions, dealing with chaos and reacting in stressful situations.

Tell us what you think about the concept of mindfulness. Use the hashtag #ABmindfulness and let's start a discussion on Twitter.

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#### GET STARTED

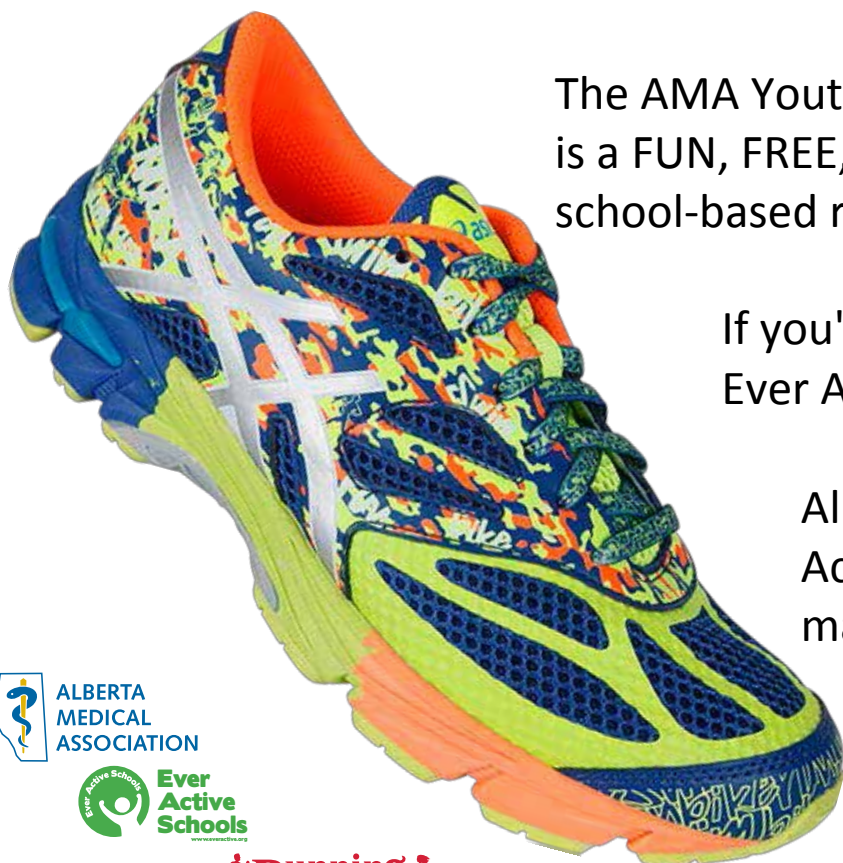
We suggest checking out the following resources if you would like more information:

- <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/>
- *The Mindful Teen*, by Dr. Dzung Vo.





# Put Spring in your steps... with the Youth Run Club



The AMA Youth Run Club (YRC)  
is a FUN, FREE, FLEXIBLE  
school-based running program.

If you'd like to start a YRC,  
Ever Active Schools can help!

Already have a school run club?  
Access free YRC resources and  
make it even better.



**Join the 17,000 Alberta students anticipated to be running this year!**

## ***Did you know?***

AMA YRC participants **surpass provincial and national averages for physical activity.**

**86%** of YRC participants felt more supported to make healthier choices.

**77%** of YRC participants felt less stressed.

**82%** of teachers said the YRC helped engage students who are not traditionally active.

**Free resources, incentives and support provided**

**For more information or to register:**

[www.everactive.org/alberta-medical-association-youth-run-club](http://www.everactive.org/alberta-medical-association-youth-run-club)