



EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS

21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners Project: Evaluation Report

Jill Osler, MSc
For Ever Active Schools
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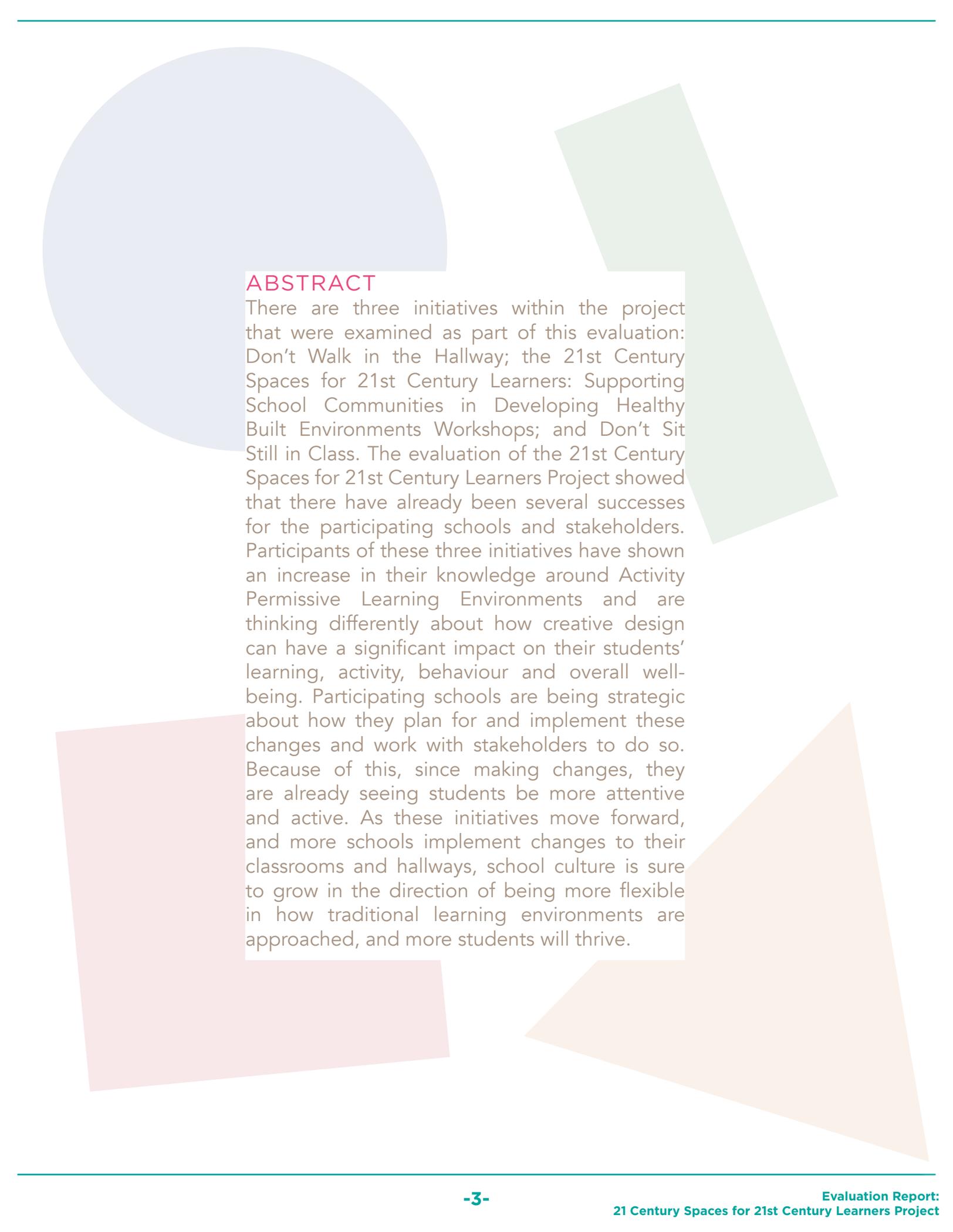


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Report Prepared by Jill Osler
Thank you to the Recreation and Physical Activity Division of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism
for supporting this initiative. Working together to build an active Alberta.





ABSTRACT

There are three initiatives within the project that were examined as part of this evaluation: Don't Walk in the Hallway; the 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners: Supporting School Communities in Developing Healthy Built Environments Workshops; and Don't Sit Still in Class. The evaluation of the 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners Project showed that there have already been several successes for the participating schools and stakeholders. Participants of these three initiatives have shown an increase in their knowledge around Activity Permissive Learning Environments and are thinking differently about how creative design can have a significant impact on their students' learning, activity, behaviour and overall well-being. Participating schools are being strategic about how they plan for and implement these changes and work with stakeholders to do so. Because of this, since making changes, they are already seeing students be more attentive and active. As these initiatives move forward, and more schools implement changes to their classrooms and hallways, school culture is sure to grow in the direction of being more flexible in how traditional learning environments are approached, and more students will thrive.

INTRODUCTION

Ever Active Schools (EAS) provides provincial leadership that promotes and supports healthy, active school communities. EAS accomplishes this mandate by providing learning opportunities, communication and knowledge exchange, developing resources and being a catalyst for collaboration and partnerships supporting the healthy school community.

APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION

EAS engaged an external consultant (Jill Osler) to complete an evaluation of the 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners Project. There are three initiatives within that were examined, Don't Walk in the Hallway, the 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners: Supporting School Communities in Developing Healthy Built Environments Workshops, and Don't Sit Still in Class. The purpose of the evaluation was to explore the process and impact in the participating school communities around Activity Permissive Learning Environments (APLE), designing spaces, students physical activity, sedentary behaviour and focus, stakeholder's readiness to participate and more.

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE COMPLETED FOR THE EVALUATION:

1. Don't Walk in the Hallway: Survey with those who have purchased a Don't Walk In The Hallway (DWITH) set and a case study with one person who completed the survey as follow-up for deeper discussion.
2. 21st Century Learners Workshop: Survey with participants from the workshops held by EAS on Activity Permissive Learning and interviews as follow-up to the survey for deeper discussion.
3. Don't Sit Still in Class(DSSIC): Interviews with people who are trying to set up spaces in their schools but haven't been able to due to timing.

DON'T WALK IN THE HALLWAY: SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

METHODS: Survey with five participants and one case study interview by phone

PURPOSE: The DWITH sets come with floor decals in different shapes and colours and are used in the school hallways to encourage movement for students, they come with a resource package. The purpose of this evaluation was to explore to what extent schools that have purchased the sets have met the outcomes of the initiative so far.

OUTCOMES:

1. Schools having ownership over the design structure
2. Staff at participating schools have an increased awareness and knowledge about the benefits of APLE and how school design can increase PA
3. There are increased opportunities for students to be active during the school day at participating schools.
4. Students are more physically active at school.
5. Increased attention, focus and concentration of students.
6. Other unintended outcomes that have arisen from having the set.



SURVEY FINDINGS

An online survey was done with 5 participants who have purchased the DWITH set. Of the 5 participants, 3 have installed the set and 2 have not yet installed it. Below are the findings of that survey:

1. Who designed the patterns for your Don't Walk in the Hallway (DWITH) Set?	
Answer Options	Response Count
Teacher	3
Parents	1
Students	0
Other (please specify)*	1

*Other: school board health promoter

2. Since my purchase of the DWITH Resource Package:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A) My understanding of the benefits of Activity Permissive Learning Environments has increased	0	4	1	0	0
B) My understanding of how school design can increase physical activity has increased since we purchased the DWITH set	3	2	0	0	0

- The majority of participants strongly agree or agree that the purchase of the DWITH resource package has both increased their understanding of APLE and school design's impact on physical activity.

3. Since we installed our DWITH set:						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Have Not Installed
A) Students at our school have more opportunities to be active during the school day	0	3	0	0	0	2
B) Students at our school are more physically active at school	0	3	0	0	0	2

- All 3 participants that have installed the DWITH set agree that since the installation students both have more chances to be active and are more active.

4. How many students do you estimate have been impacted by the installation if the resource set?

- An average of 140 students have been impacted per school.

5. Other comments (sample):

- I bought these because I was tired of stopping kids from running full blast down the hallway and crashing into me and my little students. It did the trick. The kids are so busy having fun with the floor decals they don't run full blast but hop, skip, twirl, jump which slows them down to a safe speed in the hall.
- We have an extremely high amount of challenging children and they love these. Great for counting, colours, and pacing speed of steps.
- They are great for walking in a line and making room for another group to get by.
- We also catch the teachers having fun.

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

One phone interview was done with a health promoter who works with many schools within a school division in Alberta. The interviewee has worked with schools that have installed the DWITH sets. The following are the key themes that emerged through the interview.

THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR AND DESIGN OF THE DWITH SET

- Having a plan for installation and use, and following it, is a key method to staying focused on and engaged with using the Set.
- Each school needs to create a customized plan for how they will use the Set to meet their unique needs. Within each school, each classroom should have a plan as to how they will use it as well to ensure commitment.
- Have students participate in the design of the Set to ensure engagement. This contributes to the development in students of leadership, creativity and communication skills, as well as the learning of fundamental movements.

CASE STUDY FINDINGS CONT'D

BENEFITS OF INSTALLING THE SET:

INCREASE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Having the Set installed contributes to an increase in physical activity by providing more opportunities for students to move throughout the day. Having the classroom-specific plan means that when the students see the circuit, they know they have to be moving. It is a good tool for inside recess.
- Inspires everyone in the school, not just students, to be a little more active.
- The Set helps the students to gain control over their behaviour, it is a great way to self regulate emotions for students with learning disabilities.
- Students learn in the classroom that being active helps with their own learning, so this is one tool for implementing that concept.
- "Integrating physical activity, so students aren't sitting down all day, helps the brain to be able to learn a little bit better. Students move more and learn more." -participant

SCHOOL CULTURE

- Majority of stakeholders are very supportive when they know the outcome of having more students being more active. This helps to move this initiative forward.
- Younger teachers are very supportive, however older teachers tend to be less supportive, more traditional, and not as ready for change to the classroom.
- Parents are really supportive, as the question of health is always really important to them, and they see this as a good tool.

OVERALL THEMES AND DISCUSSION

The following key points emerged as common highlights of both the survey and case study:

1. Schools are doing their own unique designs with the DWITH set. They have ownership over how they set up their decals and how they are used which gives them stronger buy-in to the initiative.
2. Planning for use of DWITH is a key component of it being a successful initiative. Pre-determining a purpose for using the set (e.g. reducing sedentary activity, increasing concentration) gives a focus to the implementation and encourages other stakeholders, including teachers and administration, to buy-in. Involving students in the design leads to them being more engaged with using the set once it is installed.
3. Strategic school design using the DWITH set increases physical activity in students, and even encourages teachers to be more active. It allows for more opportunities to be active throughout the day.
4. Adding more movement into students days by installing the set, increases their focus and emotional regulation. The students are given permission to be playful and active which leads to better behavioural and learning outcomes.

21ST CENTURY LEARNERS WORKSHOPS: SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

METHODS: survey with 33 participants and 3 interviews by phone

PURPOSE: Workshops were hosted to bring together teachers to brainstorm and workshop ideas on APLE, and discuss some promising practices. The purpose of this evaluation was to explore if the outcomes of the initiative were met.

OUTCOMES:

1. Increase understanding of the common principles and best practices with APLE.
2. Collect ideas that will contribute to a supplemental resource for the Don't Walk in the Hallway (DWITH) resource. Such as energizers, activities, and subject area links.
3. Design ideas for the ideal classroom.
4. Collect ideas on how to create APLE's on a dime for our Don't Sit still in Class initiative.
5. Participants have an increased knowledge and awareness about the benefits of APLE, and how school design can increase PA.
6. Other unintended outcomes that arose at or since the Workshop.



SURVEY FINDINGS

An online survey was done with 33 participants who participated in the workshop. 32 participants were from the education sector, and 1 from the health sector. Participants worked with all grade levels from pre-kindergarten to grade 12, with the largest numbers working with kindergarten to grade 8. There was representation from 11 school jurisdictions. Below are the findings of that survey:

1. This session enabled me to:					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A) Identify and form new partnerships, collaboration opportunities and support networks.	6	22	3	1	1
B) Reinforce existing partnerships, collaboration opportunities and support networks	10	19	2	1	1

- The majority of participants strongly agree or agree that the workshop served to facilitate the forming of new partnerships and the reinforcement of existing ones.

2. Please estimate the number of collaborative partnerships developed or reinforced through your attendance at this workshop:

- Total of 106 partnerships were identified by 33 participants.
- Average of approximately 3 collaborative partnerships per participant.

3. As a result of participating in the 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners workshop:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A) My understanding of the common principles, best practices and benefits of Activity Permissive Learning Environments (APLE) increased	12	18	0	1	0
B) My understanding of how school design can increase physical activity increased	11	18	2	0	0
C) My understanding of how school design can decrease sedentary behaviour increased	17	11	3	0	0
D) I learned from others about activities I can use in my school to increase APLE	16	12	2	1	0
E) I learned ideas about the design of the ideal APLE Classroom that I will use in my school	15	13	2	1	0

- The majority of participants strongly agree or agree that their overall learning about APLE increased. There were also very positive results for the outcomes of this initiative around the impact of design on physical activity and sedentary behaviour, as well as activities and designs they can use in their school and classroom.

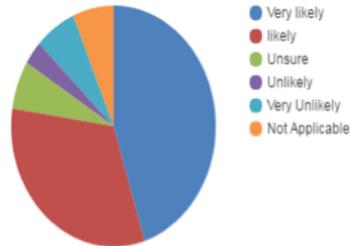
4. What was one thing you learned that you will take back to your school and use in your practice?

KEY THEMES:

- Involving the students in design engages them in the process.
- Design of classroom needs to be made to fit all learners needs.
- Importance of design, including alternative seating, for increasing movement.
- Taking movement breaks throughout the day.
- Tie in the DWITH decals with school curriculum.
- Connection between movement and learning for students.
- Involve more stakeholders in this journey through discussing APLE with them.

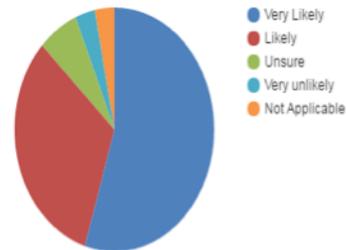
5.

What is the likelihood that you will use what you learned, to implement changes at your school toward the creation of an APLE in next month?



6.

What is the likelihood that you will use what you learned, to implement changes at your school toward the creation of an APLE in the next 5 months?



- The majority of participants felt it was very likely or likely that they would implement what they learned at their school in the next month, and an even larger number of participants felt it was very likely or likely that they would implement what they learned at their school in the 5 next months. The greater number for 5 months is likely due to the intention to implement changes in the new school year.

7. How many students do you estimate will be impacted by what you learned?

- Total number of students impacted by the 31 participants who responded: 5234 (However 7 participants wrote that it will impact the whole school, which would add many more students to the total.)
- Average of 218 students will be impacted per school (for the 24 participants who gave a specific number)

8. Do you have any additional comments about the quality or relevance of the sessions you attended? Please describe.

KEY IDEAS:

- Great opportunity for networking and collaborating with other participants.
- Would have liked EAS to provide more research and ideas, for them not to just come from other participants.
- Powerful and engaging session with a great speaker.
- Hoping Administration will support their work in moving this forward.
- Experimenting with templates and having the workstations to move around were good strategies for learning.
- Appreciated the focus on addressing the needs of learners, things that may have been somewhat pushed to the sidelines due to limitations/ constraints faced in the job.

9. As an individual or organization, what do you need to further support your work?

KEY IDEAS:

- Sharing back of all the ideas that were presented would be useful.
- A communication system where ongoing sharing can be done through ideas and photos would help encourage sustainability.
- Would like support for convincing Administration to provide resources and the ability to make the changes in the classroom.
- Access to financial resources to purchase equipment.
- Ongoing learning opportunities from EAS regarding APLE.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Three phone interviews were done with workshop participants as follow up to the survey to explore their learning in depth as well as unintended outcomes. The following are the key themes that emerged through the interviews.

1. Motivation to attend workshop and implement APLE

GETTING STUDENTS MOVING AS A MOTIVATOR TO PARTICIPATE

- Teachers don't like kids sitting and being quiet behind their desks, want them to move.
- Kids don't like sitting in their desks so wanted to find better ways to get them moving.
- Idea of students not walking in the hallway really intriguing.

STUDENTS LEARNING AS A MOTIVATOR TO PARTICIPATE

- With high needs students, having different ways to rearrange classroom to allow for movement, leads to them being more engaged in learning.
- Have seen that with hyperactive kids when changes are made in the classroom, they calmed down.
- Want to promote the healthy learning environment. Want kids to learn about being active and to understand the importance of lifelong activity.

STRENGTHS OF ACTIVITY PERMISSIVE LEARNING

- Kids work better together.
- With hyperactive kids, when they walk and move they, they have more concentration.
- All students get more physical activity throughout the day.
- When kids move their brains function better and they more engaged.
- Kids feel safer having a welcoming environment with a variety of different learning and seating styles.
- Students are happier when they get more exercise, which means they want to come back to school more.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS CONT'D

2. Implementing and Sustaining APLE

MAKING THE CHANGES TO THE CLASSROOM TO STAY ENGAGED

- Teachers bringing their own flexible furniture and accessories to the classroom, so they feel more connected to the changes.
- Motivation comes from actually implementing the changes, such as getting rid of desks and getting new tables, and seeing the impacts.
- Ensuring that classroom stuff that is not needed is removed to focus on the usable furniture.
- Getting input from students on classroom set-up helps with everyone's engagement.

BUY-IN FROM ADMINISTRATION

- Principal needs to participate (e.g. a principal found sit-stand desks for low cost from companies that aren't doing well in the economy.)
- Principal needs to be really open to new ideas.
- Implementing APLE when the principal isn't bought-in is very hard.
- Parents, students follow along with what Administration does.
- Administration needs to fill other stakeholders in on APLE.
- Principal encouraging teachers that are involved in APLE to attend the workshop is important.
- Administration needs to allocate a budget to APLE.

BUY-IN FROM TEACHERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- Lots of teachers that want to try it, so collaborating.
- Some teachers are not enthusiastic about APLE, typically older and stricter ones, they want to keep with traditional teaching set-up.
- Talk to other teachers about the benefits and how-to of implementing APLE and show them what is being done to get them to buy-in.
- Parents are happy as long as the students keep learning.
- Students go back and tell parents it was fun, which engages them in being supportive.
- Caretakers should be involved and educated that the DWITH decals don't take off flooring and paint.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS CONT'D

PLANNING FOR CLASSROOM CHANGES

- Took pictures of the designs at the workshop, so after summer they will put the decals down.
- Child-centered design for movement, excitement and comfort.
- Used the planning sheets from the workshop to design their room, served as a blueprint.
- Figure out how you are going to use the furniture and the DWITH set beforehand (e.g. use DWITH between classes, getting kids to move more, more during the end of the day when they get lethargic.)
- Work with other teachers who are doing this in their schools.
- Create a budget and request funding from Principal before school year.
- Have Ever Active Schools come to the school and talk to staff about the program.

APPLE CHAMPIONS

- There is a need for whomever is the champion for APPLE in the school to be passionate about physical activity for both themselves and for students.
- The champion should feel an emotional connection to the benefits of APPLE work.
- "That's what I want in my life, to be active and lead a healthy life, and being able to do that for the kids, to be a role model for them, it fills your heart, it makes you whole." -Interview participant
- Being an energetic person leads to other teachers come into their rooms to see what they are doing. The energy is contagious.
- Champions should typically be social types who have open door policies.
- Would like the opportunity to be offered ongoing professional development for APPLE from EAS.

3. Collaboration and Communication

COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS WHO ARE IMPLEMENTING APPLE (AT WORKSHOP AND ONGOING)

- Participating in the digital community for sharing ideas about APPLE (e.g. pinterest and twitter) will help with sustaining the changes.
- Went to workshop with other teachers from school, keeping the dialogue going with them.
- Through conversations it was found that workshop was seen to be the best Professional Development they participated in all year. Absolutely loved the afternoon-so hands on.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS CONT'D

LEARNING FROM OTHERS ABOUT CREATIVE CLASSROOM SET-UP

- Learned ideas about flexible seating.
- Creative ideas were explored and shared amongst participants (e.g. car tires painted and used as seating with cushion.)
- Good alternatives that aren't too expensive were shared.
- Learned about DWITH sets.

OVERALL THEMES AND DISCUSSION

THE FOLLOWING KEY POINTS EMERGED AS COMMON HIGHLIGHTS OF BOTH THE SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS.

1. From participation in the workshop, the understanding of APLE, as well as the knowledge of the benefits of the approach increased. Participants talked about an enhanced awareness of the positive impact of APLE on students' learning, behaviour and physical activity.
2. There was a greater understanding of how strategic school design can both increase physical activity and reduce sedentary time.
3. Participants felt that the opportunity to collaborate at the workshop and learn from others about activities and design encouraged them to implement changes. To sustain the changes, ongoing communication beyond the workshop was highlighted for continued sharing amongst participants as well as with teachers and administration at their schools to encourage their buy-in as they learn the benefits.
4. Placing the needs of students as the focus of implementation of APLE was seen as a strength of the workshop. It was felt that as long as everyone understands that APLE will enhance the wellbeing of students, that buy-in from stakeholders will follow.
5. The process of planning at the workshop was seen as a start to the implementation of changes to their schools. They felt as though the worksheets and discussions of planning increased the likelihood they will follow-through and make changes.
6. Each school needs a champion who has a passion for APLE, and the motivation to try new things such as creative classroom design and hallway sets.

READINESS OF THOSE TRYING TO SET UP SPACES WITH “DON’T SIT STILL IN CLASS”: SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

METHOD: 2 interviews by phone

PURPOSE: This interview was with 2 participants that are setting up spaces with the DSSIC initiative but hadn't yet been able to set it up due to timing of furniture delivery. The purpose of this evaluation was to understand what contributed to their readiness and buy in to the initiative, what culture and supports in their school made them so ready to modify a classroom, and what contributed to their early adoption of the idea of “alternate” spaces, and creative design.



INTERVIEW FINDINGS

1. Readiness to Participate

DSSIC TO BUILD ON OTHER WELLNESS WORK IN SCHOOLS

- Other initiatives such as the Wellness Fund, Shaping the Future, and DWITH were participated in first and DSSIC is the next step.
- Ever Active Schools (EAS) inspired them to participate.
- Want to build on what they already have, going to have standing workstations in every class.

FLEXIBLE EXPECTATIONS

- Being open to timelines changing meant motivation was maintained despite delays.
- Felt that when EAS was ready they would be ready.
- Having the extra time gave more time to plan implementation.

PLANNING

- The extra time was an opportunity to engage in planning activities for DSSIC.
- Participation in the 21st Century Learners Workshop is beneficial to being ready to implement changes.
- Need to brainstorm ideas with colleagues before implemented.
- Use of the resources from the workshop to see what works best for each school.
- Listen to what happens in other schools (e.g. using exercise balls).
- Need to establish ground rules for implementing DSSIC, including how is this going to work day to day and how to start it off.

2. Early Adoption of Idea

CREATIVITY AS INSPIRATION

- The potential to be creative inspired the participants to want to implement alternate spaces.
- Looking for different ways to incorporate APLE into the curriculum.

MOTIVATION TO TRY SOMETHING NEW

- Wanting to try DSSIC because it is new and exciting, with a belief that they could successfully implement it.
- Interest in trying new experiments.
- Having something new to try is a way to get buy-in with other stakeholders. Because when others hear about it or see it they also want to use it.

PASSION FOR APLE

- Firm belief that student wellness needs to be a part of every school.
- Like DWITH many others are worried about chaos and lack of routine, but the opposite is true, as it leads to more focus.
- A sense of excitement around the Initiative and the idea of having others excited was a trait that leads to early adoption and commitment.
- Excitement for the idea feeds into kids excitement.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS CONT'D

3. Motivation to Participate

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

- A key driver for the participants early adoption of the idea of creative classroom design was the potential positive impact on their students.
- Kids benefit from moving around more in a flexible classroom.
- Felt that it's going to help kids learn and get excited.
- Kids learn in different ways and there has to be a different way for them.
- It's also a health initiative, not just about learning. Kids aren't as active as they should be, so opportunities to be active leads to better health outcomes.
- Allows participants to meet students where they are at; it means not making them change to be successful.

CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENT

- The idea of creating an active environment was a factor in the participants buy-in to the initiative.
- Wanting to see if those who are less attentive might become more by creating a different learning atmosphere.
- Students will get excited about something new, which will make it easier for learning.
- Exploration happens with the perspective of what adjustments can be made in the environment to help students and create a positive school culture.

STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

- Having the support and participation of other stakeholders in the school community is a key aspect of the commitment to implement APLE. The more staff that can be involved the more strategies to be developed.
- The principal is one of the leaders of the school and for buy-in throughout the school, they need to be involved.
- High level of teacher buy-in is needed to move it forward and have it become school-wide.
- Teachers will be more supportive when they have the ability to customize their classroom for themselves.
- For support from janitors, you need to listen to them, give them input, and show them all the equipment.
- With parents, talk about it at parent council, really see the value about it. The kids tell their parents about.
- EAS is a leader in this work and has put in a lot of time into it. Their support is pivotal for staying current with the research and approaches.

DISCUSSION

THE FOLLOWING KEY POINTS EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS.

1. Participants were early adopters to the idea of creative design and alternate spaces in the classroom. They are risk-takers who are wanting to try something new.
2. The core values of the participants align with APLE, they are physically active, passionate, and creative, and therefore saw the benefits from the beginning. They appreciate the idea of having an open and flexible classroom environment.
3. These early adopters place students as the focus of the impact of APLE which serves to motivate them to make the changes to the classroom as soon as they are able.
4. The planning and designing process of their classrooms for DSSIC is being done with intention and strategy, so having more time for this has been an unexpected benefit.
5. The commitment to modifying their classrooms was enhanced by strong stakeholder support. Participants felt that having teachers, principals, janitors, parents and EAS on their side has kept them motivated.

OVERALL PROJECT THEMES

THE FOLLOWING KEY IDEAS EMERGED AS CENTRAL TO ALL THREE EVALUATIONS.

1. Understanding the benefits of APLE is key to being motivated to make changes.
2. Having a strategic plan and intention to implement changes is imperative to effectively moving forward .
3. Each school needs at least one champion who has a passion for and shares the core values of APLE. This champion serves as the early adopter who will take a risk, involve other stakeholders and start to change the whole school's environment.
4. Making the benefits for students the purpose for why this work is important was expressed by all. The participants all want to see students be more active, engaged, focused, and to enjoy school. Taking this approach is one that resonates with the majority of school stakeholders and is a good tool for getting others to buy-in.
5. Collaboration is key to creativity in the classroom to learn from one another and work with one another's strengths. This can be between different classrooms in the same school or between classrooms from different schools that are working toward the same goal of implementing APLE.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The evaluation of the 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners Project showed that there have already been several successes. There are three initiatives within that were examined, Don't Walk in the Hallway, the 21st Century Spaces for 21st Century Learners: Supporting School Communities in Developing Healthy Built Environments Workshops, and Don't Sit Still in Class. Participants of these three initiatives have increased their knowledge around APLE and are thinking differently about how creative design can have a significant impact on their students' learning, activity, behaviour and overall well-being. They are being strategic about how they plan for and implement these changes and work with stakeholders to do so. Because of this, since making changes, they are already seeing students be more attentive and active. As these initiatives move forward, and more schools implement changes to their classrooms and hallways, school culture is sure to grow to be more flexible in how traditional learning environments are approached, and more students will thrive.

