

# healthy schools

FALL 2022 - ISSUE #16

# ALBERTA



Supporting healthy school communities.



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**Feature Story:  
Play Should Be for Everybody**

# MEET OUR TEAM

Check out these cheesy grins! Our team has grown exponentially over the past few years, and much of our work would not be possible without these curious, kind, dedicated and fun folks. Many of them have contributed to this edition of Healthy Schools Alberta – go give their articles some love!





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# IN THIS ISSUE

Our project work with schools and communities offers a lot of new knowledge for our team, and we'd like to share much of what we've learned with you. This edition focuses on projects that have had great impact on priority populations and details on how you can implement some of these ideas into your everyday practice!

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

~ The Ever Active Schools Team



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## 2022/2023 HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITY EVENTS

### WELL-A-THON

Ongoing | Wherever you are!

The Well-A-Thon is a wellness-focused fundraiser for schools to bring in programs, services and supplies to support a healthy learning environment.

[www.everactive.org/well-a-thon](http://www.everactive.org/well-a-thon)

### STILL I RISE

November 24, 2022 | Virtual

Join Indigenous youth, educators and community members virtually for this free one-day opportunity for youth to learn, connect and share.

[www.everactive.org/rise](http://www.everactive.org/rise)

### SHAPING THE FUTURE

February 2-4, 2023 | Lake Louise - Treaty 7 Territory

Join us for the 13th 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](http://www.everactive.org/stf)

### TEACHERS' CONVENTIONS

February & March 2023 | Coming to a convention near you!

Join Ever Active Schools and HPEC at a convention near you for sessions that you can apply in your classroom immediately.

<https://everactive.org/events/teachers-conventions>

### RUNNING SHOE GALA

May 26, 2023 | Calgary - Treaty 7 Territory

The Running Shoe Gala is a fundraising event in support of Ever Active Schools and healthy futures for all children. We'll be dressing to the nines for this formal event, with one caveat: running shoes are required!

[www.everactive.org/rsg](http://www.everactive.org/rsg)

### IWALK DAY | WINTER WALK DAY | WHEEL WEEK

October 5, 2022 | February 1, 2023 | June 5-9, 2023

Never underestimate the power of event days to encourage more students and families to travel actively! Mark your calendars and register your school or group.

[www.shapeab.com/list-of-events/](http://www.shapeab.com/list-of-events/)



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

## EMPATHY AND WELLNESS

Written by Brian Torrance, Executive Director, Ever Active Schools

**Welcome back to another school year and another edition of our annual Healthy Schools Alberta magazine.**

To start with a personal story, I lost my father to cancer in mid-March. He was the most amazing Dad, a kind generous person and a below average golfer. :) My father and I were able to get to a comfortable place of talking about what was to come, and I had time to express love and gratitude, which I am most grateful for. We spoke most nights on the phone. Him living in Vancouver and me in Edmonton, we had some positive family adventures visiting each other. I lost a father but my kids also lost grandpa, his friends lost a buddy, his wife lost a husband and many others were impacted which were all part of his life and community. This has been my journey and it has also brought a hyper awareness of the people and communities that have experienced their own struggles (and life events) over the last few years. I know of friends and colleagues that have experienced challenging life events and I hope I cared for them enough and they were part of a community that provided love and support.

Let's start this school year off with empathy and wellness. It is important to surround ourselves with community. Our friend Dr. Phil McRae spoke at Shaping the Future last April and presented the statement, "whatever the problem, community is the answer". I have thought about those words quite a bit, and every time I have put those words into practice the statement holds up.

Over the last two school years, one of the heroes of the pandemic have been our schools and teachers. They have carried the challenges of learning but also the well-being of students. The educational system was quick to address "learning gaps" with tutoring and or increased assessment but less so in direct attention to teacher and student well-being and the creation of supportive environments. Students – who returned to school after social isolation to a decrease in sports/arts or other meaningful activities and less access to healthy public spaces – did not need more classroom time. They needed play, joy and positive social interactions. They needed recess, nature and time to reconnect with their friends and community. Moving forward, I feel the value, importance and urgency to invest in making wellness foundational in our school communities has increased but we need to continue to champion that it's the only way to address learning and also good health.

Embrace and enjoy the return to school and your school community. They are the support and the answer to whatever challenge may come your way. ■



Brian Torrance, Executive Director, Ever Active Schools

We wanted to take a moment to recognize some of the incredible people who chose to donate to Ever Active Schools in the 2021/2022 school year. By supporting our fundraising events and sending direct donations, these folks brought us one step closer to healthy futures for all children.

This list is not all-encompassing of our supporters, either. To every individual, group or corporation that supports our work in some way, **thank you.**

## 2021/2022 DONORS

Erynn Biggar	Doug Gleddie	Jamie Yip
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## **GARDENS, GAMES AND TIPI POLES: LAND-BASED PROJECTS TO PROMOTE MENTAL WELL-BEING**

*By Melissa Tierney, Ever Active Schools*

**The land provides healing, and this was emphasized during the pandemic. Using the land as inspiration for mental well-being, 24 schools partnered with Ever Active Schools and Government of Alberta Mental Health to design local land-based programming. Overall, 1,660 students and 228 educators from 24 First Nations and Métis communities participated, with a distance of more than 1,200 km between the farthest North and South communities.**

“The focus was on the mental health and well-being of Indigenous students and communities,” explained Andrea Dion, Health and Wellness Consultant with Ever Active Schools.

Students designed activities based on culture, food security, outdoor physical activity, or other focuses that they deemed important to their well-being. Every school worked with local Elders to incorporate culture and Indigenous languages into their project.

Projects were as varied as the communities that created them: Peace Wapiti School harvested tipi poles, with Elders sharing tipi teachings with staff and students. Enoch held a birch water workshop where students learned to tap birch trees and experienced a birch water ceremony. Amiskwaciy Academy in Edmonton held land-based teachings for Indigenous urban youth, including medicine picking and literacy of the land. Some communities hosted moccasin making, hand drum making or beading. One school hosted a K-8 winter festival to celebrate outdoor Indigenous games in icy February.

“My favorite activity was archery because we had targets and it was kind of based off, like, hunting. It was fun to use the bone arrows,” said one grade 6 student. “I hope >

we do archery again next year.”

Eight of the 24 schools addressed food security by creating school gardens and outdoor cultural areas with local medicines. In Dene Thá, a local teacher offered her backyard for 75 students to try gardening, naming it Grandma Sally’s backyard garden.

**Working together on all aspects of the project created a sense of belonging in students.**

“My favourite [thing] was to hang out with the other students. They made it go faster with some good laughs,” said one grade 12 student.

“It brings a lot of people together, especially the ones that don’t know each other,” said another.

Many of the projects addressed environmental stewardship as the core aim, including in Siksika, where students designed a living wall at the school’s entrance.

“There were a bunch of classes that were into it, for like a month the teacher had stuff all over the classroom floor, dirt all over and bits of metal and wood! Watching it from start to finish was really satisfying because you saw it go from nothing to something! Watching him put the plants onto the wall and waiting to see if the plants fell out was exciting,” raved a grade 11 Siksika student.

**These projects benefitted not only mental health, but curricular connections as well.**

“Projects like this are really important for students to see that skills they learned over the year can be applied,” said a partner teacher. “We have students doing research, emailing companies for help, physically building things and thinking about the dynamics of how it works, and where all those skills from math and english and social class are coming together to actually be used.

“This is every class you’ve ever taken coming together.”

For many schools, this was a small step in decolonizing the curriculum to allow students to engage with their Indigenous identities.

“This was about allowing them to see and know that our Blackfoot ways of knowing have a place in the classroom,” said a teacher from Siksika.

“Our education system has had a heavy colonial lens, and when we think about how much time is allotted for language instruction or cultural teachings, it’s just a fraction of their day. That identity formation is critical to all of them in this classroom, in these schools, and knowing that our Niitsitapi ways of knowing have a place in their classroom is so powerful.”

Schools intend to keep building on these projects in future years, and maintain the increased connections between students. One grade 11 student said, “It makes the school a lot less dull for the students. And it brings students in to help with it, there were lots of people that came through the project that weren’t part of it but just wanted to help so it drew people in to plant and build things. It definitely brings life to the school.” ■

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON WHEELS

By Erynn Biggar, *Be Fit For Life* and *Ever Active Schools*

This year, three Medicine Hat community groups received wagons filled with various equipment as part of the Community Engagement on Wheels initiative, thanks to funding from the City of Medicine Hat's Community Vibrancy grant.

The purpose of the program is to provide Hatters with more opportunities to engage in active, outdoor free play, fostering mental and physical well being. Big Brothers Big Sisters, Miywasin Friendship Centre and the Medicine Hat Interpretive Program each received a customized equipment wagon to suit their needs.

"It was really cool working with each group, getting to know each organization's needs, how they impact the community and how we can help them continue the work they are already doing," said Erynn Biggar, project lead with Ever Active Schools.

The contents of the different wagons varied, from bug catching gear to lawn games to sporting equipment.

"Each wagon was so different, which was really neat to see, and also an outcome we were striving for. We wanted to work with different sectors in the community to broaden our reach and have a positive impact on the community."



The initiative provided an opportunity for deeper dialogue with these partners and revealed additional community needs. Along with their customized wagons, each group also received professional learning for their staff and volunteers to build their comfort and capacity to facilitate programming, plus follow-up support and consultation to support sustainability.

"It gives us a reason to be out in the community more," said Melissa Pearl with Big Brothers Big Sisters. "For our matches [of Bigs and Littles], it's an extra resource for them to do as a free activity. It provides opportunities for group activities too – not just solely Bigs and Littles on their own."

**Looking to create your own wagon?** Here's our top suggestions to include:

- Sidewalk chalk
- Beanbags
- Hula hoops
- Cones
- EAS Classroom Resource: Shape Safari

Get these items and more from your local Canadian Tire or other sporting goods store, and from our online store!

# MyRETIREE PLAN

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## HOW TO CREATE A SCHOOL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES SLEEP

By Megan MacNeil and Pamela Mellon, SIRCLE Research Lab, School of Public Health, University of Alberta

### Healthy sleep is vital for students' overall health and well-being.

Getting enough sleep is directly related to being able to concentrate, engaging in classroom learning, and functioning throughout the day. Without enough sleep, children and teens start their school day tired, and struggling to focus. They may have difficulty regulating their emotions, be hyperactive, or doze off at their desks. Inadequate sleep is linked to challenges in learning and both physical and mental health concerns.

According to the 2020 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, 30% of students aren't getting enough sleep. In a classroom of 30 students, this means that 10 students might not have gotten enough sleep to be ready to learn. Research conducted with educators, parents and students in Alberta schools found that students translate what they learn at school to their home life, and both teachers and parents are supportive of schools promoting healthy sleep habits. Teachers shared many ways that they promoted healthy sleep habits in their schools:

### Opportunities in the classroom

- Have informal conversations about sleep when students come to school late or fall asleep in class.
- Have a big test coming up or school performance? Discuss the importance of a good night's sleep and brainstorm strategies students can try at home.
- When teaching about routines and planning, talk about how getting enough sleep helps you achieve your goals, or create a pie chart of how students spend their time.
- When teaching time-telling, talk about how much sleep they need for their age, what time they wake up, and what time they should go to bed.
- In math class, have students graph the number of hours they sleep in a week. Students can even keep a sleep diary to track their sleep!
- Explore dreams in art class by using different art techniques or making dream catchers.
- In language arts, ask students to write about a dream they would love to have.
- In science, explore the sleep habits of different types of animals.

The more sleep is talked about; the more students know that sleep is a crucial ingredient to healthy growth and development. >

## Schoolwide opportunities

- Create a bulletin board in a common space that shares ideas for healthy sleep habits with students, parents, and community groups.
- Include fun facts about healthy sleep habits in morning announcements.
- Have student groups create a school-wide sleep challenge or scavenger hunt to promote healthy sleep habits.
- Have students discuss healthy sleep habits in assemblies or invite a speaker from a local health organization or community group to speak to the school community.
- Students can learn about sleep from all school staff, and informal conversations and check-ins are a great way to promote healthy sleep habits.

## Home-School collaboration for healthy sleep habits

- Share resources on how families can work together to achieve better sleep (e.g., sleep duration, sleep hygiene, family screen time plans).
- Use your established school-to-home communication methods to update parents when a student appears tired or unable to stay awake during school time.
- Encourage parents to share when students are struggling with sleep.
- Encourage parent involvement in class activities on sleep (students tracking their sleep or reading as a family at bedtime).

## Teachers: Don't forget about your own sleep!

Transitioning back to school in the fall is a busy time, especially for teachers and school staff. During the long summer days, it is easy to fall out of routine so consider these tips to help get your sleep back on track:

- Adults (age 18-64) need 7-9 hours of good quality sleep.
- Power down electronic devices at least an hour before bed.
- Establish a calming routine before bed like taking a bath, stretching, or deep breathing.
- Keep a consistent bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends. This can help regulate your circadian rhythm.
- Keep your bedroom dark and cool.
- Avoid having pets in your bedroom at night.
- Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening.
- Get active throughout the day and pay attention to the timing of your activity. Note that strenuous exercise right before bed might keep you awake.
- Still having trouble turning off your brain? Write tomorrow's to-do's before bed to help clear your mind. ■

Learn more about school-based sleep promotion research on the SIRCLE lab website:



<https://www.katestorey.com/our-projects/sleeping-soundly/>

## CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE THROUGH STAFF CONNECTIONS

By Laura Douglas, Ever Active Schools

Here at Ever Active Schools, we're serious about fun. We understand the importance of personal connections, breaks from the screen and of course, embedding movement into the workplace! Over the years, we've worked to build a culture of fun by engaging our staff through simple yet genuine connection-building activities.

We set the tone in a recent meeting by setting intentions for the upcoming year. Using dual sided cards with a quote on one side and a photo on the other, each person selected a card that represented their intentions. From Dr. Seuss quotes to photos of bears, everybody had a unique perspective on moving into a new school year.

One easy addition to regular team meetings has been the use of our Back-Pocket Well-being Booster Cards! These cards contain icebreakers like scavenger hunts to get folks up and moving, or "crush it calls" to recognize team members' positive contributions. Get the Back-Pocket Well-being Booster Cards here: <https://bit.ly/wb-cards>

Outside of meeting spaces, we've hosted bi-monthly Fun Fridays: half-days spent as a team participating in a fun, non-work related activity. We've checked out local brew pubs, cross-country skied, played indoor beach volleyball, gone geocaching, and more!

For regular check-ins with our staff, we send out regular "pulse checks" – these are simple questions that will take 60 seconds or less to answer and are totally anonymous. Questions can be about the workplace culture, ideas for team and leadership improvement in certain areas, or even as simple as a check-in on morale.

New this year, we've also created a modified version of our All About Me Sheets questionnaire to support staff in communicating their strengths, goals and preferences as we continue to build a more inclusive work environment.

While these are practices that have shown success at Ever Active Schools, any tools or processes you use to create a positive culture among your staff should be iterative. There is no one-size fits all solution and it is important to recognize and consider the contextual conditions of your workplace and the intersectional identities of your team.

We highly recommend that all leaders take time to facilitate meaningful connections. Set your own intentions on how to engage with each other and perhaps even set aside the time now before your calendar fills up! ■



## FEED YOUR FIRE WITH A TEACHER WELL-BEING RETREAT

By Katelynn Theal, Ever Active Schools



**In June 2022, a group of 19 teachers and school staff from across Alberta gathered at the Lacombe Memorial Centre for some time away from the hustle, bustle and demands of their everyday work. Throughout the day-and-a-half retreat participants explored well-being science. They filled their metaphorical backpacks with tools to support their own well-being and also learned how to use these tools to help impact their whole school community.**

The event moved beyond self-care strategies and teacher stress, instead focussing on individual and organizational opportunities to help shift the tide from burning out to burning into our calling as teachers.

Participants brought items to demonstrate their intentions for their time at the retreat. These items remained in the centre of our circle as a reminder of why we all chose to

show up. Some such items included:

- Connector blocks to represent building connections
- A permanent marker to represent letting go of perfectionism
- Seeds to represent blooming into next year
- A Bob Ross doll to represent seeing mistakes as opportunities and staying positive

Throughout the retreat, participants experienced and spent time cultivating some well-being practices such as mindfulness, journaling, exploring strengths and values and more. Everything happened without the use of technology: no slide shows, no videos, no microphones. Instead, we created intentional opportunities to get outside in nature, to spend personal time reflecting and to share as a group.

“I loved everything about it,” said one participant. “I thought it was all great.”

“The facilitators were amazing,” said another.

Participants were enthusiastic about the idea of offering a similar learning opportunity to their school or jurisdiction.

“I think every district should offer this,” said one participant.

Another said it would be “a huge benefit for all school workers”. ■

Ever Active Schools looks forward to working with more schools and jurisdictions to host similar events and support staff in burning into their roles. We are excited to see a ripple effect of well-being throughout entire school communities. To work with us to tailor an event to your school or jurisdictional needs, please reach out to our team at [plo@everactive.org](mailto:plo@everactive.org).



Fun Run at Dr. Martha Cohen School in Calgary on May 24, 2022

## FREE, FUN, FLEXIBLE AND INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES

By Krista Trim, Ever Active Schools

**Join the AMA Youth Run Club this fall! Clubs can run, walk or move their bodies in any way. All grades and formats supported. The Ever Active Schools team provides your school with free resources, supports and can help you host a fun run.**

Interested in starting a club but don't know where to start? Here are 9 considerations for hosting an inclusive run club for all:

1. Emphasize participation and acceptance before skill and effort.
2. Don't fear having competition; rather, create an environment where differing levels of competition are welcomed and appreciated.
3. Be mindful of gender neutral language: ask for and use your participant's pronouns, and consider how your language might affect your participants. Microaggressions can be unintentional but still impact participants. By avoiding stereotypes (negative and positive), you can celebrate each student individually!
4. Monitor your participants to ensure everyone is getting equal opportunities and activities are accessible to all. Create an inclusive identity and unity within your team to prevent cliques.
5. Encourage the participants to plan and make decisions, allowing them to have input into the design of the program.
6. Reinforce the social and emotional benefits of moving and actively dissociate these from appearance – especially weight. Health promotion is key, which means avoiding any comments about students' bodies and celebrating participation instead!
7. Teach the basics: invest some time into physical literacy and fundamental movement skills. TARGET is an easy-to-follow model to work on progress over perfection:
  - **T**ask- variety, maximize participation, differentiate
  - **A**uthority- involve the learner, offer options and choice
  - **R**ecognition- effort, progress and improvement, all students
  - **G**rouping- mixed and cooperative, teamwork
  - **E**valuation- individual, private self-referenced
  - **T**ime- flexible, individualize
8. Engage women and gender diverse adults as positive role models to legitimize sport as a safe and appropriate activity.
9. Always emphasize fun!

Register for the club by October 15, 2022 and be entered to win a \$500 Visa gift card for your school! [www.amayouthrunclub.com/jointheclub](http://www.amayouthrunclub.com/jointheclub)

The AMA Youth Run Club is a program brought to you by the Alberta Medical Association and Ever Active Schools with the support of sponsors Alberta Blue Cross and MD Financial Management. ■

## ACTIVE & SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

By Tracey Coutts, Ever Active Schools

**We all want our kids to be physically active and we all want them to get to school safely. With the aptly-named Active and Safe Routes to School project, Ever Active Schools and the City of Calgary are establishing the importance of safe, active school travel in the overall municipal transportation picture.**

Since 2019, we've worked with 30 Calgary schools across four school divisions on school travel planning, with aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve safety in school zones, increase physical activity and foster climate literacy.

"With the help of Ever Active Schools, we have surveyed the situation and the city has plans in place to help maximize the safety of students," said Candace Charbonneau, a teacher champion from Arbour Lake School.

Using a combination of Green Communities Canada's School Travel Planning approach and Ever Active Schools In Residence delivery model, student and teacher champions are guided through the first phase over four days. We begin with baseline data collection, then data analysis, issue identification, and action planning. School action plans target seven key areas: Policy, Education, Encouragement, Engineering, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Equity.

Once the week's activities are completed, experienced facilitators support action plan implementation for up to one year.

Thanks to a collaborative effort and a strong network of stakeholders, our efforts have paid off! To date, school-collected data shows:

- A 4.95% increase in walking to school
- A 3.51% increase in walking from school
- A 6% increase in wheeling (cycling, scootering, skateboarding) to school
- A 5.5% increase in wheeling from school

"Our Grade Eights were very excited to see that the work they did was actually making an impact," said Charbonneau. "It's been a long time since I have seen experiential learning like this, and the engagement from the students shows they are craving it too!"

So, why are school teams seeing such success? It's simple: they are creating a culture of active travel. They have identified and addressed barriers: crosswalks have been enhanced to improve pedestrian safety; traffic safety blitzes have been requested to reduce occurrences of unsafe road practices; school teams are building and executing school-level bike plans; and the list goes on. Combined, these interventions contribute to safer, healthier, more active school communities, and students are learning the importance of being contributing, engaged citizens.

Tie your shoelaces. Change is here. ■

Thank you to everyone who has supported this project. To learn more or find ways to get involved in active school travel planning, visit [everactive.org/projects/ast](https://everactive.org/projects/ast).



Grade 5 students from Prairie Waters Elementary School present at Shaping the Future 2022 in Kananaskis, Alta.

## INVITING THE FUTURE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

By Payton and Mckenna Hall, Ever Active Schools

**At a conference called “Shaping the Future”, it only felt right to have students join us to share their stories, learn from one another, and provide a massive spark of energy.**

More than 70 youth from seven Alberta schools joined us for Shaping the Future 2022 in Kananaskis, both participating in and leading presentations.

A highlight was the unpredictable spring mountain weather cooperating for outdoor student activities by Ever Active Schools staff. Students from Montreal Lake Cree Nation and Enoch Cree Nation played active tic-tac-toe, soccer and volleyball. Seeing youth laughing, smiling and playing in the mountain sunshine created a buzz that lasted the entire conference.

Next came the amazing presentations, entirely facilitated by students. Prairie Waters Elementary students empowered adult delegates to create outdoor learning spaces; Lacombe Composite High School students shared samples of their school-grown honey and feta cheese; students from Enoch Cree Nation led traditional games; and more. Delegates raved about the vibrant, polished sessions. We are in awe of these future health and wellness champions! ■

**Bring your students to Shaping the Future 2023!** We are accepting applications and holding space for student presentations; or, bring them to attend and hear from fellow student champions.

Learn more at [everactive.org/stf](https://everactive.org/stf).



Contact an AHS Population  
and Public Health Dietitian  
by emailing:  
[PublicHealth.Nutrition@ahs.ca](mailto:PublicHealth.Nutrition@ahs.ca)

## PROMOTING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

By Alberta Health Services Registered Dietitians

**Developing a healthy relationship with food is just as important for growth and development as the food we eat. It contributes to students' physical development and supports social and mental well-being. As an educator, what you say and do can influence your students' relationship with food.**

As you read the tips below, take a moment to reflect on your actions and words. Think about how you can promote positive messages about food and eating to your students. The ideas shared below are relevant to anyone in the school setting who interacts with students around food and eating.

### Use Neutral Language

When we categorize food as “good for you” or “bad for you,” children can internalize these messages as a reflection of who they are as a person. This can lead to thoughts of guilt and shame when they eat “bad” foods. Using neutral language that does not categorize foods is a way to support a healthy relationship with food. Here are some ways you can use neutral language to talk about food:

- Use words that describe the sensory aspects of food, such as colour, shape, smell, flavour and texture, rather than the food's nutritional value.
- Focus on referring to foods by their actual names. For example, call a cookie a cookie, not a treat; call an apple an apple or a fruit, not a “good for you” snack.
- Avoid using food as a reward.

### Emphasize the Positive Aspects of Food

Healthy eating is about more than what you eat. It is also about when, where, why and how you eat. Healthy eating looks different to everyone, because everyone has their own preferences, backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles and needs. To help students develop a positive mindset around eating, focus on the appealing aspects of healthy eating:

- Recognize how food supports our social and mental well-being.
- Honour foods' connection to culture, tradition, history, community and the land.
- Encourage students to choose a variety of foods and flavours that they enjoy.
- Focus on how food fuels our minds and bodies.
- Emphasize how healthy behaviours like physical activity, sleep, and regular meals and snacks make students feel good. Avoid referring to weight or appearance. >

## Words matter! Use the following table for suggestions when talking about food:

Try this:	Instead of this:
“There are many reasons to eat fruits – they give you energy and can be a quick and tasty snack!”	“Cut down on juice and pop. Children who drink juice and pop daily are more likely to be in a larger body.”
“Starting your day with grains can give your body the energy it needs for a busy day.”	“Eat high-fibre foods like oatmeal to help manage your weight.”
“Enjoy the foods packed in your lunch.”	“You need to eat your fruit before you have your brownie.”
“I like apples because they are juicy, crisp and sweet.”	“I like apples because they are a low-calorie snack.”

### Respect mealtime roles

Whether it is the classroom, lunchroom, the cafeteria, recess or an after-school activity, you can help support the development of healthy relationships with food. Respecting roles around food during meal and snack times in the school setting means:

- Schools decide when and where food is eaten
- Students decide whether and how much to eat from the food available
- Parents and caregivers decide what foods are packed for meals and snacks. As students get older, they may play a role in choosing foods from what is available at home or purchasing foods at the school cafeteria, nearby stores or restaurants.

Respect students’ decisions about how much to eat. This includes eating food in the order they choose. Trust students when they tell you they are full or hungry for more. This allows students to trust what their bodies are telling them.

**Note:** Using guidance such as the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth to determine which foods to offer in a school setting is appropriate. Direction on what foods to provide to a population of students is different from food and nutrition education or discussions. ■

### For more information:

*Words Matter: Promoting a Positive Relationship with Food* YouTube Video

- This AHS video gives educators and role models an overview of how language can influence students and youths’ relationship with food.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0JP5ir9Quw>

*AHS Healthier Together*

- Scroll down to “Nurture a healthy relationship with food” to learn more about helping students develop a positive mindset around food and eating.

<https://bit.ly/NurtureAHealthyRelationshipWithFood>

## HOW DO I TEACH CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE?

By the team of Registered Dietitians at Teach Nutrition

How to teach Canada's Food Guide (CFG) is a question that our team of Registered Dietitians at Teach Nutrition hears... A LOT. CFG is part of the curriculum for all grade levels, so it requires different approaches for different ages and stages. Determining how, why, and what parts of CFG are relevant and age appropriate for your learners may be overwhelming, but we're here to help!

Nutrition education works well when students are given lots of opportunities to explore and practise. Start by focusing on concrete, foundational concepts that you and the students can build on as they become ready to think about abstract ideas such as food categories and nutrients. We have done the work to apply a paced learning approach in all our resources so you can feel confident using these materials in your classroom.

The table below breaks down recommendations by grade division with links to free Teach Nutrition resources:

For whom?	How?	With what?
K-3	Centre learning on food exploration and categorization of foods based on the senses.  <i>E.g., Sort foods into broad categories based on colour, shape, texture, and/or temperature.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Explorers</li> <li>• Food Picture Cards and Study Prints</li> </ul> <a href="https://bit.ly/3yKhWFi">https://bit.ly/3yKhWFi</a>
4-6	Introduce CFG and begin teaching students about how all foods fit into it.  <i>E.g., Sort foods into their categories: vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Guided Discovery of Canada's Food Guide</li> <li>• Food Picture Cards and Study Prints</li> </ul> <a href="https://bit.ly/3okyZsw">https://bit.ly/3okyZsw</a>
7-9	Connect CFG to food preferences when planning meals and snacks.  <i>E.g., Translate food categorization into hands-on skill development.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food for Me</li> <li>• DIY Meals and Snacks</li> <li>• A Guided Discovery of Canada's Food Guide</li> </ul> <a href="https://bit.ly/3ohxlrG">https://bit.ly/3ohxlrG</a>
10-12	Explore complex and abstract concepts such as food systems and the role of nutrients in the body.  <i>E.g., Consider variety and balance while planning and preparing meals and snacks that meet personal needs, using CFG as a tool.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding Canada</li> </ul> <a href="https://bit.ly/3aTsnhR">https://bit.ly/3aTsnhR</a>

## EASY RECIPE: BLACK BEAN PROTEIN BALLS

Adapted from [thezestfull.com](http://thezestfull.com)

This tasty, allergy-friendly no-bake recipe will be a hit for grown-ups and kids alike! The black beans are truly well-hidden – we've tested them with groups of youth leaders from the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program with great success.

### Ingredients

- 14oz can of black beans, rinsed well
- 4 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp vegetable or canola oil
- 1/4 cup cocoa powder
- 1-1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup unsweetened coconut flakes
- 1/3 cup chocolate chips

### Directions

1. In a food processor, blend black beans, honey, oil and cocoa together until a smooth paste is formed. If you think you've blended it enough, blend it for 30 seconds more.
2. Transfer paste to a bowl and mix in rolled oats, coconut flakes and chocolate chips until very well combined. Again: if you think it's mixed well enough, mix some more.
3. Roll into balls. You can weigh them out for precision or eyeball them. If you weigh them, take the overall weight of the dough and divide by 30 - you should end up with roughly 20g per ball. When rolling, the dough may crumble – squeeze it like dry play-dough and gently roll between your hands.

That's it! Keep your protein balls refrigerated for up to 3 weeks, or freeze them to keep them longer. ■





## WALKING WITH ELDERS

By Tracey Coutts, Ever Active Schools

**If the pandemic taught us anything, it's the impact of social isolation. Connecting regularly with the outside world is important for positive mental health for all of us. However, in a Statistics Canada 2012 Health Report, almost one in four adults over the age of 65 (24%) reported that they would have liked to have participated in more social activities in the past year.**

Providing opportunities for older adults to connect with peers and youth in their communities sets the stage for increased interactions and sharing. Enter the Walking with Elders project.

Funded by New Horizons for Seniors, Walking with Elders aims to connect Treaty 6 Elders and Knowledge Keepers with older adults and youth in Parkland County through walk and talks and celebration events.

As a collaborative effort between Ever Active Schools, the Town of Stony Plain, Alberta Parenting for the Future Association and Tri-Region school divisions, this project will be launched in Stony Plain on September 30th and October 1st, 2022, with an invitation to citizens of all ages to gather to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and the International Day of the Older Person.

Prior to the launch, Tri-Region youth will be solicited to submit biographical compositions and artwork to honour Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and older adults in their lives. These submissions will then be mounted on Trail Tales boards ([learn more about Trail Tales on page 12!](#)) and set out along walking paths at the launch event, where guests will be invited to walk, talk and celebrate these inspirational community members.

Reducing social isolation is important to us all. Bringing citizens together to share and celebrate is a great place to start. ■

The Recreational Leadership Spring 2022 cohort celebrates their day in Canmore, Alta.



A Recreational Leadership student, left, helps her teacher, Kaitlyn Mitchell, to use an adaptive road cycle.



## FINDING NEW CLASSROOMS

By Kaitlyn Mitchell, *Ever Active Schools and Students*

**As we crested the hill heading westbound on Highway 1 to Canmore, the mountains became visible for the first time for my group of high school students. The wide eyes and gasps of wonder became more and more apparent – this was the first time some of the students had ever been to the mountains, despite only living an hour away.**

This was a field trip for our Recreational Leadership program to learn and experience adaptive sport opportunities, such as adaptive cycling and trail riders, with Rocky Mountain Adaptive. It was also an opportunity to hike up Heart Creek Trail and experience the beauty and power of being outside in nature. Excitement, nervousness, and anticipation were some of the many emotions being experienced by the students.

Throughout the day, we encountered many “firsts” in nature, which reminded me of the power of land-based teachings in a student’s education and why we should strive to get our students outside when we can. First time dipping our hands in a spring-fed creek, first time seeing a squirrel in the wild, first time exploring the expansive root system of an uprooted tree, and first time listening to the multitude of bird chirps in the trees. Nature lends itself to one of the best classrooms that not all students get to experience!

“A highlight of the year for me was our trip to the mountains,” said one student.

“I never knew how big and powerful the mountains were, the calmness that nature could bring to my life, and the connection I built with my peers that afternoon. I can’t wait to spend more time in the mountains.” ■

## GUIDING YOUNG WOMEN WITH THE ISKWÊWAK CIRCLE

By Chantell Widney, Ever Active Schools

In 2021, Ever Active Schools and the kitaskinaw Education Authority in Enoch Cree Nation came together to create a hub for physical activity, recreation and well-being for the nation's youth.

### Mission in Cree:

kâkakiy kâ-sîtoskâhcik awâsisak  
kinistowinahkik  
otawîhkôsôwiniwâw nehiyâwiwin  
kakaskihtamâsocik miyo  
mamitonêyicikan, otâcahkîwiniwâw,  
miyomahcihôwin, ekwa sohkâtisiwin  
ita kôcicik.

### English Translation:

“To guide and support each awasis (child, a lighted angelic being) to reach their full potential intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically, and to realize a strong maskêcosihk nehiyawak identity within a safe, respectful, and loving learning environment.”

The iskwêwak circle is an initiative of the hub, designed for young women in grades 10-12 at maskêkosak kiskinomâtowikamik school in Enoch. Through the guidance of Elders, the iskwêwak circle provided a safe and welcoming space for young women to come together to learn about culture, try new activities, develop leadership skills and connect with Elders, Indigenous leaders and the néhiyaw ways of knowing.

In Cree culture the “kaytayak” (kêhtê-ayak, ‘elders’) say that the heart and strength of the Nations comes from our women. The Plains Cree word for Fire is “iskotew” (iskotêw). The “otawew” (otêh, ‘heart’) of our lodges/tipis is always the iskotew, as without fire, we would not have survived. As such, fire is seen and understood as “pimatisowin” (pimâtisiwin, ‘life’). The keeper of the lodge fire is iskwew (iskwêw ‘woman’). Iskwewak (iskwêwak, plural) are the givers of life, which is why the second root word in iskotew comes from the Cree word for heart. “

Activities of the iskwêwak circle included a pipe ceremony, traditional medicine teachings, birch water teachings, workshops in relationships and communications, a hip hop workshop taught by Nimihitotân, a leadership talk by N7 athlete Kendra Rosychuk, and finished off with an outdoor wellness camp in Canmore, Alberta, where the girls hiked, biked, and participated in a maps course.

The inaugural year of the iskwêwak circle was a huge success. The girls came together to challenge themselves, learn and build relationships.

One student expressed her joy at participating in the iskwêwak circle.

“My favorite part was when we went hiking ... and I got to lead the hike. I went wherever my heart desired. It was amazing.” ■

## BEING WELL STARTS WITH EQUITY AND INCLUSION

By Jamie Anderson, Ever Active Schools

Ever Active Schools is excited to introduce the Youth Wellness Leader Certificate: a first-of-its-kind leadership training for youth seeking after-school and summer camp employment. The training focuses on the role of equity, diversity, and inclusion in health promotion and well-being.

Youth learn how they can create welcoming and accessible environments for all participants to benefit from the positive outcomes associated with well-being, because everybody deserves to play.

With funding support from RBC Future Launch, we have been able to offer this low-barrier training to youth aged 15-25. The YWLC program is also intended to address youth barriers to graduation and employment by working with schools to support credit-earning, providing equitable access to industry-standard certifications such as High Five's Principles of Healthy Child Development, and working directly with employers to support equitable hiring practices.

Youth play an important role as change agents in school and community settings and we want to equip them with the right tools to have the greatest impact! To bring this opportunity to your community, reach out to us at [info@everactive.org](mailto:info@everactive.org). ■





# TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

Since 2001, Ever Active Schools has been supporting educators to feel confident in their practice and helping school communities to be hubs of well-being. This year is no different!

As Alberta’s teachers prepare to implement a new curriculum this fall, our team has been hard at work making connections to resources that can help. We’ve been focusing on the Physical Education and Wellness curriculum that will be taught in grades K-6, although we are big fans of cross-curricular teaching and learning! Many of these resources can support the competency progression of Personal Growth and Well-being in all subject areas, including the new Math and ELA (K-3) curricula.

We asked our staff to pick one resource for each of the organizing ideas of the Phys. Ed. and Wellness curriculum and share what they like about it. From our toolbox to yours, here is what the Ever Active Schools team recommends:



[bit.ly/bffl-omts](http://bit.ly/bffl-omts)



[bit.ly/fms-flip](http://bit.ly/fms-flip)



[bit.ly/eas-ses](http://bit.ly/eas-ses)

## Resource

## Organizing Idea

### Orange Marks the Spot ..... Active Living

This free download is ideal for introducing spatial awareness, navigation and orienteering to K-6 students. It includes six, one hour-long lesson plans that can be used in a variety of outdoor settings. A great pick for recess or course planning!

### FMS Flip ..... Movement Skill Development

Whether you incorporate these into stations in your phys-ed class, or use them to promote active responses to knowledge-check questions, they are ready-to-use and incredibly adaptable. The visuals are also colourful and inclusive, showing students how to move their bodies!

### Social Emotional Shuffle ..... Character Development

This is EAS’ best selling resource! This deck of cards offers a fun, active way for students to learn about different emotions, and gives them healthy ways to express themselves. It is great for active moments in class, and helps to build social awareness within the classroom.



[bit.ly/eas-olq](http://bit.ly/eas-olq)

### Outdoor Learning Quickdraw ..... Safety

This resource provides teachers with ideas on how to facilitate games and activities through physical literacy, outdoor skills, teamwork and environmental action. Students will interact with the environment while learning about boundaries, responsibility and assessing risk.



[bit.ly/ahs-sn](http://bit.ly/ahs-sn)

### School Nutrition Lesson Plans ..... Healthy Eating

These lesson plans offer easy and flexible cross-curricular opportunities to discuss food and nutrition in K-12 classrooms. They can be implemented as-is or modified for the needs of your students. Use these lesson plans to examine the role that food plays beyond just nutrition!



[bit.ly/emhcr-smho](http://bit.ly/emhcr-smho)

### Everyday Mental Health ..... Healthy Relationships

What's not to love about this free and easy-to-use resource? The site is well-organized so you can search by the skills you want students to learn and practice, including those to build healthy relationships like empathy, kindness, conflict resolution and being a good friend.



[bit.ly/ahs-tsh](http://bit.ly/ahs-tsh)

### TeachingSexualHealth.ca ..... Growth and Development

This free resource from Alberta Health Services includes full lesson plans, talking tips and a plan to set up ground rules so staff and students can build trust and explore growth and development with a feeling of safety. Beginning with basic body functions and progressing through puberty and maturation, this resource lays a foundation for learning outcomes from K-6 and beyond.



[bit.ly/ohpea-ww](http://bit.ly/ohpea-ww)

### Wallet Wellness ..... Financial Literacy

Wallet Wellness provides activities that introduce students to basic financial skills that they will be able to carry with them into adulthood. The activities all work in a very relatable, non-judgmental way that can be understood by students of all socio-economic backgrounds.



**PLAY SHOULD BE FOR EVERYBODY**  
By Jamie Anderson, Ever Active Schools



## The 2020 ParticipACTION report card revealed significant and ongoing gaps in physical activity levels amongst Canadian children and youth.

Less than half of children ages 5-17 are meeting the recommendations for daily physical activity, and only one in five children are engaging in 1.5 or more hours of active play daily (ParticipACTION, 2020). Of greatest concern are the gaps in activity for girls, gender diverse children and children who experience disability. Without access to inclusive movement opportunities, these children are missing out on the positive outcomes associated with physical activity, including improved academic performance, increased self-esteem and self-efficacy, flourishing mental health and more (ParticipACTION, 2020). Beyond physical activity levels, we also recognize the ways in which discrimination and barriers to access can negatively impact other aspects of well-being, including social and emotional well-being.

At Ever Active Schools, we believe that everyone deserves access to health and well-being. Everyone deserves to have opportunities and resources to tend to all dimensions of their well-being. We are committed to ensuring access to play for everybody, because we know that play has an integral role in healthy child development and healthy futures. Through the development of our Youth Wellness Leader Certificate training, we have examined the key values for creating equitable, inclusive, and accessible physical activity opportunities. These key attitudes and values are consolidated in our *Play is for EVERYBODY* framework. Play is for **EVERYBODY** when it is:

### **Equity-seeking**

Our goal is to ensure that everyone has access to well-being, and we have to be intentional about our environment if we want that to happen. Equity is not one-size-fits-all. It requires that flexibility and different entry points, supports, and resources to ensure that everybody gets what they need to support their well-being.

### **Valuing diversity**

Each student comes to us with behaviors, beliefs and characteristics that make them unique. Their value systems, languages, religious beliefs and ways of life also contribute to their self-identity. By valuing each student's identity, culture, interests and strengths, we can positively contribute to their self-concept and build them up as individuals. Give participants opportunities to share their feelings, beliefs, values and perspectives, and teach them how to receive and embrace this information while still honoring the >

differences of their classmates.

### **Emphasizing participation**

Ensure that you emphasize participation and acceptance before skill and effort. Don't fear competition; rather, create an environment where differing levels of competition are welcomed and appreciated. In order to increase movement and decrease sedentary time, we also need to eliminate elimination games.

### **Removing barriers and challenging biases**

Barriers exist at individual, interpersonal and organizational levels. Create an environment where all bodies are valued as good bodies, and encourage participants to embrace the different ways that they move in the world. Addressing our own biases is also important. Bias is a way of understanding the many assumptions that have settled into our brains. The more these assumptions are reinforced or go unaddressed, the more those brain pathways become easier to travel. We have to work to identify and challenge our unconscious biases to reduce harm and increase experiences of belonging.

### **Youth-led**

Leadership comes in many different forms, but all youth play an important role in supporting quality programs and in providing examples for younger participants. It is important to engage youth as leaders in school- and community-based programs!

### **Building belonging**

Belonging is essential when it comes to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. Prioritize relationships over tasks and ensure that all participants have access to caring adults or leaders and the opportunity to make friends.

### **Offering choices**

Offer choices in individual and group, cooperative and competitive, and high and low intensity activities, with equipment, time, rules and more! Choice is empowering for participants and by giving opportunities to practice choosing how they move, we can ensure they feel competent and confident to do so throughout their lives.

### **Designed for accessibility**

Accessibility takes shape through intentionality about our environments, attitudes, communication, equipment and the games and activities we choose. Accessibility means that all participants have access to the benefits of our programming. To create inclusive environments, ensure that all participants are welcomed and valued, are able to fully participate, can experience reciprocal social relationships and are presumed competent and able to engage in ways that feel best for them.

### **Yours for life!**

Find ways to move and play that feel best for you - this will allow you to role model diverse ways of moving and playing with your participants. Consider age-appropriateness and remember that play looks different across ages and life stages. ■

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