

healthy schools ALBERTA

FALL 2020 • ISSUE #14



Supporting healthy school communities.

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**Feature Story: The Continuation
of Parental Engagement**

MEET OUR TEAM

For this edition, we're showing appreciation for the little things that keep us happy and healthy. Check out our team's favourite moments from 2020, and send us yours using [#EAS2020HappyMoments](#) [@EverActiveAB](#)



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IN THIS ISSUE

2020 sure has been a year for the history books.

It might not have gone the way anybody expected, but there is so much to be proud of! In this edition of Healthy Schools Alberta, we explore the value of land-based learning, positive psychology and building resilience, and legacies built since the world experienced a massive shift.

Do you have a story of your own to share? Get in touch! Please reach us at info@everactive.org or [@everactiveab](#) on social media. We love feedback, questions and stories!

~ The Ever Active Schools Team



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PLAN
YOUR YEAR

2020/2021 Healthy School Community Events

Ever Active Schools is committed to safe practices around public health. While we are optimistic in planning our events this year, we will adapt to meet or exceed public health guidelines as information becomes available.

SHAPING THE FUTURE 2021

January 28 - January 30, 2021 | Lake Louise - Treaty 7 Territory

Join us for the 12th annual Shaping the Future conference! Come to Lake Louise to learn and share all about Comprehensive School Health, with topics for beginners to experts, in the beautiful Canadian Rockies.

www.everactive.org/stf

RESILIENCY SUMMIT: RISE UP!

May 3 - 4, 2021 | Camp Nakamun - Treaty 6 Territory

Join Ever Active Schools and Indigenous youth, educators and community members at Camp Nakamun for a two-day gathering for the purpose of sharing activities, celebrating stories and practices regarding health, wellness, and resilience.

www.resilientschools.ca/resiliency-summit

TEACHERS' CONVENTIONS

February-March 2021 | Multiple Alberta Locations

Ever Active Schools and our provincial partners are looking forward to presenting at Teachers' Conventions again this year! Look for our School Health and Wellness Symposia and Health and Phys. Ed Institutes at a convention near you.

www.everactive.org/professional-learning

ALBERTA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION YOUTH RUN CLUB

Whenever You Want | Wherever You Are

Join the Alberta Medical Association Youth Run Club this fall to get your students moving. Receive all of the resources and supports needed to start a free, fun and flexible club!

www.amayouthrunclub.com

Visit www.everactive.org for the latest information on Ever Active Schools events and project work.



REFLECTION, GRATITUDE, GROWTH AND THE FUTURE

My mom’s birthday is September 3rd, and I remember how excited she would always get at this time of year. It was back to school, back to routine and schedules. As a child I never shared her optimism for summer’s end; but as the years go on I find myself with the same enjoyment of September. This year, I am excited to share big news.

Ever Active Schools is changing from a special project within the Alberta Teachers’ Association to a standalone national charity. We will keep the name Ever Active Schools and continue to support the health and well-being of Alberta school communities. Being a national charity will allow us to pursue additional areas of growth, capacity, and impact, and alongside partners can expand our borders.

REFLECTION

Ever Active Schools began in 2001, stemming from the leadership of the Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC), to provide professional learning opportunities for health and physical education teachers throughout Alberta. There are too many people to thank; Ever Active Schools is a result of committed leadership, dedicated employees and thousands of hours of volunteerism from HPEC. With a great deal of time and expertise, this work has expanded, and our vision is to ensure all students belong to healthy school communities that enable optimal health and learning. We believe in the health and wellness of everyone.

As we reflect on where we have been, the environment in which we work has changed. It seems like right now change is expected and constant. We have seen the importance of wellness within our school communities and the societal push for wellness as a foundation of our educational systems. If a child is not healthy, mentally and physically, and does not have a sense of belonging, they will not be in an optimal environment to learn. Over the past 20 years we have seen collective agreement that health promotion should live in schools. Schools are a major influence in both individual and societal wellness.

GRATITUDE

I would describe the Alberta Teachers’ Association as the quiet yet immensely supportive parent of Ever Active Schools. For 20 years the ATA has helped us with payroll, human resources and steady guidance. Most recently, through this year of transition, Ever Active Schools is grateful to Brian Andrais and Dennis Theobald for their support. Previous support came from Dr. Mark Yurick, who I feel I need to mention for his selfless commitment to the people and work of Ever Active Schools. Also, much gratitude to Nancy Luyckfassel, who has guided our work around professional learning and inspired us with her resilience and positivity. We are excited to maintain a strong partnership with the ATA and continue to work collaboratively on teachers’ conventions, staff well-being and other initiatives.

GROWTH

Growth is the fun part. With a committed board of directors providing governance

and direction, the shift to becoming a charity allows for enhanced impact and a greater range of possibilities. We are developing new mentoring opportunities for teachers and school communities to build capacity for wellness through a comprehensive school health framework. We can provide expertise to build around workplace safety and staff well-being; positive mental well-being for all; active living and physical literacy for all; inclusive physical activity; risky play through loose parts play; unique activities in winter and ice environments; recess; supporting resilient schools and Indigenous students; and other health priorities.

Ever Active Schools will also continue to grow in areas of emerging need. COVID-19 has showed us that we don’t always know the next challenge. We will provide ongoing and deeper support for wellness so that communities are healthier and more resilient.

Growth and the future will also continue to be a collaborative approach. Working alongside like-minded organizations, we can address issues as a collective group, understanding that we are all very much “in this together”.

Lastly, the Ever Active Schools board or directors has decided what the foundation and values of the charity will be. We will operate with the values of Relationships, Innovation, Diversity, Contributing and Well-being. The way we engage partners, work with schools, and support communities will lead with those values.

YOU GOT THIS

When COVID-19 shut down our lives as we knew it, we reached out to our friends, partners and internal team in an effort to say that we were thinking of and care for them. We sent out a very simple message that they were strong, awesome and the most capable of navigating through our current times. We hold optimism that school communities and the work we build post-COVID will be better, and we are excited for Ever Active Schools becoming a charity and playing a role.

Personally, I am grateful for the people and schools I get to work with every day, and I am excited for the chapters to come. **Mom was right: September is awesome.**



– Brian Torrance, Director,
Ever Active Schools

A special thank you to our board of directors, who have supported the transition and future of Ever Active Schools:

- Dr. Doug Gleddie
- Dr. Lauren Sulz
- Ms. Nancy Luyckfassel
- Dr. Richard Lewanczuk
- Ms. Maureen Parker
- Mayor Bob Young
- Dr. Mark Yurick
- Ms. Elisha O’Lain



Photo: Dene Tha' community members celebrate the launch of the local Greening Project

LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP THROUGH LAND-BASED LEARNING

By Matt Letkeman, Ever Active Schools

Like their counterparts all over the province, teachers and staff at Dene Tha' Community School (DTCS) in Chateh in Northwest Alberta have worked hard to find creative ideas to support, encourage and teach their students outside of a traditional school setting. Home visits, food drops, and online and radio-based learning have all been utilized to continue supporting and advancing healthy education in the community.

Another one of the school's ideas was a land-based learning initiative geared towards greening the community of Chateh: a community garden. This project grew out of an already-in-motion program in collaboration with the University of Guelph, Bees@School: school classrooms gain hands-on scientific experience and collect valuable data, which they send back to the University in the Fall. After setting up Chateh's first Bee Hotel at the school, staff realized that their new guests needed a more accommodating outdoor space. The principal and three teachers hatched a plan: in collaboration with Ever Active Schools, they would greenify the school community through a community garden built from old tires!

On May 28, Dene Tha' Community School officially launched their Greening Project. A local Elder offered a prayer and ceremony to bless the seeds, plants and fertile growth of the garden; the community came together to transform tires into beautifully paint-

ed planters, sow the first tomato, cucumber and herb seedlings, and finally, they erected a proud community sign: "We are a Resilient School!" The day was capped with a small, physically distanced barbecue to celebrate the life and food that will grow in the months to come.

Dene Tha' Community School truly is a Resilient School. The COVID-19 pandemic caused many cancellations and adaptations to their programs and projects. DTCS, along with 30 other First Nation and Métis schools in Alberta, had been working to build a youth-led initiative called the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP). The program builds on the strengths, talents and natural (and often undiscovered) leadership skills of First Nations youth. During either an after-school or lunch-time program, older students, typically in high school, spend time with and mentor younger students, usually in elementary. The mentors learn how to design and implement a weekly program: they prepare and serve a healthy snack, plan and lead active games, and facilitate teaching circles. Sometimes the mentors are the ones to share teachings, and other times they invite local Elders, educators and parents to share knowledge.

A team of 15 students and staff from DTCS attended a training session to prepare them to create their IYMP program, and this group was instrumental in carrying forward Chateh's Greening Project. Several of the student mentors were involved in the launch and have started their own individual family seed kits to grow over the summer. IYMP, through relationships and mentorship, aims to teach youth the value of belonging and generosity. A health champion at the school, Ms. Edel, called the Greening Project "a physical manifestation of nurturing and caring for something." Beyond the values of belonging and generosity, IYMP serves as a platform for youth to learn about the importance of independence and mastery. Another school health champion, Yolanda, said the Greening Project is another mentorship opportunity for the students to learn about responsibility while teaching their peers, siblings and younger students how to care for plants and nature.

Although the cancellations and restrictions of COVID-19 came with many challenges for the school and community in Chateh, like many, they have come together, inspired by new ideas of change to support the continued growth of their healthy school and community. The Greening Project has been such a success that the high school students will be taking to the earth to plant their graduation legacy in 2020, with fresh seeds and soil! ■



Photo: Dene Tha' community members paint tires to be used as planters in the Greening Project

MY PATH PROGRAM

By Natasha Rychlik

My Path Learning Society is a non-profit organization in partnership with the Parkland Public School Division to provide an alternative educational choice for families in the Tri Region.

The My Path Program provides a holistic learning approach that fosters strong connections between home, school and community to support grade 1-9 students in the areas of physical education, arts, technology and health.

The program is a collaborative design with input and support from parents, educators, community organizations, program specialists, and municipalities.

The My Path Program began its third-year on August 31, 2020. For more information, please visit mypathprogram.com or send an email to info@mypathprogram.com.

OPEN YOUR DOOR AND EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS

By Aiofe Cahill, Principal, St. Luke Catholic School

I love to travel and I love to learn. When I saw the Alberta Teachers' Association had a short-term administrator exchange opportunity I thought, this is for me!

I was partnered with a principal from Iceland. My excitement grew; I started researching the area right away, and helped my counterpart plan her trip to Canada.

On October 25, 2019, I picked Ingileif up from the airport for her visit, the first half of our exchange. I was filled with excitement, and some trepidation, for the adventure ahead; but from the moment we met, I knew we were kindred spirits.

We enjoyed 10 days together, visiting division schools, sightseeing, and experiencing Canadian culture. Ingileif spent time at our school getting to know the staff and students and answering questions about Iceland. As we walked the hallways, I would ask, "is that how you would have handled that situation in Iceland?", or "what would you have done differently?" Having an international colleague to reflect with in the moment provided me with new perspectives.

Ingileif enjoyed a unique experience, too: she celebrated Halloween for the first time, carving pumpkins, dressing up, and trick-or-treating with my girls. We also enjoyed a weekend in Canmore hiking, sightseeing and talking like old friends.

This exchange was the best professional development I've ever experienced. COVID-19 has temporarily paused the second half of our adventure, but I'm still just as eager to visit my new friend and discover what Iceland has to offer a Canadian principal. If you love meeting new people and learning, explore this opportunity. You will not regret it! ■



Left: Ingileif Ástvaldsdóttir;
right: Aiofe Cahill

Photo: Trail Tales makes its debut.



TRAIL TALES: STORIES THAT MOVE YOU

By Tracey Coutts and Scott Bailey, Ever Active Schools

Looking for a versatile, cost-effective way to increase physical activity and improve literacy in your school community? Well, have we got a tale for you. A Trail Tale, to be more precise.

Trail Tales launched in Parkland School Division 70 (PSD70) as a means to promote physical activity and literacy while enhancing the active travel experience for school communities. Storyboard kits, consisting of individual book pages on weather-proofed signs, were created and placed along popular walking routes to be read and enjoyed by active travellers.

Ever Active Schools, PSD70 and Stony Plain Regional Library collaborated to create the first kits, funded through the Alberta Traffic Safety Fund. Library expertise ensured that we honoured copyright laws and selected engaging books. We purchased two copies of each book (the books could not legally be reproduced), then dismantled them and pasted the pages on half-sheets of poster board. To welcome people to the experience and thank them for participating, we created two additional pages to bookend the story. We then numbered, laminated (to provide weather-proofing), and velcroed the poster board pages to corrugated lawn signs. Currently, the sets include English, French, and Cree language picture books and are housed in the Stony Plain Regional Library to facilitate public lending and engagement.

In Spring 2020, these kits became part of the Ever Active Schools' Physical Literacy Mentorship toolkit, popping up in school communities across the province to encourage active travel and daily physical activity. Through funding from Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, we equipped schools with kits that use an adhesive vinyl sleeve to allow for stories to be changed, providing an opportunity for student voice in book selection. The Be Fit for Life Network gave permission to display Leah Yardley's moving story, As Big as the Sky, As Tall as the Trees — a perfect fit for Trail Tales, since it includes movement prompts on each page!

Most of us have experienced stories that have moved us, but Trail Tales offers that opportunity in every sense of the word. ■



STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON WELLNESS IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

By Stephen Stublyk, Concordia University of Edmonton Graduate

At Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE), the Education Faculty has been working towards improved wellness for pre-service teachers since 2018. The faculty signed the Okanagan Charter for Health Promoting Colleges and Universities and became an active participant in the Teachers of Tomorrow project, a collaborative effort between the Werklund School of Education and Ever Active Schools, among others. Using the Comprehensive School Health (CSH) framework, this project asks, “How do we best prepare future teachers to address school wellness?”

CUE’s Direction

All four components of CSH are prevalent in the project: teaching and learning, social and physical environment, policy, and partnerships and services. Pre-service teachers gain increased self-efficacy toward CSH implementation in their future classrooms, and they enhance their own health and wellness throughout their two-year after-degree program. Through an embedded approach in all courses, comprehensive school health and student wellness emerged as a focal point in the CUE Faculty of Education learning outcomes.

Creating the Education Student Wellness Committee

Pre-service teachers interested in implementing the Teachers of Tomorrow project volunteered to create the Student Wellness Committee. Each committee member has a background, passion and high level of interest in wellness. The collective understanding is that being well was not simply focusing on any single dimension of wellness, like physical, social, emotional, or occupational, but rather finding a balance.

The committee’s goals include seeing CUE’s pre-service teachers graduating with a deep level of understanding of what it is to be well as both a student and a teacher, and obtaining access to quality resources to become wellness leaders in their classrooms, schools and communities.

Modelling CSH Beyond Teaching and Learning

Upon its creation, the Student Wellness Committee’s first task was to distribute a survey focusing on six dimensions of wellness, with the intent of using the results as a catalyst for student-centred activities. The results identified four areas of focus: ➤

high levels of stress, lack of physical activity, and need for enhancements to both the social and physical environments.

Wellness has to be felt and practiced by pre-service teachers as authentic learning experiences before it can be implemented into their future classrooms. The committee utilized small initiatives, such as leading mindfulness minutes and distributing stress-buster kits during exams; as well as hosted larger events. The mandatory Wellness Forum offered wellness-themed breakout sessions, a small trade show featuring campus and partner resources, and a student panel. Healthy Halloween utilized healthy snacks, embedded physical activity and a bulletin board full of ideas.

Thoughts from a Graduate

From an alumni perspective, I am proud of the forward motion created in such a short time. I am most excited to see what the next group of wellness leaders can offer to the program, and I know that CUE’s future teacher graduates will be healthier individuals, strong role models and school wellness leaders for students everywhere.

Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of all student committee members who shared their time, commitment and passion for wellness. We would also like to acknowledge the CUE Education faculty and staff, and in particular, Dr. Edgar Schmidt, Dean of Education, for the ongoing support of our Education Student Wellness Committee. ■



Quality wellness information is abundantly available; one must simply know where to look. It was important to the Student Wellness Committee to have a strong social media presence with easily accessible, quality content that keeps wellness top-of-mind. The committee’s Instagram account keeps students up to date with current initiatives, weekly wellness tips, CSH resources and empowering wellness messages.

TOOLS FOR RESILIENCE

By Dana Fulwiler, Ever Active Schools

“Like tiny seeds with potent power to push through tough ground and become mighty trees, we hold innate reserves of unimaginable strength. We are resilient.”
— Catherine DeVrye, *The Gift of Nature*

We. Are. Resilient. We can navigate adversity, grow in the face of challenges, and take risks. Not only are we wired to overcome challenges, resilience can also be learned and taught. It is not something we either have or we don’t, and as Dr. Ann Masten’s research on development suggests, resilience is common and results from ordinary processes - she calls this ordinary magic¹.

Resilience is a multifaceted human process with a range of lived experience and research to help us unpack what it means to us, why it’s a powerful resource, and how to cultivate it. Studies on resilience training in schools show decreases in symptoms of depression and anxiety and improvements in optimism and healthy mindsets². Research identifies several protective factors to cultivate within ourselves and our students, including self-regulation, self-efficacy, connection, mental and emotional agility, self-awareness, physical health, and optimism³.

Optimism is often misunderstood as blind positivity, rather than realistic confidence that good things can and will happen. It’s considered a powerful resource for resilience and a mindset we can build. Optimistic people view the causes of negative events as temporary (vs permanent), specific (vs pervasive), and external (vs personal)⁴. Optimism allows us to not take things too personally, accept that “this too shall pass”, and approach challenging situations with compassion, curiosity, and a commitment to growth. This mindset can take practice. Below are a few prompts to help overcome our own mental barriers and cultivate optimism⁵:

How can I celebrate the goodness in myself and others?

Experiencing positive emotions through actions like gratitude and strengthening connections have a massive impact on our well-being and resilience (see the EAS online blog for more of the science). They energize us and help us to maintain perspective. To honour the goodness in ourselves, we can ask, “what did I do today that I’m grateful for, and/or proud of”?

What’s within my control?

This is a tricky and important one. Our natural tendency is toward the negative⁶. Often that energy and attention is wasted on things beyond our control, and since uncertainty impacts our well-being, it’s even more essential to be intentional in the ways we redirect our focus. In tough, overwhelming or uncertain times, we can say to ourselves, “one thing I can control is _____” — and then follow through.

Am I connected to reality?

Sometimes our minds cloud a clear answer. According to Dr. Karen Reivich, think- ➤

ing traps are patterns of thought that can narrow our view of the world around us and result in missed (or misunderstood) information. Two common thinking traps are catastrophizing and personalizing:

- Catastrophizing: imagining the worst possible scenario and getting stuck there. This often results in feeling anxious and overwhelmed. Use the mental cue, “breathe”, and the critical question, “what’s the evidence?”
- Personalizing: blaming adversity on yourself alone and internalizing the struggle. Often results in sadness, guilt, and/or withdrawal. Use the mental cue, “look outward”, and the critical question, “how are other circumstances contributing?”

These thoughts are counterproductive - I’m going to challenge them!

Real-time resilience is an evidence-based process to further challenge those thinking traps⁷. It helps shut down our unhelpful thoughts, redirect our focus, and build our confidence to rise to the occasion. It’s not about “thinking positive”, but rather challenging counterproductive thoughts head on. Think of an upcoming difficult situation, or something you’ve been worried about, and consider these real-time resilience prompts to quiet any negative self-talk:

- Evidence: that’s not true because ...
- Plan: if __ happens, I will __ ...
- Reframe: a more productive way to see this is ...
- Control: one thing I can control is ...
- Signature Strengths: I can use my character strength, X, to ...

Further exploration:

- Engage in UPenn’s free course, Resilience Skills in a Time of Uncertainty, on Coursera with Dr. Karen Reivich: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/resilience-uncertainty>
- Self-compassion is another research-based practice for cultivating resilience in real-time. Check out Dr. Kristin Neff’s website for more information and accessible tools: <https://self-compassion.org/>
- Eudaimonic by Design has curated free resilience resources based on science. Embodied resilience, motivation, meaning, belonging, flow, resilient grieving, and more: <https://www.eudaimonicbydesign.com/resilience-resources> ■

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Photo: A student creates art using sidewalk chalk.

#DPAEVERYDAY: THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEGACY FROM AT-HOME LEARNING

By Scott Bailey, Ever Active Schools

When schools moved into at-home learning this past spring, there was uncertainty about the role of physical activity, health and physical education. While some jurisdictions, notably Prince Edward Island, made well-being a pillar of their learning continuity plans, Alberta and other provinces did not provide much initial direction.

At Ever Active Schools, a decision was quickly made to invest efforts in supporting Daily Physical Activity (DPA), which is exactly what it sounds like: engaging in physical activity every day, any which way, as part of a healthy, active lifestyle. DPA promotes emotional regulation and self-control, improved memory, self-esteem and self-worth, thinking, learning, attention and focus, in addition to the widely recognized health benefits (Participation 2018).

We weren't the only ones encouraging DPA: Ophea in Ontario launched a 10-day DPA Every Day challenge over spring break, where unique activity videos premiered daily for families at home to follow along. Ophea handed the challenge to us from there, and we continued creating physical activity idea videos using #DPAeveryday from April through to June in hopes of helping students and families weave physical activity into their new daily routines.

As we prepare to return to in-class learning in September, we know that student and staff well-being is a top priority of Alberta teachers. One identified strategy is to focus on encouraging physical activity, especially in outdoor settings. Over the past few months, we've developed a variety of resources to help. ➤

#DPAeveryday

More than 60 short videos with unique physical activity ideas, many of which link to free resources and use materials that you can find or create at home. A few different series within the playlist have also been produced:

- Explore Your 2.4: Tips for safe active transportation
- DPA Any Which Way: Practical ideas for inclusive DPA
- Traditional Games: Games and proper protocols to collect materials
- Wacky Workouts: Fitness plans for junior and senior high school students

youtube.com/EverActiveSchools

Alberta Medical Association Youth Run Club

The AMA Youth Run Club program is available to all! Sign-up FREE to participate as a group or individual for regular emails with training tips, videos from run club ambassadors and other free resources. Train for a 2km or 5km fun run that you can complete in your community on your time.

amayouthrunclub.com

Health and Physical Education Curriculum Supports

PHE Canada, Ophea, Ever Active Schools and HPEC have all released lesson plans and resources to support teachers, parents and students with Health and Physical Education programming from home:

- PHE Canada's Home Learning Centre features lessons for Physical Education, Healthy Eating, and Emotional Well-Being
- Ophea has curated a collection of HPE Resources that feature mindfulness activities, dance activities, physical activities, physical activities with math, health and financial literacy activities, puberty and health activities, and internet safety in English and French.
- Ever Active Schools and HPEC have published Physical Education Lesson Plans organized for grades K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12 and covering all areas of Alberta's curriculum: Individual Activities, Games, Activities in Alternative Environments, Types of Gymnastics and Dance.

phecanada.ca

ophea.net

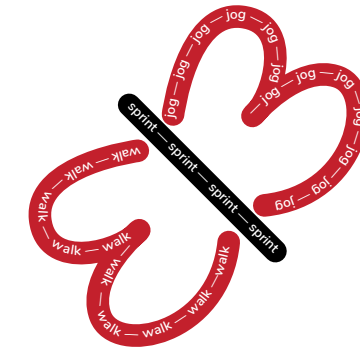
everactive.org



Photo: Students get warmed up for an AMA Youth Run Club fun run in 2019.

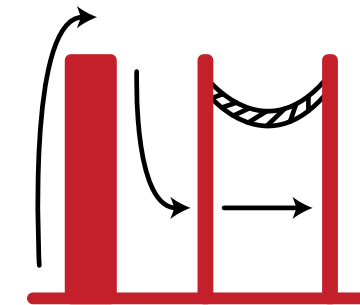
LOW-EQUIPMENT ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR ONE OR MORE PLAYERS

The Alberta Medical Association (AMA) Youth Run Club went virtual over the spring, resulting in a need for training activities that students and families can complete at home in a small group or as an individual. Here are some of our favourite low-to-no equipment activities that can be done by one or more people at a time!



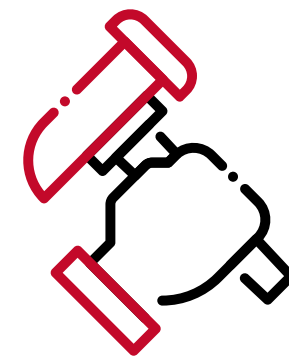
BUTTERFLY

Set up cones or plastic cups in the shape of a butterfly. This particular butterfly shape should be symmetrical, with a straight line down its centre. This centre line is the “sprinting lane”, while one side of the butterfly is the “jogging lane” and the other is the “walking lane”. Have players start to jog around one side of the butterfly shape, then sprint down the middle and finally walk the other side.



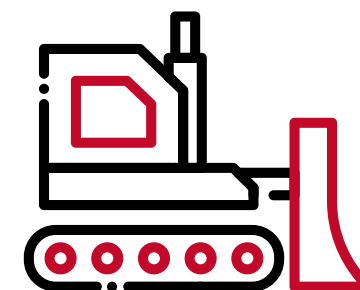
OBSTACLE COURSE

Try this inside or out, depending on the space you have available! Include as many actions as possible, such as going over, under or around items, crawling, hanging, hopping, skipping and any other challenging movements you can come up with. Do this individually, one after another, or relay style. Include some calisthenics like push-ups, sit-ups or lunges somewhere in your course to add some variety.



BUILDERS AND BULLDOZERS

Find objects that you have multiples of that can stand upright and be knocked over, such as plastic cups or stuffed animals. Put all of the items standing upright. Time how long it takes for players to run around and knock them all down. Set them back up and do it again, trying to beat the first time. Increase the challenge level by putting items farther apart or in different rooms, only allow the use of certain limbs, etc.



For a multi-player version, place half of your objects upright and half knocked over. Divide players into two teams: builders and bulldozers. Builders try to get all of the items standing upright, while bulldozers try to knock them all over. Play for a set time. When time is up, count the number standing and not to see who has more! Use the same suggestions in the single player version to add challenges and remember to switch teams throughout rounds! ■

EXPLORE YOUR 2.4: PUTTING THE WALK BACK INTO WALK ZONES
By Kerri Murray, Ever Active Schools

Explore Your 2.4 is a movement that aims to revive community walkability through youth engagement. Through an immersive, curriculum-aligned experience, youth are guided to first explore, then observe, and finally, engage with community spaces that are within a 2.4km radius of their home and/or school.

Why 2.4 kilometres? Most school jurisdictions specify a radius ranging from 1.6 to 2.4km, depending on grade configuration in the school, as the “walk zone.” Yet, in practice, very few people walk here! In fact, over the past 30 years in Canada there has been a significant decline in the number of students who bike or walk to school, with a noticeable shift to automobility. Buling, Mitra & Faulkner (2009) found that between 1986 and 2006, there was an average declining mode shift of 9.5% in walking to and from school among 11-15-year-olds in the Greater Toronto Area.

As education budgets strain, school jurisdictions and families alike will be looking for transportation solutions to expanding walk zones and rising bus fees. Without alternatives, the solution for many will be increased automobility. Explore Your 2.4 is positioned to help counter this trend with



Photo: Two students enjoy a walk together at an active travel event in 2018.



Photo: Kerri Murray (right) walks with her daughter at an active travel event in 2018.

increased active mobility. It supports travel mode shift by increasing youth comfort and competence to move independently, while improving familiarity, safety and walkability of community spaces.

Concurrently, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a phenomenon of hyper-locality. Province-wide shut-downs turned homes into office settings, virtual spaces into schools and neighbourhoods into hubs of recreation. Even with gradual re-opening, people are staying local and preparing to cycle in and out of closures for many months to come. They are invested in the social and physical dynamics of their communities and there is a high readiness for civic engagement. Explore Your 2.4 capitalizes on this readiness and employs a flexible delivery model, with in-person or online tools available.

Join the movement... Explore Your 2.4! ■

EASY BANNOCK
By Shaunna Haas-Jack, Ever Active Schools -
recipe adapted from allrecipes.com

Ingredients

- All purpose flour 3 cups (375g)
- Salt 1 tsp (5ml)
- Baking powder 2 tbsp (30ml)
- Butter, melted 2 tbsp (57g)
- Water 1.5 cups (360ml)



Directions

1. Combine flour, salt and baking powder in a large bowl. Pour in melted butter and water. Stir with a fork to make a dough ball.
2. Turn dough out on a lightly floured surface and knead about 10 times. Divide into several small dough balls and pat down into circles, about 2cm thick.
3. Cook in a greased frying pan over medium heat, about 15 minutes each side. Or, bake on a parchment-lined sheet at 350F for 25-30 minutes. ■

Tip! You can also wrap a long piece of bannock dough around a stick to cook over a fire. Place it away from the flame to cook evenly. When it turns golden brown, it's ready to eat!



TeachNutrition.ca

By Dairy Farmers of Canada Registered Dietitians, for Alberta Teachers

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ENJOYING MEALTIMES

By Alberta Health Services Registered Dietitians

At the time of writing this article, Public Health Orders were in place that required schools to be closed, physical distancing measures including a minimum of 2 meters spacing between individuals in public spaces and indoor congregating gatherings limited to a maximum of 15 people. Therefore, while we know there are many benefits to eating together, suggestions for eating together in the school setting are not being provided at this time.

Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It's also about where, when, why and how you eat, as well as healthy attitudes about food.

Meals together can be a time to put away conflicts and concerns and express gratitude for what you have. It's also a chance to connect with family, friends and loved ones. Schools, teachers and parents can all play a role in creating positive mealtime experiences. If you have the opportunity, talk to students about how they share mealtimes with members of their household.

At home, try to eat at the same time as other members of your household. If you live alone, or are separated from friends and family, consider eating together using video calling.

Talk together

Pleasant talk creates relaxed meal and snack times and builds relationships.

- Talk about topics that are important to your children and make comments or ask questions to show your interest.
- Ask questions that need more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
- Try some conversation starters or have children write some ideas on paper to get the family talking.

Limit distractions

Make your meal the focus of your attention. Eating in a quiet, comfortable place encourages mindful eating. Mindful eating, means paying attention to the eating experience with all of your senses- seeing, tasting, hearing, smelling and feeling. This allows food and the mealtime to be enjoyed.

- Set aside toys and phones, shut off active boards/TVs and put other electronics aside while eating.

Let kids make choices

Give kids a chance to make decisions about what food to choose.

- Encourage kids to take part in planning and preparing lunches and snacks. Set a table with healthy foods and let everyone pick which foods to put on their plate and how much to eat from the choices provided.

Slow down

Mealtimes are a time to slow down, relax and connect with others – even it is only for a short time.

- Make sure kids have enough time to eat (20-30 minutes).
- Make meals a priority by scheduling regular times to eat throughout the day. ■



Photo by August de Richelieu from Pexels

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FAMILY

By Rachelle Howse, BSc. Kinesiology CSEP-CEP PPFS

Thanks to my parents, I have always been physically active.

From a very young age, I attended fitness classes with my mom (a nurse), cross country skied with my dad (a Physical Education teacher), went on bike rides with friends, explored nature on family camping trips, and played a number of school sports. I was taught early and often about the importance of an active lifestyle.

Now in adulthood, as a Kinesiologist, Clinical Exercise Physiologist and mom to three young daughters, I further understand the physical and mental health benefits of participating in physical activity and sport. My husband and I try to be healthy role models for our daughters by getting outside and being active as a family. I love the memories we create together, and there is nothing better than the smiles on our daughters faces as they discover something new.

Kids are more sedentary than ever before and are relying on technology to keep them occupied. Adults aren't immune to the draw of screens either – 52% of parents reported that they spend too much time on their own mobile devices (Robb M.B., 2019). The most recent ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth shows a D+ for overall physical activity in Canadian kids.

The 2020 Report Card focuses on the critical role families play as influencers in children's physical activity and healthy habits. The report card has a number of suggestions for parents, guardians and supportive adults to reclaim family time as active time. The Report Card also discusses the importance educators and school administrators play in

supporting a movement-positive culture both in school and at home. Provide active breaks, moderate the use of screens, and assign healthy movement behaviour homework.

Let kids be kids and allow them to experience free play and nature. They should feel the grass and dirt under their bare feet as they explore the great outdoors. Let them learn, like I learned, to love and live a physically active life together as a family. ■

From the 2020 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

Getting Families

Active

Together



Follow Rachelle and her family along on their adventures on social media!

@momentumyeg

A ‘SWEDE’ TOOTH FOR PHYSICAL LITERACY AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EQUIPMENT

By Johannes Hedlund, Fritidsbanken and Movement in School; and Kristina (Stina) Skoglung-Hansson, Movement in School

In 2018, the Swedish government delegated a mission to the Swedish Sports Confederation: to inspire school staff and children to include themselves in activities based on movement, play and physical activity throughout the day, to work towards better public health and well-being and improved school results among Swedish children. And so, Movement in School Sweden began.

Movement in School is coordinated by 20 project coordinators in 19 districts across the country. Coordinators find and support schools in areas of lower socioeconomic status, where organized physical activity is a lower priority than in other demographic areas, and work to implement a change in movement culture. Using activities and play, the project provides school staff, students and families with physical literacy education. Coordinators use a variety of resources customized to each group to inspire them to move.



Photo: Hedlund (left) and Skoglung-Hansson present.

As of January 2020, Movement in School has worked with 571 schools in 131 (of 240) municipalities throughout Sweden. Of those schools, 399 of them received support through formal agreements between the school and the project, which incorporates mutual responsibilities. The other 172 schools have received support through networking opportunities. Feedback from both staff and students suggests the teaching environment in classrooms has been calmer and more productive. During recess, staff and students are seeing results such as students being more involved in play, both structured and unstructured, especially students who have not been involved before. This has led to increased conflict resolution between students, and new friendships.

Fritidsbanken is a library for sport and leisure equipment where anyone can borrow, and everything is free. The first Fritidsbanken began in 2013 as a socioeconomic initiative: a deacon in the Church of Sweden proposed the idea of providing access to sport and leisure equipment to support newcomers to participate in social and recreational activities. Those values still stand strong, and today there are many other aspects of the work. In addition to introducing citizens to a more active lifestyle, Fritidsbanken also offers employment opportunities, plays a big part in sustainable practices, and supports schools. ➤



Photo: Hedlund (left) and Skoglung-Hansson visit the University of Calgary.

to sports, promoting activity instead of consumption, increasing activities during school recess, and more. It’s a win-win situation for a municipality to start a Fritidsbanken!

There is a fantastic collaboration between Fritidsbanken and Movement in School. A large number of schools borrow equipment on a regular basis, bringing new possibilities to schools for students to try new activities at recess. We have seen schools borrow anywhere from 20 to 50 pairs of inline skates, and after their two weeks, they borrow something else! Tents, fishing rods, balls, sticks, hobby horses, kites, sledges, skates, skis, boule games... There are always new opportunities.

Fritidsbanken and Movement in School share common goals: to associate movement with fun, and to give everyone, especially children and youth, the opportunity to experience new activities or deepen their enjoyment with familiar activities. Together, they build a sustainable future with healthy and well individuals. ■



Article authors Johannes Hedlund and Kristina (Stina) Skoglung-Hansson from the Swedish Sports Confederation attended Shaping the Future 2020 to share a Swedish perspective around health and wellness advocacy. Even 6,720km away, our Swedish counterparts face many of the same opportunities and challenges as we do here in Alberta — though they employ some different strategies that perhaps we can learn from.



Photo: Students cook bannock over a fire at a traditional foods camp in Enoch.

INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

By Cassie Flett, Ever Active Schools

At Atikameg First Nation School, part of the Kee Tas Kee Now Education Authority (KTCEA), incredible work is being done around Indigenous food sovereignty.

“Food is important to our community,” said Darrell Fors, a teacher at Atikameg School. “Local food is what your body is used to, because of what your body knows.”

The school integrates Indigenous foods into both the curriculum and the school’s lunch program and has also supported and encouraged families to invest in local gardens and to hunt and fish on traditional grounds. Future projects for this community include the creation of a fruit forest with Indigenous plants like saskatoon berries, chokecherries, blueberries and other foods that can be used as medicine.

Indigenous food sovereignty is not just about food, but about the language and integration of culture and Indigenous way of life. “The Cree language is key to the survival of and passing of knowledge to the younger generations,” said Fors. “Our Cree teachers take students out to the trap line...on our land, and they include language around food.”

Students also learn to hunt, gaining the important skill of providing for their families and the community.

“The more real-life experience they can learn from the language, the better.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Atikameg School partnered with Canadian Feed the Children and Ever Active Schools to provide family gift hampers. Provisions included fishing rods and supplies, skipping ropes, hula hoops, seeds for planting and other items to support active and healthy families.

“Every family at our school received equipment to continue practicing gathering and fishing for food.

“We are depending on Indigenous foods.” ■



FOOD EXPLORERS: AN INNOVATIVE KINDERGARTEN AND GRADE 1 FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

By Dairy Farmers of Canada

Nutrition education can be equally exciting and overwhelming for both teachers and students.

We want to support food literacy by inspiring young learners to engage in the story of food and be open to new food experiences. So how can we get students excited about food in a way that is inclusive and accessible in our changing world?

Enter Food Explorers!

Food Explorers is our new kindergarten and grade 1 nutrition education program that encourages students to have fun exploring food through the mysteries of tastes, textures, and colours. Through experiential learning and tasting opportunities, students explore a variety of foods in a safe and engaging environment. A variety of foods are explored in the program, each with accompanying learning activities such as books, discussion prompts, classroom cooking, journals, take home recipes, and more!

Food Explorers is designed to fulfill developmentally appropriate outcomes in the physical and health education curriculum and integrate several opportunities for cross-curricular links such as math and language arts. Teachers who complete a workshop will receive a free kit that includes all the resources needed to facilitate the program including teacher, student, and take-home materials. Additionally, distance learning resources have been developed to support teachers and parents to facilitate this program from home as needed. ■

Visit TeachNutrition.ca for more information and to book your free teacher workshop!



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BUILDING HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES: AN ONLINE COURSE

By Louise McClelland, Ever Active Schools

Creating a healthy school community requires time, energy, dedication, and above all else, knowledge. The Comprehensive School Health (CSH) framework is an excellent way to build a strong foundation and create impactful change.

“Comprehensive School Health is the root of it all,” says Dayna Landry, a teacher in Wild Rose School Division.

Landry has led a variety of CSH initiatives in her school community, such as a Youth Action Team, hot lunch program, and Body and Mind (BAM) Run during Mental Health Week.

“In my role, I try to implement CSH in all that we do. I try to motivate others to buy in and I try to help educate them on CSH. The [CSH] Hub and Building Healthy School Communities [course] is my backbone. It’s my reference and where I can find the information and the support to feel as though I can then educate others.”

The CSH Hub is exactly what it sounds like: a go-to directory of organizations who provide teaching and learning resources, housed in one place to simplify access to information for all stakeholders within a school community.

Now, The CSH Hub has launched Building Healthy School Communities, a free online course that lays the foundations for understanding well-being in the context of educational settings. The course is directed at teachers, district leaders, and health promotion facilitators, among others.

As a Health Champion and teacher representative on her school division’s wellness committee, Landry encourages others to seek education around CSH.

“I took this course because I want to do more... I want to create change in schools and in homes. To do that, I have to be educated. I want to take in as much knowledge as possible and this course was it!

“To be able to implement it, you have to truly understand what it is and why it is important. It is more than just physical activity and planning a sports day; it is the foundation of all the elements of wellness.”

Take the free course at cshhub.com/course. ■

The CSH Hub was created from a partnership between Ever Active Schools and the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING FROM EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS

By Chesa Peter, Ever Active Schools

While at school, children develop and practice a wide variety of skills that will serve them from K to 12 and beyond. From the very beginning of their school experience, student learning goes far beyond literacy and numeracy.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the on-going process through which children — and adults! — learn, practice and use skills to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL). SEL consists of 5 competencies: Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making. Like any kind of learning, SEL requires practice and repetition. Below are our top 3 resources for embedding SEL opportunities throughout a school day and reinforcing learning within a school culture:

Social and Emotional Shuffle

Social and Emotional Shuffle includes a set of 52 emotion cards, along with games, prompting questions, conversation sparkers and cross-curricular suggestions for using the cards. The purposeful design allows for this resource to be used in a number of ways across grade levels. As students strengthen the ability to recognize emotions in themselves and others, they are better positioned to respond to and manage emotions in a positive way.



Shape Safari: An Exploratory Movement Adventure

Shape Safari is designed to provide students the opportunity to connect to their body and breath in a fun, exploratory way. Mindful movement and breathing contributes to the development of self-awareness. When students develop self-awareness, they lay the foundation for all the other SEL competencies.



Social and Emotional Learning Booster Kit

This kit includes Social and Emotional Shuffle and Shape Safari resources, along with a selection of equipment to boost daily physical activity and other learning experiences in a way that connects to SEL. With an intentional approach and small shifts, games and activities can be optimized to include cross-curricular connections and promote SEL. ■



ALLOW ME TO EX-PLAY-N
 By Adrian Xavier, Ever Active Schools

You’ve probably heard, witnessed or read something about Ever Active Schools’ (EAS) involvement with or advocacy for loose parts play. If you haven’t, here’s a brief overview of what loose parts play is and the benefits:

“Loose parts” refers to any material that can be moved, carried, stacked or altered¹. Loose parts can include natural materials, like sticks, stones, water, leaves and sand; or recycled materials, like cardboard boxes, ropes, fabric, lengths of pipe, and milk crates. Typically, loose parts play is set outdoors, allowing for the natural environment to become a variable of the play experience and provide the potential for generous physical boundaries.

Research specific to loose parts play is full of benefits and characteristics, including social, emotional and cognitive outcomes² and increased physical activity levels^{3,4}. Research outcomes are considered promising and sustainable, although not yet established or certain. According to the International Play Association⁵, play is instinctive, voluntary and spontaneous. Consequently, during loose parts play it is not uncommon to observe a variety of play types, most notably locomotor, mastery, symbolic, imaginative and creative/object play⁶.

“PLAY IS THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD”
 - Jean Piaget

year mentorship relationship using the Comprehensive School Health framework⁷ to achieve the outcome of on-site implementation. Typically, loose parts play is an option to further diversify the recess experience for students, providing an additional outdoor zone with materials for unstructured, free play. In a few school settings loose parts play has also been used as an approach to support students’ readiness to learn and as a strategy to target social and emotional learning.

Now, we’ve taken it one step further. In collaboration with Pop-up Adventure Play and Playground Ideas⁸, we’ve created an interactive Loose Parts Play Handbook. This resource will guide your implementation with evidence-based research and lived experiences working with Alberta school communities. The electronic handbook includes embedded links for additional resources depending on your needs at the various stages of preparation and implementation. Print the entire resource, or simply print the tips, templates and guides of greatest interest to help facilitate your learning and execution.

One last thought: Loose parts play research generally involves children and youth between the ages of 2 and 12; but play is for everyone! As we grow, our interests and choices develop and change, and it shouldn’t impact our instinctive, voluntary and



Photo: A student examines natural loose parts.

spontaneous behaviours to engage in whatever play may be for us at a particular life stage. We need to recall, re-live and reflect on the purpose, impact and importance of our play!

The spirit of play is ever-present because it’s what you want to do, when you want to do it, for whatever purpose it serves. Look deeper into what loose parts play represents: it teaches us to see beyond the conventional. You determine the meaning through your medium, whether it’s a jam session or jam making, programming or pottery, make-up or make believe. It’s more than the material, it’s your manifestation. Go play! ■



Photo: Students engage in loose parts play for the first time.

Get your copy of the new Loose Parts Play Handbook at everactive.org/loose-parts

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CHARTING A NEW COURSE FOR THE ROLE OF HOME IN A HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITY: ONE PARENT'S PANDEMIC PONDERINGS

By Kerri Murray, Ever Active Schools

It is too soon to tell what the lasting effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic will be on education. History decides these things and they are only obvious in retrospect. In a simplistic view of educational history, the system has looked more or less the same since the industrial revolution: Sir Ken Robinson and others have spoken of the factory model influence that characterized that era and permeated education: Learners are grouped according to their date of manufacture (age), their days marked by bells to signal task changes, and their desks lined up in rows.

It has me wondering: Will the pandemic bring about the next revolution in education? Maybe COVID is the catalyst. I can tell you that in our household, it has been.

In my experiences, both as a parent and a professional, the role of the home in a healthy school community has always been the most challenging to define and to navigate. Yet, through the closures of schools and the online learning efforts of committed teachers, the veil between home and school thinned.



Photo: Article author Kerri Murray and her family enjoy time together outdoors.

I have never been more engaged in my children's education; yet at one point, I was the president of the school council. Today I know more about the content of their learning, their assignments and assessments, the concepts they're struggling with, and their work habits. Sometimes we're working elbow to elbow. When I ask how the school day was, they will often report in full sentences. Sentences! Plural!

It was a watershed moment for me to realize that this enhanced engagement happened through my daughters as students, not through their teachers and educational assistants. For some reason, I always took my relationship with my children as learners for granted and was searching for ways to build relationships and engage directly with their teachers and educational assistants. Even worse, in my professional role, I was relying on the same channel as the way to involve parents in school, completely overlooking the reinforced student-parent relationship.

I can hear the teachers out there: "Yes! We're trying! We send agendas home >

for communication, and sometimes send emails or homework." But that isn't what I'm talking about. Something about the proximity between myself and my children, inside of our shared working day, and the frequency of communication around learning goals across all subjects, makes this different. The relationship between home and school can and should be reinforced through the students. Facilitating this type of engagement has the advantage of wrap-around support for the students and also alleviates strain on the part of teachers and staff.

If COVID-19 surfaced anything, it was the vital contributions schools in general, and teachers and staff in particular, make to a functioning society. In a chronically undervalued profession, we witnessed a glimmer of hope via social media memes, exasperated posts and expressions of gratitude. When parents spend all day, every day with their children, we wonder how you've done it all these years.

Paradoxically, this public sentiment also surfaced a darker thread of dialogue through inner circles of educators: Disbelief (and dare I say resentment) that parents perceived themselves as filling the role of teachers, and being able to relate to their experience. Narratives arose like, "Parents are still parents and teachers are still teachers," or "This is not homeschool, this is online learning."

“VIEW THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE HOME AND SCHOOL ON THE SAME TEAM.”

I understand this response from teachers: it comes from a combination of expert knowledge of pedagogy, child development, and the subtleties of learning in a school setting that neither homeschool nor online learning can replace. I know this expertise is often overlooked by the public. However, I worry that a defensiveness or sensitivity around public education misses the larger point and the outreach opportunity. Consider the attempts to relate to your role as an effort in appreciation of it, not a threat to it. Forgive the lay-language around "homeschool" and view this as an opportunity to have home and school on the same team.

System-wide revolution or not, perhaps now is the time to embrace a micro-revolution in the relationship between homes and schools. I recognize that not every family's experience is the same as ours. I acknowledge the extraordinary privilege that affords me the space to work from home at a near-ideal stage in my children's development that enables them to learn with minimal oversight from me and at a distance from their teachers. Every family's readiness and capacity will be different, depending on their circumstances. Still, if this can happen one family at a time, one classroom at a time, one school at a time, parents can fortify the education system in a meaningful way, leaving more resources for schools to support families who aren't able to engage as much. In the end, together, we create healthier and more connected school communities. ■

“IF THIS CAN HAPPEN ONE FAMILY AT A TIME, ONE CLASSROOM AT A TIME, ONE SCHOOL AT A TIME, PARENTS CAN FORTIFY THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN A MEANINGFUL WAY.”

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