

Ever Active Schools

healthy schools alberta.

Supporting healthy school communities



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Feature

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Fitzy Challenge

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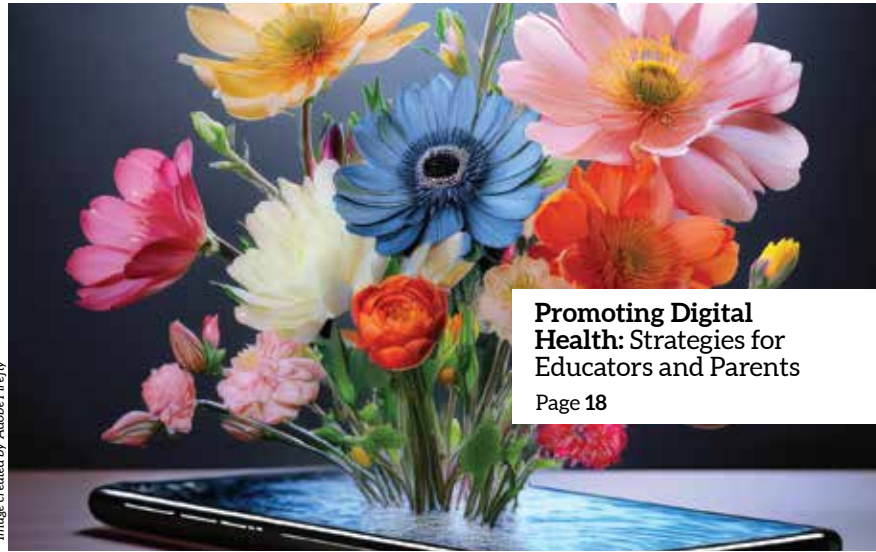


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In This Issue

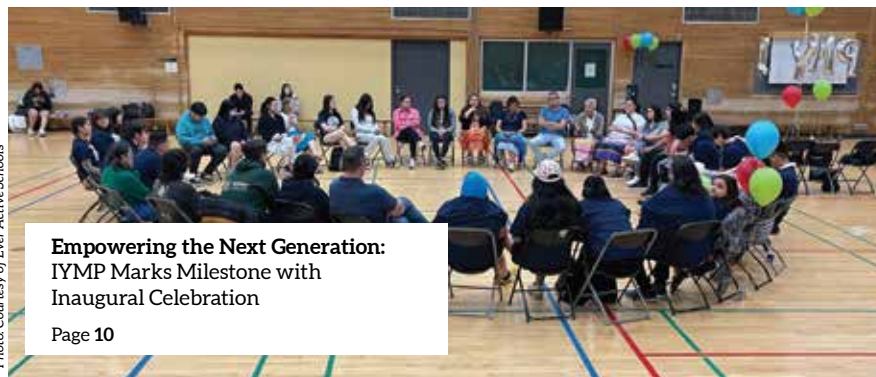
In this issue, we explore stories that center on the theme of **empowerment through well-being**. From fostering balanced relationships with technology in our feature on Digital Well-being, to promoting health and cultural connections in the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP), you'll find narratives that showcase how students, educators, and communities are taking active roles in nurturing well-being.

We also delve into the benefits of Active School Travel (AST), where sustainable transportation choices empower students and families to make healthier, environmentally conscious decisions. These stories collectively emphasize the significance of equipping individuals with the tools and knowledge to enhance both personal and community well-being.



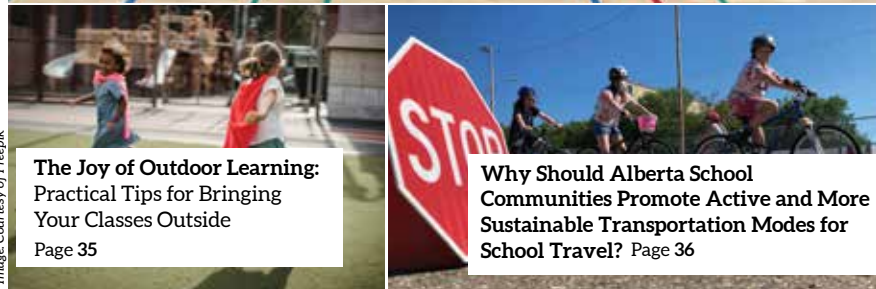
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Empowering the Next Generation: IYMP Marks Milestone with Inaugural Celebration
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Sharing Circle, IYMP Day, May 2024. Photo: Courtesy of Ever Active Schools



The Joy of Outdoor Learning: Practical Tips for Bringing Your Classes Outside
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Why Should Alberta School Communities Promote Active and More Sustainable Transportation Modes for School Travel? Page 36

Image: Courtesy of Freepik

Photo: Courtesy of Ever Active Schools

Ever Active Schools acknowledges that our work takes place on the traditional territories of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Specifically, we are situated on the lands of the Cree, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, and Nakota Sioux Nations, and the Métis Nation in Edmonton, Calgary, and Medicine Hat, as well as the territories of the Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 regions. In Saskatchewan, we recognize the traditional lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota Nations and the Métis Nation. We honor and respect the diverse histories, cultures, and contributions of these Indigenous communities, who have been stewards of these lands since time immemorial. We recognize the ongoing legacy of colonialism and are committed to working collaboratively with Indigenous communities to support the health and well-being of all children and youth. We strive to integrate Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into our practices and programs, fostering an environment of mutual respect and learning. In this spirit, we commit to advancing reconciliation efforts and fostering a culture of inclusion and understanding within the school communities we serve and throughout society as a whole.

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Erynn Biggar | p. 7 and 9

In 2010, Erynn began working with the Be Fit for Life Centre as a fitness instructor, teaching all age groups. In spring 2021, she transitioned to a larger role as a Health and Wellness Consultant with Ever Active Schools, handling youth programming, Fun & Fitness for older adults, summer camps, Active School Travel (AST), and fundraising initiatives.



Dr. Teena Starlight | p. 10

Dr. Teena Starlight is the National Director of Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) at Ever Active Schools. With over two decades of experience with various educational boards and Mount Royal University, she integrates Indigenous Ways of Knowing into her teaching. She focuses on land-based learning, collaborates with elders and organizations, and teaches the Indigenous Perspectives in Education course at MRU.



Andrea Halwas Larsen | p. 20

Andrea Halwas Larsen, PhD, is a Counselling Therapist and a Registered Expressive Arts Therapy Consultant at Juno House since 2015. She uses expressive arts to help clients find emotional connection and meaning, focusing on interpersonal neurobiology, attachment, and emotion-focused therapy. As the Education Coordinator, she also leads presentations on the Juno House Therapeutic Model.



Kaitlyn Mitchell | p. 8 and 26

Kaitlyn is a Health and Wellness Consultant with Ever Active Schools, specializing in the Recreational Leadership program. She collaborates with the City of Calgary and the Calgary Board of Education to deliver recreational leadership programming for high school students at the Central Library. The program helps students gain work experience, develop employability skills, earn high school credits, and have fun.



Emily Kinkade-Speight | p. 24 and 25

Emily is a Health and Wellness Consultant with Ever Active Schools. She is involved in numerous projects focused on empowering youth and reducing barriers. She has facilitated the Youth Wellness Leader Certificate training, built a Community of Practice to enhance employer readiness for underrepresented populations, and collaborated with partners like the Jays Care Foundation and Volunteer AB on program implementation.



Erin Schwab | p. 26

Erin completed her yoga teacher training in 2017 and began teaching with Be Fit For Life in Medicine Hat in 2018. After Be Fit For Life transitioned to Ever Active Schools in 2020, she continued leading youth programs. In 2023, Erin joined Ever Active Schools, part-time, teaching yoga and supporting community engagement. Passionate about staying active, she loves helping others move and connect.



Tracey Coutts | p. 36

Tracey is the Active School Travel (AST) Team Lead at Ever Active Schools. She contributes in the national AST Canada working group, sharing impactful AST policies and best practices with school jurisdictions and municipal decision-makers across Alberta.



Kayla Repas | p. 27

Since joining Ever Active Schools in 2021 as a Health and Wellness Consultant, Kayla has focused on Comprehensive School Health and physical literacy through key projects like **In Good Health**. Kayla has earned multiple fitness certifications and dedicated her career to promoting healthy lifestyles.



Jenn Mireau | p. 34

Jenn joined Ever Active Schools in 2022 as a Health and Wellness Consultant, focusing on inspiring future leaders to embrace a holistic healthy lifestyle. Before this, she led day camps and climbing teams at YMCA Calgary and facilitated experiential learning through the Healthy Living School program.



Katie Mahon | p. 39

Katie joined Ever Active Schools in 2017 as a Provincial Projects Coordinator, focusing on equity and addressing barriers to participation in healthy school communities through a Comprehensive School Health approach. She is currently the Director of Relationships.



Kerri Murray | p. 14

As Director of Strategy and Innovation, Kerri thrives on the variety in her role, from supporting initiatives and writing grants to navigating evaluation and reporting. With a background in health promotion, she focuses on population health strategies for children and youth, particularly in policy development, wellness equity for Indigenous peoples and health economics.



Nathan White | p. 35

Nathan White is the Athletic Director and Department Head of Physical Education at McNally High School. He recently spent two years with Ever Active Schools as a Health and Wellness Consultant, supporting the development of healthy school communities. Nathan is dedicated to fostering active and inclusive environments for students.



Sydnie Erlendson & Cason Machacek | p. 18

Sydnie is the Digital Wellness Family School Liaison Counsellor, Lethbridge School Division. She works with students, parents, and staff to promote well-being through digital practices, emphasizing safe and productive uses of technology.

Cason is a Digital Wellness Teacher at Lethbridge School Division. His goal is to equip students with critical thinking skills and promote a balanced approach to technology.



Jamie Anderson & Chesa Peter | p. 38

Jamie is a Health and Wellness Consultant with Ever Active Schools. He joined the organization in 2018 as the **In Good Health** program facilitator. Since then, he has held numerous projects and roles.

Chesa is a Health and Wellness Consultant with Ever Active Schools. In this role, she supports school communities on their Comprehensive School Health journey, providing physical literacy mentorship, facilitating professional learning, and designing resources.

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Healthy Schools Alberta is an Ever Active Schools' annual publication focused on active and healthy stories, initiatives, resources and more.

Released in September to kick off the new school year, it is distributed through the Alberta Teachers' Association and reaches every school in Alberta (roughly 2,110 schools) as well as a variety of stakeholders in the health, education, sport and recreation and research sectors.

Articles, commentary and editorial material represent the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Ever Active Schools' values.

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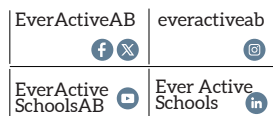
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We're in our Digital Well-being Era: Balancing Technology against Movement, Culture and Getting Outside

Welcome to another school year and another edition of Healthy Schools Alberta from Ever Active Schools.

The conversation around whether organizations should produce a print magazine, newsletter, or other communication materials is always ongoing.

Should we create a print magazine?

Some might argue, "No, I don't think so. It's not very environmentally friendly—just go digital. We've been over this."

"Yes, that's a good point, and we do need to be cautious of the environmental impact of printing, mailing, etc. Even Sports Illustrated is now digital... or wait, are they out of business?"

But have we considered the power of a magazine or newspaper to connect people? Perhaps we could pick up a magazine and share trivia questions (spoiler alert), pass it along to a colleague, or even cut out a favorite article.

The debate remains unresolved—printing does leave an environmental footprint. Yet, in a time when we aim to find ways to put down technology and socially connect with each other, we're offering another print edition of Healthy Schools Alberta! On a personal note, my dad sold pulp and paper for a living, so maybe it's hard for me to turn the page on print.

We are living in a digital age, and there's no turning back. Living with technology requires balance, and we're already seeing the negative mental and physical health effects of too much screen time and overdependence, both in ourselves and in our children and youth. Of course, technology provides tremendous benefits in the ways of

innovation, inclusion and accessibility. What's important is to strike the right balance. The new "standards" from the Government of Alberta to limit distractions are a positive step. I would urge that the next step is to double down on all the protective factors we know can limit dependence on personal devices.

The programs that Ever Active Schools leads and collaborates on focus on building these protective factors. Quality physical education, spending time outdoors, active travel to school, creating environments for social connections, learning, and connecting to Indigenous culture, sport, arts and more are all key drivers of these protective factors. Let's invest in them!

It's about building up the good rather than just banning the bad.

The start of the school year brings opportunities for new habits and routines. While technology and phones will remain a part of our lives, we can continue to explore and learn different ways to practice digital well-being, both individually and within our schools.

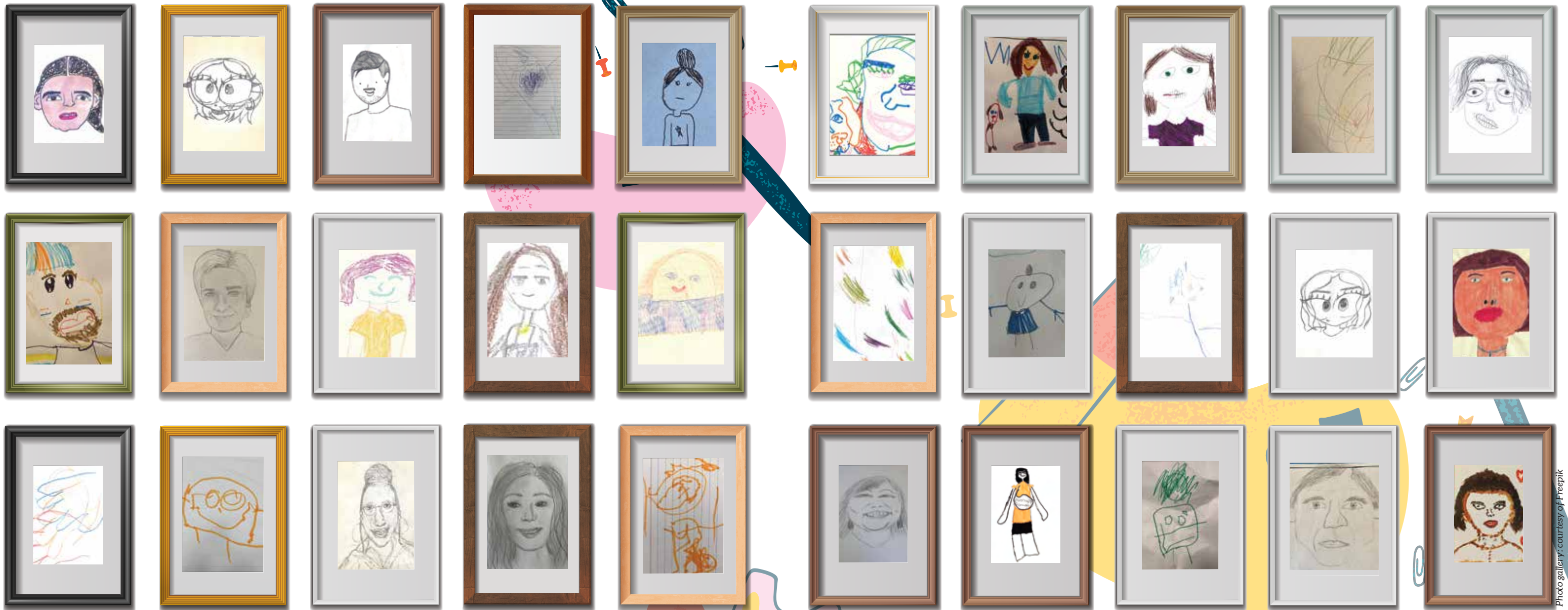
We are excited about the possibilities that 2024/2025 holds. Thank you for the invaluable contributions and positivity in the work that you do each and every day. We are privileged to do this work, and we are grateful for the people we are fortunate to work with—we can't wait to get started.

Thank you for reading, and please create a social connection by sharing an article or passing along the magazine.

Have an amazing year!

Meet The Team

This year, we introduced a creative twist for our "Meet The Team" section. We asked each team member to have a young person in their life draw, paint or color a portrait of them. We encouraged everyone to have fun with it, hoping that the diverse age range of the children involved would beautifully showcase the breadth of our work. Drumroll, please! Here are the masterpieces we received!



Row 1: Left to Right: **Sandeep Kaur** by Mannat, **Amy Risk Richardson** by Brooke (10 yrs), **Mason Ulvestad** by Luke, **Chesa Peter** by Juniper (3 yrs), **Katelynn Theal** by Audrey (7 yrs), **Jenn Mireau** by Aiden, **Kaitlyn Mitchell** by Violet (6 yrs), **Chantell Widney** by Hannah, **Erin Schwab**, **Kai Williamson** by Zofia (11 yrs)

Row 2: Left to Right: **Jason Lafferty** by Frances (7 yrs), **Tracey Coutts** by Cassidy (16 yrs), **Louise McClelland** by Luca (4 yrs), **Katelyn Seiferman** by Tonia, **Emily Kinkade-Speight** by Emberly (6 yrs), **Jamie Anderson** by Miggy (3 yrs), **Krista Trim** by Margaux (4 yrs), **Hayley Degaust** by Fia (4 yrs), **Erynn Biggar** by Brooke (10 yrs), **Kayla Repas** by Scarlett (8 yrs)

Row 3: Left to Right: **Katie Mahon** by Wiley (1 yr), **Efetobore Mike-Ifeta** by Tejiri (3 yrs), **Titun Aderibigbe** by Daniel, **Kerri Murray** by Jess (15 yrs), **Kayla Gale** by Daemia, **Dr. Teena Starlight**, **Amanda Patrick (Cardinal)** by Briar Rose Stanners (8 yrs), **Cassandra Anastacio** by Enzo (4 yrs), **Brian Torrance**, **Laura Douglas** by Audrey (16 yrs)

Other team members (not pictured): **Sam Starr**, **Leith Monaghan**

Check out our team here, alongside our Board of Directors, and Youth and Educator Advisory Councils.



Scan code to see team or go to everactive.org/about/our-people/

The **Fitzy** Challenge

As you flip through the pages of Healthy Schools Alberta this year, keep your eyes peeled for Fitzy, Ever Active Schools' fun-loving mascot who's all about staying active and healthy! Fitzy is here to share all the awesome stories of Ever Active Schools' successes over the past year—from big wins to thrilling new developments. Whenever Fitzy pops up, remember that they're the embodiment of healthy schools, spreading the joy of living a happy, active, and balanced life.

And here's the fun part—don't just follow along, keep track of Fitzy's adventures! At the end of the magazine, you'll find a set of questions all about Fitzy's journey. Get those answers right, and you'll be entered to win a bundle of exciting prizes from our EAS store valued at **\$150 CAD!** It's our special way of saying thanks for being part of our healthy schools adventure. So, keep an eye out for Fitzy, and get ready to show off your knowledge for a chance to win big!



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

As you read Healthy Schools Alberta (HSA) this year, we would love to hear your thoughts! Your feedback is invaluable in helping us create a magazine that's engaging, relevant and meaningful to our community. What do you enjoy most about the magazine? Are there topics or features you would like to see more of? Do you have suggestions for improvement or new ideas to share? Please don't hesitate to reach out to us at info@everactive.org. Your input will help shape the content and direction of HSA for years to come. Thank you for being a valued reader!

River Flats Run, Medicine Hat, 2023. Photo: Courtesy of Ever Active Schools

Intergenerational Connections

Erynn Biggar

Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools



“It was fun to watch the children's enthusiasm participating in the run and it was fun to work with the other supportive volunteers on site.”

-Linda, River Flats Run volunteer

Medicine Hat, known for its mild winters and sunny skies, is a community that embodies compassion and generosity. When local groups need help, Hatters never hesitate to answer the call. This same altruistic spirit was on full display at the end of May 2024, when local seniors volunteered at a multi-school fun run. Elm Street School hosted its annual River Flats Run, drawing over 1,200 elementary students from southeastern Alberta.

When Kayla Repas, the Race Coordinator, mentioned the need for volunteers, I knew exactly who to turn to. I lead fitness classes for older adults -active members of our community who not only enjoy activities like pickleball, golf and bike riding but are also dedicated supporters of local plays, musical theater and charity events. As soon as I shared the need for volunteers for the River Flats Run, these remarkable individuals eagerly stepped up.

Half of the volunteers for the run came from my seniors' fitness class. Among them were Linda and her husband John, who were excited to be part of the event. Reflecting on their experience, Linda said, “This was volunteering we could do, and we found it enjoyable. We felt comfortable participating and look forward to volunteering in the future.” She added, “it was fun to watch the children's enthusiasm participating in the run and it was fun to work with the other supportive volunteers on site.”

Linda and John were paired with two other class members, Patty and Wendy. Patty shared, “Kids are always entertaining. We had many laughs over the comments we heard as they passed our station. It didn't take much time, and it was a lot of fun.” Another pair of volunteers, John and his wife, Dale, served as race “sweepers” on their bikes. Knowing their passion for cycling and their commitment to the community, I had a feeling they wouldn't say no! John even joked, “I think we were press-ganged into helping—there's a history lesson for you. But we enjoyed every minute of it.”

That morning, they rode down on their bikes, ensuring all the kiddos crossed the finish line before heading home. But before they left, they did me one last favor: posing for a picture. As the link between my older adult fitness class and the school, it was truly inspiring to see the older generation giving back to the younger ones. The spirit of giving, role modeling and community was evident throughout the entire event.

It's a privilege to be so closely connected with Medicine Hat's aging population. They have incredible stories, wisdom to share and unique perspectives on life that certainly keep me young! I hope more intergenerational events like this can enrich your school programming as well. I'm deeply grateful to these generous individuals for spending their time with the children of southeastern Alberta, giving back to our community once again.



John and wife, Dale, at the River Flats Run, Medicine Hat, 2024. Photo: Courtesy of Ever Active Schools



Entwistle Library Champions: Integrating Literacy and Physical Literacy Program

Entwistle interior library bookshelves, courtesy ACI Architecture.

Kaitlyn Mitchell

Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

“Creating a space where students were excited to visit the library for both literary and physical activities was a major win.”

Nestled along the banks of the Pembina River, just west of Edmonton, lies the small hamlet of Entwistle, Alberta. With a population of fewer than 500 people, the charming and close-knit community feel of Entwistle are evident as soon as you arrive. At the heart of this community is the Entwistle Library, a vital hub where everyone is greeted by name, and the staff are always ready to assist with anything from scanning documents to signing out library books. Each Friday, around 70 local schoolchildren visit the library for programming and literacy development.

When Ever Active Schools first met with the Entwistle Library team, the conversation naturally turned to how they could connect literacy with physical literacy, engaging students in both for a healthier future.

The library soon became an unexpected hub for promoting physical literacy among the youth. With support from Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, Ever Active Schools and the Entwistle Library embarked on a collaboration to help the community become more active, especially given its distance from Edmonton and limited access to recreational opportunities.

The library purchased sporting equipment like yoga mats, basketballs and snowshoes, which are now available for families to sign out for free. During their weekly visits, students began participating in physical literacy activities right alongside their literary pursuits. A local hip-hop dancer provided lessons, and Ever Active Schools' staff led games and team-building exercises, introducing students to new, fun ways to stay active and healthy.

Creating a space where students were excited to visit the library for both literary and physical activities was a major win. The community is eager to see what the future holds as this hamlet continues to champion literacy as well as promote health and well-being through physical activity opportunities.

The initiative in this story was made possible by funding from Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities:



Lacing Up for a New Life: Newcomers Embrace Canadian Culture through Learn to Skate Program

Erynn Biggar
Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools



Learning to skate as a kid in Canada is more than just a childhood activity—it's a memory that sticks with you. As a born-and-raised Canadian, skating feels almost second nature. When winter rolls around, outdoor rinks appear in neighborhoods and backyards, bringing everyone together for a beloved national pastime. For many of us, those first wobbly steps on the ice are a rite of passage, creating moments that become a natural and cherished part of who we are.

The Learn to Skate program in Medicine Hat, emerged from our Resettlement Through Recreation initiative, designed to introduce newcomer children and youth to Canada through recreational opportunities. As one participant perfectly put it, "What could be more Canadian than embracing our winter months and learning to skate on frozen water?"



The dream of bringing a Learn to Skate program to Medicine Hat came together slowly. With an existing partnership with Saamis Immigration Services, we just needed to work out the logistics. For anyone interested in implementing a similar program, here are the steps we followed:

- **Find available, consistent ice times** - We secured three Friday afternoons in a row at the local arena.
- **Gather equipment** - Skates and helmets are essential for skating. We were fortunate to receive skates and helmets donated by a Calgary school we had supported previously. We were short a few adult sized helmets, but the City of Medicine Hat and Medicine Hat Adaptive Sport and Recreation lent us some from their supplies.

- **Find experienced instructors** - Contact local figure skating clubs, hockey teams, or power skating groups. We reached out to the Medicine Hat College Rattlers women's ice hockey team, who were excited to help. They said, "We'd love to be part of this program!"

The excitement truly began when we introduced the idea of skating to our newcomer families. Many were unfamiliar with hockey, so we arranged for them to watch a Rattlers game. The Rattlers graciously hosted 44 newcomers at a home game in late January of 2024. The experience was eye-opening for many, as one newcomer reflected, "This was my first time seeing hockey, and it was incredible. I was in awe and even cried a little. I FaceTimed my family back home to share the experience."

A month later, those same families laced up their skates and joined our Learn to Skate program. The very players they had watched during the game were now helping them on the ice. "It was amazing to have the Rattlers help us," one participant said, "they showed us how to skate, encouraged us when we fell, and cheered us on. It felt like we were part of something special."

Newcomers ranging from ages 6 to over 20 joined in, including a Saamis Immigration volunteer who had lived in Canada for three years and finally got the chance to skate. She said, "I've always wanted to try skating but was afraid I wouldn't know how. Participating in this program was a dream come true for me."

The entire Rattlers team, their head coach and his family provided essential support, making the program a resounding success. Each participant had a player by their side, guiding them, encouraging them, and celebrating their achievements.

This is the power of sport, community, and Canadian culture—bringing people together and creating unforgettable experiences.

This work would not be possible without the partnership of the following organizations:





Empowering the Next Generation: IYMP Marks Milestone with Inaugural Celebration



Dr. Teena Starlight
National Director, Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP),
Ever Active Schools



Sharing Circle, Inaugural IYMP Day, University of Alberta. Photo: Courtesy of Ever Active Schools

On June 6, 2024, the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP) celebrated a significant milestone with its inaugural IYMP Day at the University of Alberta. Thanks to the generous support of Air Canada Foundation, we brought together 32 IYMP mentors and 13 program leaders from Stoney Nakoda First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools, Paul Band First Nation and Cumberland House Cree Nation to honor the students who have contributed so meaningfully to the program.

The day began with a heartfelt opening prayer by Elder Flora Northwest, setting a tone of reverence and community. Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Rick Wilson, and I were honored to welcome everyone with heartfelt addresses. As I mentioned to the students, "Today is a celebration of your hard work, dedication, and the bright futures that lie ahead."

The First Peoples' House team introduced themselves and guided the students on a tour of the University, before gathering for a feast that marked the beginning of the celebrations.

Students were honoured with certificates recognizing their contributions to the program. Swag bags, complete with IYMP T-shirts were handed out, and the real fun began. "Seeing everyone in their IYMP T-shirts was fantastic," said one participant, "it made me feel like part of something bigger."

The day was filled with traditional Indigenous games and classic team-building

activities. As the games wrapped up, we gathered in a sharing circle. Here, students had the chance to express how IYMP had impacted their lives. "Because of IYMP, I see myself going to university," one student shared. Another added, "I am a better mentor because of IYMP," while another expressed, "I want to apply for post-secondary education now, thanks to this program." A participant also noted, "I got to travel and meet new people through IYMP, which was an amazing experience."

These reflections are more than words; they are a testament to the personal growth and empowerment that IYMP fosters in its participants.

Indigenous students face numerous challenges in education and employment. By creating a welcoming and supportive environment at the University of Alberta, we enhance the likelihood of students pursuing higher education after graduation. Our collaboration with First Peoples' House helps build relationships that ensure students feel welcomed and supported. IYMP's support extends beyond graduation, aiding students in education, employment and continued mentorship.

We are deeply grateful to our sponsor, Air Canada Foundation, whose support made this day possible. Thanks to the generous and invaluable support of sponsors like Air Canada Foundation, we can continue to celebrate and support Indigenous youth.

IYMP remains committed to recognizing the contributions of youth, providing opportunities for travel, meeting new people and fostering community.

IYMP Day was proudly sponsored by Air Canada Foundation



Learn more about IYMP:



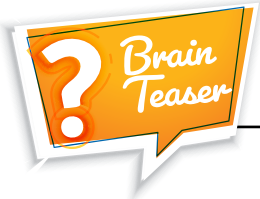
Scan code or go to iymp.ca

91% of children and youth surveyed say we've helped them connect with their culture!

100% of the surveyed kiddos we worked with say we helped them celebrate their culture in style!

-2023/2024 EAS Annual Report





The following questions are inspired by the stories in the **In The Community** section. Ready to test your smarts? Feel free to revisit the stories if you need a refresher!

1. **What event brought together over 1,200 elementary-aged students?**
 - A) River Flats Run
 - B) Multi-school fun run
 - C) Intergenerational event
 - D) Community volunteer day
2. **What is the name of the initiative that aimed to introduce newcomers to Canadian life through recreation?**
 - A) Resettlement through Recreation
 - B) Shaping the Future
 - C) Saamis Immigration Services
 - D) Medicine Hat College Rattlers
3. **Who donated skates and helmets for the Learn to Skate program in Medicine Hat?**
 - A) Jays Care Foundation
 - B) A Calgary school
 - C) Saamis Immigration Services
 - D) Medicine Hat College Rattlers
4. **What was the age range of newcomers who participated in the Learn to Skate program in Medicine Hat?**
 - A) 6 to 18
 - B) 6 to 20+
 - C) 10 to 25
 - D) 15 to 30
5. **Where is the small hamlet of Entwistle located?**
 - A) East of Edmonton
 - B) West of Edmonton
 - C) North of Edmonton
 - D) South of Edmonton
6. **What is the name of the organization that collaborated with the Entwistle Library to promote physical literacy?**
 - A) Ever Active Schools
 - B) Jumpstart
 - C) Entwistle Community Pool
 - D) Pembina River Group
7. **How many local schoolchildren visit the Entwistle library each Friday for programming and literacy development?**
 - A) Around 20
 - B) Around 50
 - C) Around 70
 - D) Around 100
8. **What was the significance of June 6, 2024, for the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP)?**
 - A) It was the program's anniversary
 - B) It was the day the program was launched
 - C) It was the inaugural IYMP Day held at the University of Alberta
 - D) It was the day the program received sponsorship from Air Canada
9. **How many IYMP mentors attended the IYMP Day event?**
 - A) 13
 - B) 32
 - C) 45
 - D) 50
10. **Which of the following nations were represented at the IYMP Day event?**
 - A) Stoney Nakoda First Nation
 - B) Kehewin Cree Nation
 - C) Enoch Cree Nation
 - D) All of the above
11. **What type of activities did students participate in during the IYMP Day event?**
 - A) Traditional Indigenous games and team-building activities
 - B) Academic workshops and seminars
 - C) Cultural performances and exhibitions
 - D) Sports competitions and tournaments
12. **What is one of the goals of the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (IYMP)?**
 - A) To create a safe and inviting environment for Indigenous students
 - B) To provide academic scholarships to Indigenous students
 - C) To promote Indigenous culture and traditions
 - D) To support Indigenous students only in their first year of university
13. **Why is sponsorship important for IYMP?**
 - A) To fund administrative costs
 - B) To support program expansion and growth
 - C) To support Indigenous youth relocation
 - D) To promote the program through advertising

1. A) River Flats Run 2. A) Resettlement through Recreation 3. B) A Calgary school 4. B) 6 to 20+ 5. B) West of Edmonton 6. A) Ever Active Schools 7. C) Around 70 8. C) It was the inaugural IYMP Day held at the University of Alberta 9. B) 32 10. D) All of the above 11. A) Traditional Indigenous games and team-building activities 12. A) To create a safe and inviting environment for Indigenous students 13. B) To support program expansion and growth

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Allow Us to Reintroduce Ourselves

“We help children and youth experience well-being across every dimension of health. We support them with tools and skills to be well, well into the future.”

Kerri Murray

Director of Strategy and Innovation,
Ever Active Schools

Sometimes, it's tough to explain what we do at first. When someone new asks, the conversation usually starts like this:

"So, what do you do?"

"I work for a charity that promotes health in schools."

"Are you a teacher?"

"No."

"Are you a nurse?"

"No."

Besides making me sound like the least interesting person at the party, you can see the conversation often begins with what we are not. So let's run with that. Allow me to reintroduce Ever Active Schools by starting with what we **don't do**.

We don't just do physical activity

I know, I know, it's in our name. While Ever Active Schools started 21 years ago to support health and physical education teachers, we now embrace a multi-dimensional view of health. Social, spiritual, mental, emotional, financial, occupational and environmental well-being are just as important as physical health.

We don't work only in schools

Schools are places where well-being can be experienced, practised, learned about and modelled. Ever Active Schools takes a settings-based approach

to supporting young people where they live, learn and play. This includes both schools and community spaces.

We don't do downstream and targeted interventions

There's a well-known story in public health about a river. Standing by the river, one sees many people have fallen in from somewhere upstream. The downstream approach is to help people out of the river. The upstream approach is to figure out why people are falling in and stop it from happening. Ever Active Schools provides young people with the knowledge and skills to avoid falling in the river altogether, and we're equipped with life rafts to help those who are already in the river to thrive.

We don't work alone

We are an interdisciplinary team of educators, health professionals, recreation leaders, community builders and professional staff. This variety of expertise allows

us to work at the intersection of health and education. We collaborate with a wide network of dedicated partners across these sectors, strengthening our shared mission of healthy children and youth.

We can't do it without you

As a registered charity, we rely on grants, foundations, partnerships and donations to sustain our operations and deliver our work. Currently, only 1.5 per cent of our funding comes from donations. We aim to grow in this area because donor dollars have lower administrative costs, give us flexibility and show public support for child and youth well-being.

Now that we've ruled some things out, allow me to share just a few examples to illustrate how we do work and the impact we can have together:

- A young girl from Enoch Cree Nation sews a ribbon skirt as part of an after-school culture and crafts club through the wellness hub – māmawinitowin mīyowāyāwin
- A student from Cappy Smart School teaches their peer a self-regulation technique they recently learned during a difficult moment at recess
- A whole school participates in a community run/walk/roll event in Fort McMurray that celebrates inclusion of all abilities
- A young person, recently arrived to Canada as a refugee, gets to know their new community by exploring local parks on snowshoes
- An elementary class observes traffic outside their school at drop-off time to understand how they might help more families choose active transportation

With these foundations in place, I'd like to reintroduce you to Ever Active Schools. We are a national charity doing local work. Our interdisciplinary team partners with health and education sectors in school and community settings. We help children and youth experience well-being across every dimension of health. We support them with tools and skills to be well, well into the future.

It's nice to meet you again. I hope we will continue to be friends.

Article adapted from "Get To Know Ever Active Schools". Originally published as a blog post on the Ever Active Schools website.

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Photo : Courtesy of Ever Active Communities - Montreal Lake, Ever Active Schools.



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- Blog
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Ever Active Schools in Residence

- Resilient Schools
- Physical Literacy Mentorship
- Active School Travel

Current Projects

Active School Travel
Alberta Active After School
Youth Run Club
Ever Active Communities
Everybody Plays

Learn to Skate
Resettlement Through Recreation
Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program
Teachers of Tomorrow
Youth Wellness Leader Certification

"One of the most impactful moments was the drumming that brought kids to the finish line...It was beautiful to share that powerful moment, uniting culture, ceremony, and sport under the foundation of Truth and Reconciliation."



BRIAN TORRANCE
Executive Director,
Ever Active Schools

"Our goal was to support their recess program... We worked to increase their capacity to be leaders, not only at recess but in their school, developing their skills in emotional intelligence. They've become marvellous leaders, not only within their own school but with others as well."



KRISTA TRIM
Health and Wellness
Consultant, Ever Active Schools

"Everybody was focused on making their own individual skirts, but they would come together as a community, helping each other... I think that really exemplifies the relationship that Enoch Cree Nation and Ever Active Schools have together, working together for the same goals and lifting these kids up."



CHANTELL WIDNEY
Coordinator: Enoch Hub
for Sport and Well-being

Ever Active Schools

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Reflecting on moments of impact



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Promoting Digital Health: Strategies for Educators and Parents

“Taking a multimodal approach to digital well-being requires considerations for mental, physical, social, and emotional health, and how each of these components may be affected by technology use and interactions.”

Sydney Erlendson & Cason Machacek
Digital Wellness Team,
Lethbridge School Division

Understanding “Digital Well-being” can be challenging, as there is no clear, quantifiable way to measure well-being. Through the work that we—the Digital Wellness Team—have done, we understand “digital well-being” as the practice of maintaining a balanced and healthy relationship with the technology that exists in today’s world. Taking a multimodal approach to digital well-being requires considerations for mental, physical, social, and emotional health, and how each of these components may be affected by technology use and interactions. Some primary components of digital well-being include managing screen time effectively to promote functional ergonomics, fostering mindful and intentional use of technology to maintain focus and productivity, and promoting a healthy digital diet that includes diverse activities beyond screens.

Our Portfolio

As with any group, youth in school communities have varying levels of digital use and interaction. This may be due to a multitude of reasons, including (but not limited to) a family’s values surrounding digital media, access to technology and personal devices, and a young person’s level of comfort within the digital world. Certain classrooms, schools, and even school divisions may also have varying degrees of guidelines and restrictions surrounding technology use in the school setting. Our role in the Lethbridge School Division is to provide education and support through the lens of digital well-being. While our title demonstrates a strong focus on the “digital” component, we have found significant importance in approaching digital well-being

from the perspective of well-being for the entire person.

Our approach aims to get people to consider different facets that make up well-being and how each of these facets may be impacted by digital involvement. Within the concept of “digital well-being” or “digitally thriving,” we take into consideration components such as relationships, communication, self-concept, environment, productivity, and overall physical and mental health. With these different areas of focus, our Digital Wellness Teacher creates ready-to-implement lessons and instructional modules for classroom teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Our Digital Wellness Counsellor, Sydney Erlendson, provides consultation for wellness team members and offers customized supports and strategies for individual students through a counselling lens.

Current Awareness and Landscape

Working through this lens, we have had the opportunity to see firsthand some of the ways that students are interacting with devices and some of the associated challenges. While our team operates specifically within one division, the concerns surrounding the impacts of technology on young people are not unique to any one place. We are seeing a rising number of youth experiencing mental health diagnoses and reports of concerning online behaviour from students, families, school-based staff, and law enforcement. While we do not publicize specific data findings through this portfolio, research and dialogue surrounding the potential correlations between technology and well-being guide our approaches with



Image created by Adobe Firefly

students. Hearing from school-based staff members and parents has given our team perspective on how universal many of these behaviours and emotions are. Regardless of any potential guidelines or restrictions on personal device access in school settings, we recognize that these standards will not eliminate concerns surrounding online activity in youth. This has encouraged us to continue conversations and education on this topic and support others as they do the same.

Reflection of Collaborative Opportunities

Our team was recently featured on The Podclass, a podcast by Ever Active Schools that focuses on maximizing the health and well-being of students and teachers. This opportunity allowed us to share some of the findings and insights that our team has gathered through this portfolio. Discussing the work we have done in classroom settings and with families, and engaging in dialogue about the challenges students face, was enlightening. Experiences like these provide us with the chance to receive feedback and perspective from individuals who share our commitment and passion for well-being. We are encouraged by the growing number of available resources on this topic and will continue to evolve our landscape by exploring them.

Actionable Strategies

Our portfolio invites all individuals to reflect on their own digital habits. As we have moved through the first year of this work, many of our conversations started by reflecting on our personal habits surrounding technology. We considered times when we used technology as a tool of convenience, as a coping strategy or self-regulating mechanism, and when we reached for our devices automatically, without clear purposes.

Through these reflections and our year of research, we have developed strategies and considerations for technology use in young people. Making time each day for “analog activities” (activities that do not involve screens) is a great way to promote balance. In a classroom setting, this may involve things like a board game/puzzle station, reflective journaling, opportunities to learn a new language, or scheduled times for outdoor activities. It is important to recognize that

technology is often viewed as a tool of convenience to help us complete activities and interactions throughout the day, but it is not always essential. Reducing our reliance on technology may help guide us toward a balanced relationship with it. This can be further demonstrated through behaviour modelling, both in and out of the classroom. Finding time to connect face-to-face is key to preserving or restoring relationships and communication practices.

In the school setting, we encourage teachers or administrators to host clubs or conversations that amplify students’ voices and perspectives on this topic.

Part of our role in promoting digital well-being in our community is connecting individuals with available resources. We have explored podcasts, presentations, professional learning webinars, books, and hosted collaborations with professionals from various backgrounds. We encourage people to lead with curiosity about this topic and diversify their understandings by seeking perspectives that may differ from their own. Our team has developed a website¹ that shares numerous resources, both externally vetted and locally developed. It is through these resources and others that we have developed an evolving pedagogy around digital well-being.

Moving Forward

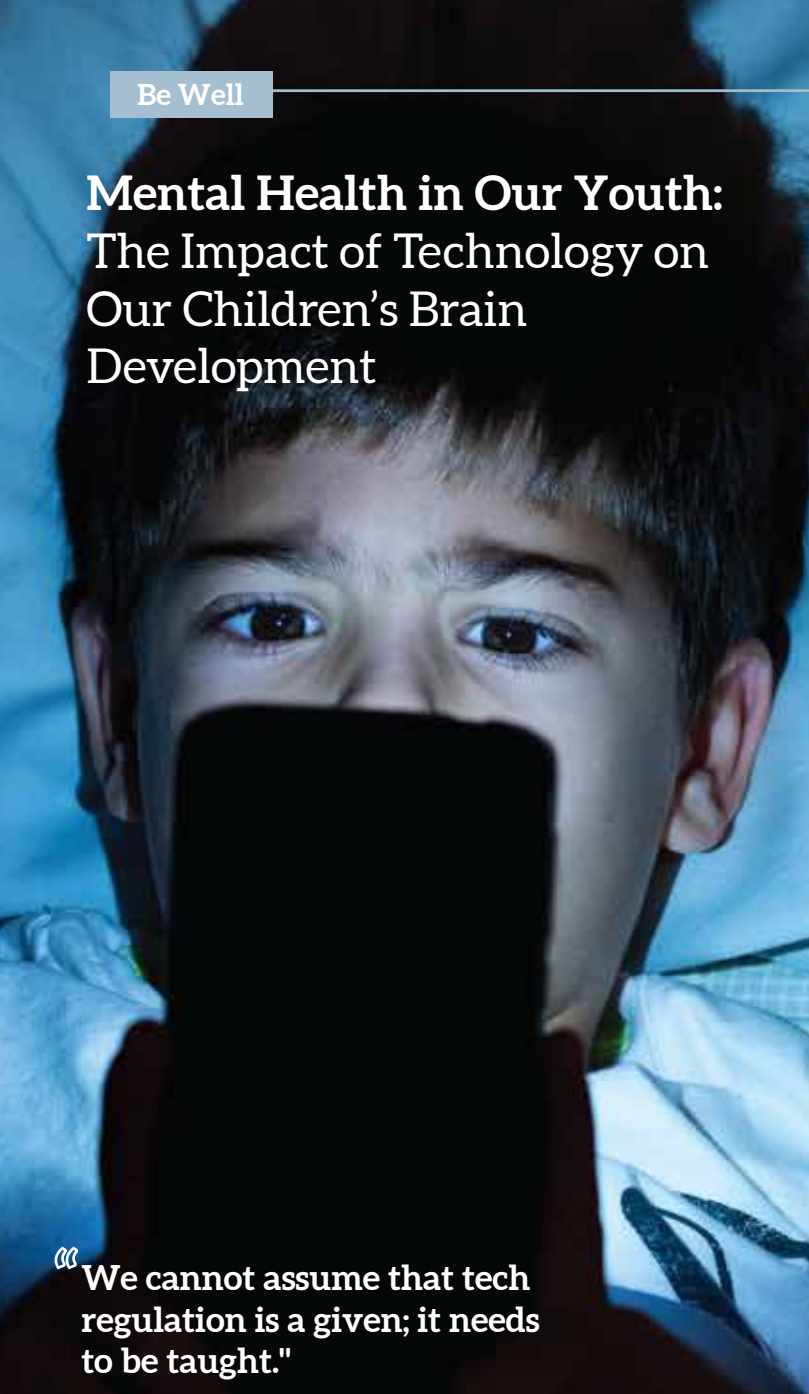
Recently, Alberta’s Minister of Education outlined guidelines for the use of personal devices in classroom settings. This announcement has confirmed the important need for promoting positive relationships with technology. Our hope is that promoting digital well-being through articles, podcasts or other learning opportunities will encourage individuals to explore digital well-being concepts and continue to develop their frameworks. Our mission and values centered on digital well-being will guide us in continuing to prioritize this critical aspect of overall well-being for youth and those who support them.

Footnote:

1. Lethbridge School Division Digital Wellness website



Mental Health in Our Youth: The Impact of Technology on Our Children's Brain Development



"We cannot assume that tech regulation is a given; it needs to be taught."

Andrea Halwas Larsen, PhD

Associate Therapist, Juno House, Calgary, AB.

Juno House is a private practice counselling centre specializing in working with adolescent girls and young women and their families.



Learn about Juno House:



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"MY CHILD IS ADDICTED TO THEIR PHONE AND WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT."

This is a common theme we hear at Juno House in Calgary. However, thanks to current research in interpersonal neurobiology and evidence-based clinical data, it's clear that the responsibility of technology management doesn't lie solely with children; it's also a parental and school responsibility.

Research shows that it is physically impossible for a developing brain to manage their technology (*The Big Disconnect*, Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair, 2013)¹. Understanding this helps us support children and helps them develop a healthy relationship with their devices.

This is a new landscape for parents. No parent has ever faced this level of digital distraction. Parents of this generation were caught up in the whirlwind, and now the stakes are higher than ever, with an emergency in child and adolescent mental health declared by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2021 (*The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt, 2024)².

Technology, once a convenience, became essential during the pandemic in 2020. Children and teens relied on their devices to connect to peers, education and the outside world. We have inadvertently created a generation who thinks they need their device to feel seen, safe and connected and are developing their sense of self-worth based on their 'likes' on social media (*Growing Up in Public*, Devorah Heitner, 2023)³. However, the devices are actually interrupting healthy brain development that is so crucial in the first twenty-five years of a child's life (*Brain Storm*, Dr. Daniel Siegel, 2011)⁴.

The biggest risk is how children and teens are using technology, in particular social media, to soothe themselves at the detriment of their mental health (*The Big Disconnect*, Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair, 2013)⁵. Technology is a stimulant and it is wired to the dopamine addictive centre of the brain (*How to Break Up with Your Phone*, Catherine Price, 2018)⁶. Children and teens are consistently stimulating their brains with their devices, contrary to what healthy brain development needs.

For the growth of an integrated prefrontal cortex, children and teens need stimulation in short bursts, but then they need long periods of reflection time and physical movement to help the brain process (*The Big*



Image: Courtesy of Freepik

Disconnect, Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair, 2013)⁷. The immediate reactions devices provide, and the expectation of instant responses, make children's brains agitated and anxious when they do not receive immediate feedback. They are not *setting the pattern for lingering in their internal exploration to ponder and problem solve*. They now associate that downtime and time away from their device as causing them more anxiety because they accidentally learned to soothe themselves with a stimulant (*How to Break Up with Your Phone*, Catherine Price, 2018)⁸. Essentially, we are teaching their brains to be addicted to stimulation, making time away from devices feel like dysregulation with heightened fear, shame and sadness.

We cannot assume that tech regulation is a given; it needs to be taught. We need to manage it for them and manage our own tech use so it does not feel punitive, but rather as a way of life. You cannot expect your child to get off their device if you are on yours; we need to be the models of a healthy relationship with the digital world. It's our job to give children boundaries to keep them safe and healthy and it is their job to resist the boundary and push back (*Brain Storm*, Dr. Daniel Siegel, 2011; *Good Inside*, Dr. Becky Kennedy, 2022)⁹. Children need connection and you are it.

So what does that landscape look like? Working primarily with teens and their parents at Juno House, we developed digital rules with families to help manage tech use effectively. Parents need to create "Technology Contracts" with their children. We need to teach good digital habits by having important and collaborative conversations about tech expectations, no-phone zones, tech boundaries and consequences, good sleep etiquette (including no devices in their rooms, turning off devices two hours before bed to allow for non-stimulation time for melatonin production, and relational time with an adult), social media regulations including restricting use until age 16, and discussions about online dangers, low self-esteem from social media leading to increased anxiety and depression, cyber-bullying, online predators, pornography, sextortion, and 'Distributing Without Consent & Cyber Bullying' - a new offence in the Criminal Code.

If you as a parent do not feel comfortable having these conversations with your child, they should probably not have a phone. We have seen the reality firsthand - someone else will be teaching your child these lessons,

Footnotes

- Steiner-Adair, C. (2013). *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in The Digital Age*. HarperCollins.
- Haidt, J. (2024). *The Anxious Generation: How The Digital Age Is Driving Up Anxiety in Young People*. HarperCollins.
- Heitner, D. (2023). *Growing Up in Public: How The digital Age Is Shaping Young Lives*. Henry Holt and Co.
- Siegel, D. J. (2011). *Brain storm: The Power and Purpose of The Teenage Brain*. Random House; Kennedy, B. (2022). *Good inside: A guide to becoming the parent your child needs*. Penguin Life.
- Steiner-Adair, *The Big Disconnect*.

and they could be breaking the law without realizing it. Before we let our children drive a vehicle, we teach them the rules of the road and model how we want them to keep themselves and others safe. We need to do the same with digital literacy.

This responsibility should not just fall on parents. It should fall on all adults to keep children safe. Alberta has just banned cell phones in schools during class time. This is a much needed step to protect our children. Schools need to set boundaries and ensure students understand the role cellphones play in their lives. The work done in the Lethbridge School Division by the Digital Wellness Team, Sydnie Erlendson and Cason Machacek, exemplifies ways that each school division can proactively teach digital literacy and empower today's generation of youth to understand their relationships with technology and educate them on the dangers of what seems to be too good to be true.

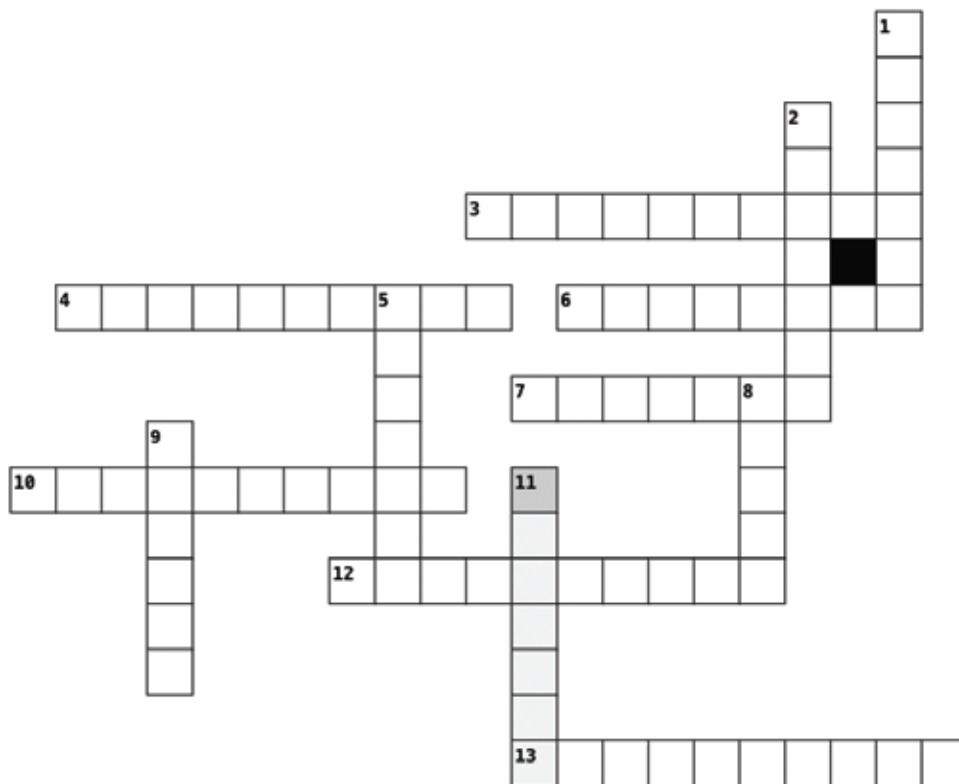
The most powerful tool parents have is their relationship with their child. Our brain sets down patterns based on repetition, and then we have the anticipatory brain patterns that evolve (*The Power of Showing Up*, Dr. Daniel Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson, 2020)¹⁰. Parents have to help their children feel safe, seen and connected without a device; we need to help them feel valued based on more than their curated social media posts. We need to help our children feel comfortable in the relational world. We must scaffold discomfort in children to help them tolerate being bored, anxious, angry, scared, sad or ashamed and recognize that they can move through it without distracting themselves by being on their devices. Then, when our child faces the reality of cyber-bullying or sextortion, they have the capacity to ask for help without shame or fear.

We can empower our children by creating a sense of connection, collaboration and a framework of how to use tech with the message: we are here to help you navigate this. We need to fight fire with fire and offer our children more dopamine than they get from their device. Our connection and relationship with them need to be more soothing than the stimulation of their cellphone. Then their phone can become a tool, not a lifeline.

This is our superpower as parents: to give our children a felt experience of being seen; it is then that they can critically look at their relationship with their device and see that it serves a superficial role in their overall sense of who they are and how much they matter in the world.

- Price, C. (2018). *How to Break Up with Your Phone: The 30-day Plan to Take Back Your Life*. Ten Speed Press. Random House.
- Steiner-Adair, *The Big Disconnect*.
- Price, C., *How to Break Up with Your Phone*.
- Siegel, D. J. (2011). *Brain storm: The Power and Purpose of The Teenage Brain*.
- Siegel, D. J., & Bryson, T. P. (2020). *The Power of Showing Up: How Parental Presence Shapes Who Our Kids Become and How Their Brains Get Wired*. Ballantine Books.

Crossword The crossword below is based on questions from our feature story. Ready to put your knowledge to the test? Don't hesitate to revisit the story if you need a refresher!



Across

- 3. This term describes the approach that considers mental, physical, social, and emotional health in relation to technology use
- 4. The team's goal is to help people achieve a healthy relationship with this
- 6. The landscape of digital wellness includes listening to podcasts and attending these for professional learning
- 7. A practice encouraged by the team to understand and improve technology habits
- 10. A professional who provides consultation and strategies for individual students
- 12. A key component of digital wellness that involves how technology affects physical well-being
- 13. The specific school division where the Digital Wellness Team operates

Down

- 1. A type of activity that helps reduce screen time and improve digital balance
- 2. One of the formats used by the Digital Wellness Team to share their findings
- 5. A form of activity that does not involve screens and helps maintain digital balance
- 8. A type of activity that is essential for preserving relationships and communication
- 9. The practice of setting aside time for activities that don't involve screens to promote balance
- 11. A digital wellness component focusing on maintaining focus and productivity

Across
 3. Multimodal 4. Technology 6. Webinars 7. Reflect 10. Counsellor 12. Ergonomics 13. Lethbridge

Down
 1. Puzzles 2. Podcast 5. Outdoor 8. Clubs 9. Analog 11. Mindful





Let's Play Ball!



Photo: Courtesy of Ever Active Schools

Emily Kinkade-Speight

Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

In September 2023, Ever Active Schools (EAS) and the Jays Care Foundation (JCF), the charitable arm of the Toronto Blue Jays, joined forces to forge a dynamic partnership aimed at empowering schools across Alberta through Jays Care's Affiliate School Program.

This partnership seeks to elevate awareness of the award-winning, inclusion-focused extracurricular program, providing schools with on-the-ground support and equipping educators with the resources needed to level the playing field for youth who often find themselves on the sidelines.

The Affiliate School Program offers a free, accessible opportunity for educators to lead an 8-week inclusive, grassroots baseball program. This initiative uses baseball as a tool to teach students essential life skills inherent to the game, such as teamwork, courage, independence and resilience. Educators are trained in trauma-informed practices, ensuring the program is safe and inclusive for a diverse group of student-athletes, each with their unique needs and goals. The program is designed to harness the power of

sport and play, co-creating reliable programming for children and youth who are often excluded, including self-identified girls, youth with disabilities, Indigenous youth and those facing barriers like poverty or gender identity.

Throughout the 8 weeks, athletes experience a real sense of belonging, the courage to try something new—like different sports or clubs—and the opportunity to develop positive connections and friendships.

Upon enrolling in the program, JCF celebrates athletes like big leaguers at no cost to the schools. JCF provides a comprehensive program manual, including 8 pre-made lesson plans and over 100 games and activities. Schools also receive an \$800 specialized Blue Jays baseball equipment kit, Blue Jays ribbons for every athlete, Toronto Blue Jays t-shirts and hats for all athletes and coaches, and ongoing support from both JCF and EAS.

Jays Care's Theory of Change drives the program's design, which focuses on removing barriers, advancing belonging and fostering a love of sport. The approach



has three key components: **Actions** (Advance equitable access, prioritize belonging, provide quality physical activity, build resiliency), **Outcomes** (a greater love for the sport and physical activity, an enhanced sense of belonging, an increase in life skills like self-regulation, leadership and positive sense of identity) and **Impacts** (stronger more connected communities, continued engagement in sport and physical activity and enhanced well-being). These efforts are making a tangible difference, empowering young people across the country.

Over the past school year, I had the privilege of visiting 14 Affiliate School programs across Alberta, and I was truly impressed. Witnessing educators create inclusive environments where all athletes could try something new, step outside their comfort zones and build confidence and friendships through the power of sport was incredibly inspiring.

During one visit, I overheard a conversation between two Grade 4 athletes while they were on the field, one on first base and the other on second. After a few hits to the field, the student on first base encouraged their teammates, saying, "Come on team, we have to win this game." The student on second base quickly replied, "It's okay if we don't win. Just like coach says, if we're trying our best and having fun, that's what really matters." They then gave the student on first base a high five. That moment brought home the true power and importance of this program, seeing its impact firsthand.

One coach from Alberta shared, "I am truly blown away by this program. The support that is offered, the equipment provided, I am truly without words and incredibly grateful. As a coach this program has been my favorite experience yet."

Thanks to this partnership, we have seen a significant increase in the number of Alberta schools participating in the Affiliate School Program, growing from 40 schools in 2022-2023 to 115 schools in 2023-2024. If you're looking for ways to engage students outside the classroom and are committed to making a meaningful impact, we want you on our team!

To apply to become an Affiliate School and join Jays Care Foundation and Ever Active Schools on this journey, please scan the QR code below. You and your students won't regret it!

Sign up!



Scan code or go to
mlb.com/bluejays/
community/jays-care/
affiliate-school-program/en

Jays Care All-Star Regional Event

Extra, Extra, read all about it!

On May 23rd, 2024, at Rotary Challenger Park in Calgary, AB, Jays Care Foundation, in partnership with Ever Active Schools, hosted the first-ever All-Star Series event for schools in the Affiliate School Program. Coaches and athletes from 9 schools across the province gathered for a day filled with action-packed activities that inspired and united communities to celebrate their athletes and create lasting memories.

At the All-Star Series event, athletes were celebrated like 'Big Leaguers,' engaging in fun and inclusive baseball activities designed to make them feel like true All-Stars, both on and off the field. Despite the cold, rainy May day, the warmth, energy, and excitement were palpable. Activities were set up across two baseball fields, including game play in a stadium-like environment, skills and drills sessions where athletes showcased their abilities, inflatables, a photo booth with a Rogers Centre backdrop, creative stations with Toronto Blue Jays-themed games and art activities, and a sensory tent for attendees needing a quieter space to regulate.

The event saw over 210 students, coaches and families in attendance. Hosting the event successfully required a true community effort, with six Jays Care Foundation staff traveling from Toronto and 20 volunteers from WestJet, Rogers, and Ever Active Schools. The combined efforts of staff and volunteers helped create a truly unforgettable experience, ensuring every athlete felt like a star.

While baseball was the central theme, the event focused on significant goals like access, connection, belonging, and fun, rather than simply tallying home runs or pitch speeds. One of the most memorable moments was at the beginning of the day during the opening ceremonies. As each school group arrived, they were directed to the main field, where their names were announced over the microphone. Athletes ran onto the field one by one, basking in the cheers from the crowd and other teams. Witnessing the pride and joy on the faces of these young athletes as they were celebrated like true All-Stars was a powerful moment. It was a magical experience that highlighted the event's true purpose: empowering youth who often sit on the sidelines and celebrating them for the All-Stars they are.





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Canadian Outdoor Experience

Kaitlyn Mitchell

Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

With over 7,000 newcomer students arriving in Calgary in the fall of 2023, Ever Active Schools partnered with the Calgary Board of Education's LEAD (Literacy, English and Academic Development) program to provide physical activity opportunities. The Canadian Outdoor Experience program was created, supporting nearly 200 students with three unique "Canadian" experiences: skating lessons, Indigenous games and a mountain hiking trip. The program aimed to make outdoor activities accessible to students of all abilities, providing a meaningful way to participate.

As students prepared to try skating for the first time, many were eager to share their excitement. One student, new to Canada from Afghanistan, exclaimed, "It was my first day of school and you made it better than my expectations!" A teacher reflected on the experience, noting that many students come from really difficult pasts and how nice it was to see them laughing and smiling and "just being kids again."

Ever Active Schools also hosted a similar experience in Medicine Hat with their "Outdoor Day" event, offering newcomer students a chance to experience bonfires, guided walks and games in their new Canadian environment. Partners like Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, RBC and Catapult Canada played a crucial role in making these opportunities possible.

Breaking Barriers and Building Inclusivity: The Medicine Hat Adaptive Sport Festival

Erin Schwab

Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

In the heart of Medicine Hat, Alberta, something remarkable unfolded in the fall of 2023. Inspired by the annual Parasport Festival in Prince Edward Island, Ever Active Schools, Medicine Hat Adaptive Sport and Recreation, and Autism Alberta joined forces to host an Adaptive Sport Festival aimed at fostering inclusivity and breaking down barriers in sports. This event united educators, students with disabilities, and community members for a transformative experience focused on learning, participation and empowerment.

At the core of the festival was a powerful belief: **everyone deserves the opportunity to engage in sports and physical activities, regardless of ability.** With this ethos, teachers, educational assistants and students from Medicine Hat and surrounding areas came together to explore how to remove barriers and make physical activity accessible to all.

The festival offered a diverse array of activities designed to accommodate a wide range of abilities. Participants immersed themselves in wheelchair sports, adaptive boccia and various gym games, creating an inclusive space where everyone could participate and thrive. Beyond the physical activities, the festival also served as a platform for dialogue and education, empowering attendees to learn from each other and share best practices for fostering inclusive environments.

One of the most significant barriers to participation in adaptive sports and recreation is the fear of doing or

saying the wrong thing. Many hesitate to get involved out of concern for inadvertently offending others. However, the festival embraced a culture of learning and growth, emphasizing that **it's okay to try and even fail**, as long as there's a willingness to learn and improve. This mindset shift encouraged participants to step out of their comfort zones and embrace new experiences, knowing that every attempt contributes to a more inclusive community.

A key lesson from the festival was the importance of individualized modifications. Every participant has unique needs and abilities, and these can vary from day to day. Whether it's adapting equipment or offering choices, the festival highlighted the need for flexibility and personalized support. By tailoring experiences to meet individual needs, organizers ensured that everyone could fully engage and enjoy the activities.

For many, the festival was more than just a one-time event—it was a catalyst for personal growth and transformation. As someone who grew up playing sports and experienced firsthand the doors that athleticism can open, volunteering with the Medicine Hat Adaptive Sport and Recreation programs was an affirming experience. Witnessing the passion and dedication of organizers and participants alike reaffirmed the belief in the power of sports to unite communities and create positive change.



Building Self-Regulation Skills: A Guide for Parents and Educators

Kayla Repas
Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

Image: Courtesy of Freepik

Self-regulation is the ability to manage our behavior, thoughts and emotions appropriately. It is our ability to know when what we are doing is appropriate for the situation and having the ability to redirect if needed (Herndon, 2024).¹

Arlin Cuncic, in "How to Develop and Use Self-Regulation in Your Life,"² highlights the traits of those who have mastered self-regulation:

- Act in accordance with their values
- Calm themselves when upset
- Cheer themselves when feeling down
- Maintain open communication
- Persist through difficult times
- Put forth their best effort
- Remain flexible and adapt to situations
- See the good in others
- Stay clear about their intentions
- Take control of situations when necessary
- View challenges as opportunities

The benefits of developing self regulation skills are crucial for our children and students. These building blocks help them enhance “every aspect of a child’s development, learning and growth, including language learning, school success, attention and problem-solving skills, overall mental and physical health” (McGill & Boaden, 2016).³ Importantly, self-regulation is not just a skill for childhood—it can and should be developed throughout our lives. As we encounter new experiences, we may need different strategies to overcome challenges. Self-regulation empowers individuals to bounce back from stress and pivot when things don’t go as planned, fostering resilience, confidence and compassion.

Whether you’re teaching Division I or Division IV, here are some tips and resources to help develop self-regulation superstars in your classroom:

Tips on Improving Self-Regulation Skills at School:

- Practice mindfulness (guided meditations, breathing techniques, yoga, etc.)
- Incorporate movement and brain breaks
- Explore emotions (through journaling, emotional vocabulary, feelings charts, etc.)
- Set goals (SMART goals, tracking progress)
- Provide positive reinforcement and feedback
- Promote student autonomy (allowing student-led activities and learning)



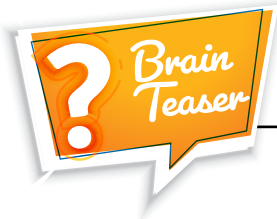
By integrating these strategies and resources, you can help nurture students’ self-regulation skills, setting them on a path toward lifelong success and well-being.

References:

1. Herndon, J. R. (2024, January 21). Self-regulation definition and skills to practice. Verywell Health. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/self-regulation-definition-and-skills-5257605>
2. Cuncic, A. M. (2023, May 5). How to develop and use self-regulation in your life. Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-develop-and-use-self-regulation-in-your-life-5194860>
3. McGill, F., & Boaden, D. (2016). Why self-regulation is important for young children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 44(2), 123-134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0695-x>



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The following questions are inspired by the stories in the **Get Active** section. Ready to test your smarts? Feel free to revisit the stories if you need a refresher!

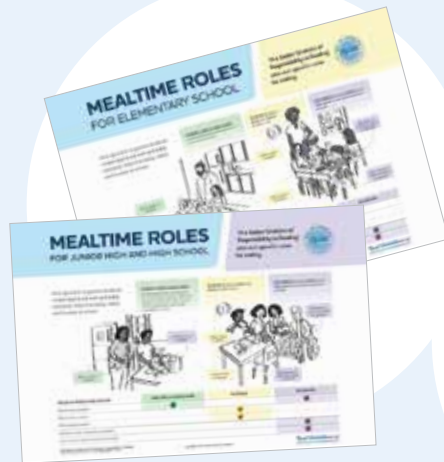
- What is the main goal of the Affiliate School Program?**
 - To increase awareness and provide resources for schools to implement an inclusion-focused extracurricular program
 - To provide equipment and support to participating schools
 - To train educators in trauma-informed practices
 - To promote baseball as a sport
- Which groups are specifically targeted by the Affiliate School Program?**
 - Self-identified girls, youth with disabilities, Indigenous youth, and those facing barriers such as poverty or gender identity
 - Boys, youth with abilities, non-Indigenous youth, and those with economic advantages
 - Coaches, educators, and families
 - Schools, communities, and organizations
- How many schools participated in the Affiliate School Program in Alberta in 2023-2024?**
 - 40
 - 115
 - 210
 - 300
- What program did Ever Active Schools partner with to provide physical activity opportunities for newcomer students?**
 - LEAD program
 - Canadian Outdoor Experience program
 - Jumpstart program
 - Catapult Canada program
- What three unique experiences were provided to students through the Canadian Outdoor Experience program?**
 - Skating lessons, Indigenous games, and a mountain hiking trip
 - Swimming lessons, team sports, and a city tour
 - Cycling lessons, outdoor games, and a park picnic
 - Dance lessons, art classes, and a museum visit
- What was the goal of the Canadian Outdoor Experience program?**
 - To provide competitive sports opportunities for newcomer students
 - To make outdoor activities accessible to students of all abilities
 - To teach newcomer students about Canadian culture
 - To provide academic support for newcomer students
- What inspired the Medicine Hat Adaptive Sport Festival?**
 - The Olympics
 - The Parasport Festival in Prince Edward Island
 - The Special Olympics
 - The Paralympics
- Which organizations joined forces to host the festival?**
 - Ever Active Schools, Medicine Hat Adaptive Sport and Recreation, and Autism Alberta
 - The City of Medicine Hat, the Province of Alberta, and the Canadian Government
 - The Medicine Hat School District, the University of Alberta, and the Alberta Sports Council
 - The Parasport Festival, the Special Olympics, and the Paralympics
- Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of individuals with self-regulation skills?**
 - Acting impulsively without thinking
 - Calming themselves when upset
 - Persisting through difficult times
 - Remaining flexible and adapting to situations
- Why is developing self-regulation skills crucial for children and students?**
 - It only enhances their language learning skills
 - It only improves their school success
 - It enhances various aspects of their development, learning, and growth
 - It has no impact on their development or learning
- What resources does Ever Active Schools offer to support self-regulation skills development?**
 - Only paid resources
 - Only free resources
 - A range of free resources, with additional resources available for purchase
 - No resources

1. A) To increase awareness and provide resources for schools to implement an inclusion-focused extracurricular program 2. A) Self-identified girls, youth with disabilities, Indigenous youth, and those facing barriers such as poverty or gender identity 3. A) 115 4. A) LEAD Program 5. A) Skating lessons, Indigenous games, and a mountain hiking trip 6. B) To make outdoor activities accessible to students of all abilities 7. B) The Parasport Festival in Prince Edward Island 8. A) Ever Active Schools, Medicine Hat Adaptive Sport and Recreation, and Autism Alberta 9. A) Acting impulsively without thinking 10. C) It enhances various aspects of their development, learning, and growth 11. C) A range of free resources, with additional resources available for purchase

Free Resources for School Lunches

School

Mealtime Roles Posters to help everyone enjoy mealtimes at school.



Classroom

Lunch Box Guide activities to complete with students and share with families.



Home

School Lunch Tips for every step of lunch making.



Inspiration for all
Classroom Kitchen recipes offer a variety of ideas, from simple assembly to complex dishes, for classroom use and beyond.



Download or order your free print resources at **TeachNutrition.ca!**

TeachNutrition™

By Dairy Farmers of Canada's Registered Dietitians

Mealtime Roles at Schools

Teach Nutrition™
By Dairy Farmers of Canada's
Registered Dietitians



The foundation for students learning to eat well and having a relaxed food environment at school is understanding the different roles of parents and other caregivers, schools and students in food and eating.

Trust and respect are important aspects of meals and snacks at school. These principles form the foundation of the Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding (Division of Responsibility), created by registered dietitian Ellyn Satter. This evidence-informed approach clearly identifies everyone's role in mealtimes and helps children and youth in the long-term process of learning to eat a variety of foods. It can also help children and youth feel more connected with themselves, their world and their food.

What does the Division of Responsibility look like at school?

Parents and other caregivers decide what foods are packed for meals and snacks. In junior high and high school, students gradually take on this role by choosing from foods available at home or purchasing foods at the school cafeteria or nearby stores and restaurants.

- Trust that families are doing their best. The foods students bring to school reflect their families' needs and resources.
- Respect that each child's food experiences, abilities and preferences are different.

Schools decide when food is eaten.

- Schedule meals and snacks at regular and consistent times.
- Have water available between meals and snacks.

Schools decide where food is eaten.

- Offer students a clean, comfortable place to eat. Even when students are permitted to leave school property, it's beneficial to provide a designated eating space whenever possible.
- Limit distractions such as screens and electronics while eating.

Students decide whether and how much to eat from what was packed. Learning to let students eat in a way that is right for them is an important part of following the Division of Responsibility.

- Trust students to decide whether or not to eat.
- 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 they are hungry for more.

Interested in learning more and sharing this information with your colleagues and families? Visit TeachNutrition.ca to explore the "Mealtime Roles at School" resource. You can also scan the QR code on this page to download or order a free "Mealtime Roles" poster to display in your classroom, lunchroom or cafeteria.



Download Free Mealtime Roles" Poster

Food and Nutrition Literacy in the Classroom and Beyond



Photo: Courtesy of Pexels

Food and Nutrition Literacy (FNL) is an evolving concept that goes beyond food and nutrition knowledge to encompass skills and confidence related to decision making around food. FNL is impacted by external factors such as access to and availability of food.

Food and Nutrition Knowledge - knowing where food comes from, familiarity with different types of food, the nutrients they provide and their impact on health.

Food Skills - the ability to perform tasks such as chopping, measuring, reading a recipe, and following food safe practices to prepare a meal.

Confidence and Decision Making - the ability to choose and prepare foods in a manner that supports a healthy eating pattern, a healthy relationship with food, respect for food traditions, and enjoying meals with others.

Access to and Availability of Food - factors related to the ability to access adequate food, including financial considerations and family food practices.

Why is FNL important?

FNL impacts overall eating patterns. Developing FNL skills during childhood and into early adulthood can support health and well-being. This is timely given reports of a decline in food preparation skills and difficulty accessing healthy food choices in spaces children spend time like recreation centres and other public places.

How can schools support FNL among students?

Schools can support students' food and nutrition knowledge and food skills through:

- Classroom learning and extra-curricular activities related to health, wellness, food and life skills.
- A focus on food exploration at younger ages, with progression to nutrition knowledge, food preparation and decision-making skills.

Schools can weave confidence and decision making around food into knowledge and skill learning opportunities. This can include framing topics around a healthy relationship with food and respect for families' culture, traditions, and ability to access food.

Schools can influence the availability of food in school environments including:

- **What** foods are provided to students by school food service operators including school food programs, canteens, cafeteria, vending, fundraisers, and sporting/social events.
- **When** and **where** students eat food during the school day, including supporting social connections during mealtimes by providing adequate time to eat and minimizing distractions.

Factors such as family food practices and access to food will impact what foods students bring to school. Respect the role of families in deciding what foods are sent. If you are interested in professional development on these topics contact publichealth.nutrition@ahs.ca.

How can we support our own FNL?

As you consider how to support your students' FNL, you may wish to reflect on what FNL means to you personally. If you are interested in expanding your nutrition knowledge, hoping to try some new recipes, or are struggling with food access, scan the QR codes for more information.

AHS Nutrition Services dietitians will have curriculum aligned lesson plans, with a focus on food and nutrition literacy, available for piloting in Fall 2024. Visit the Together4Health Project page on the AHS website to find out how to take part in the pilot.

Recipes



Nutrition



Food Access



Yields 4 Servings

NICE & EASY ONE-POT MACARONI & CHEESE

Prep: 5 min
Cooking: 15 min



This recipe is shared from dairyfarmersofcanada.ca



Ingredients

- 8 oz (250 g) elbow macaroni or 2 cups (500 mL) small pasta shells
- 2 cups (500 mL) Canadian old shredded or extra-old Cheddar cheese
- 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) Canadian milk
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) dry mustard or Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) pepper
- nutmeg ground
- (optional) Hot pepper sauce
- Additional shredded Canadian old or extra-old Cheddar cheese (optional)

Preparation

In a large pot of boiling, salted water, cook pasta according to package directions until just tender but firm (al dente).

Meanwhile, in a blender or food processor (or in a tall container using an immersion blender) combine Canadian cheese, Canadian milk, flour, mustard, pepper and nutmeg. Process until blended and fairly smooth.

When pasta is ready, drain well and return to the pot. Add cheese mixture. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, for about 5 min or until sauce is creamy, smooth and thick. Season to taste hot pepper sauce, if desired. Garnish with extra Canadian cheddar cheese, if desired. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information

Per Serving

Energy:	514 Calories
Protein:	25 g
Carbohydrate:	55 g
Fat:	21 g
Fibre:	2.2 g
Sodium:	418 mg

Top 5 Nutrients

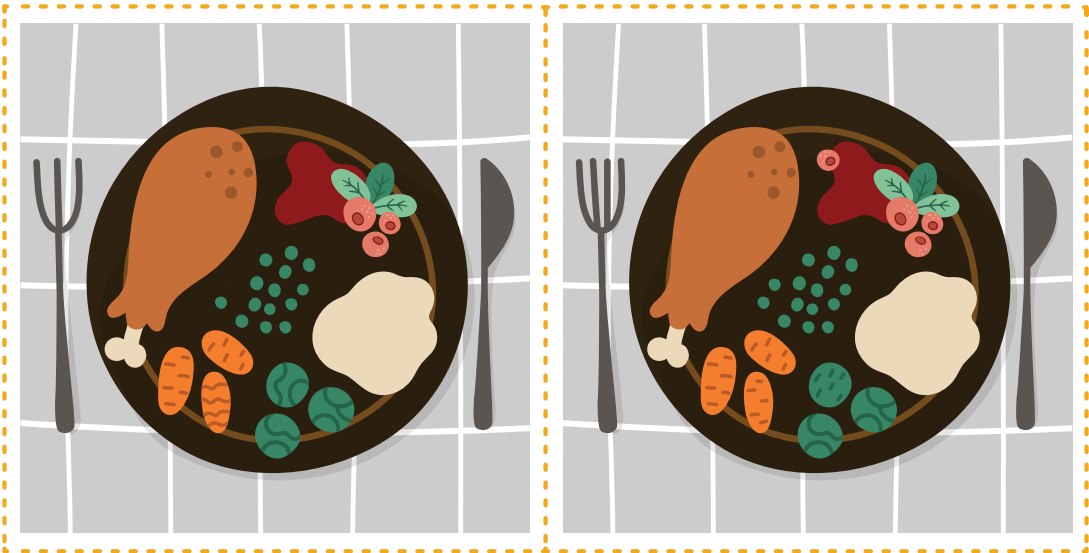
	(% DV*)
Calcium:	49 % / 536 mg
Selenium:	104 %
Folate:	77 %
Thiamin:	48 %
Phosphorus:	45 %

*percentage of daily value

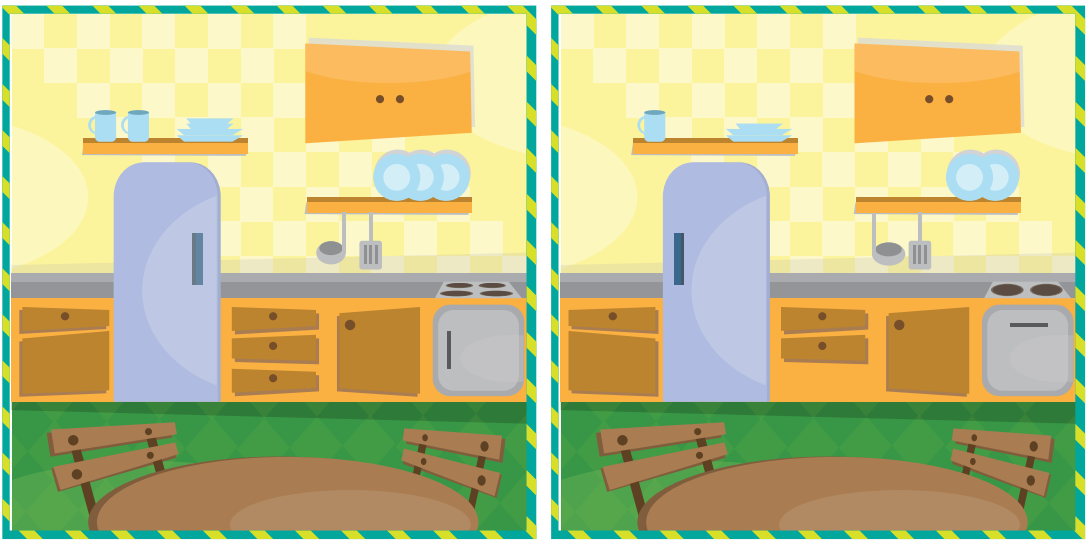
SPOT

THE DIFFERENCE

5
DIFFERENCES



10
DIFFERENCES



The nice & easy one-pot macaroni & cheese recipe by Dairy Farmers of Canada is truly a winner! Do you have any tasty recipes of your own that you'd like to share? If so, send them our way at info@everactive.org. We'd love to feature them on our social media and possibly even include them in next year's issue!

Students as Change-Makers for Healthy School Communities

Jenn Mireau
 Health and Wellness Consultant,
 Ever Active Schools

“There is no lesson more powerful than teaching students that their voices matter and that their actions can make a difference.”

Students are at the heart of every school, and empowering them to become drivers of change is vital. As a Health and Wellness Consultant, I have the privilege of helping students discover the unique strengths that enable them to overcome challenges positively. There is no lesson more powerful than teaching students that their voices matter and that their actions can make a difference. But what does it truly mean to be a change-maker?

For the students at Colonel Walker School, being a change-maker means *“taking something and making it better.”* A class of Grade 5 students recently experienced this firsthand by exploring how social-emotional learning impacts healthy relationships. They began by identifying a range of emotions and learning strategies for self-regulation. Through team challenges, they transformed into leaders, using emotional regulation techniques to engage in conflict resolution. The students then shared their learning with the entire school through an assembly and worked together to create a dedicated space where everyone could practice self-regulation techniques.

At Cappy Smart School, students defined being a change-maker as *“helping others feel accepted for who they are.”* Through the *“Play is for EVERYBODY”* framework, they explored how active play can promote diversity, equity and

inclusion. They learned that play is most impactful when it is adaptive and inclusive, allowing everyone to participate regardless of their differences. These student change-makers designed positive play experiences to share with their peers and used *“Don’t Walk in the Hallway”* decals to create an inclusive space that promotes active play and fosters belonging.

For the students at West Dover School, *“creating a place where everyone feels connected”* is central to being a change-maker. Selected students became play ambassadors, learning how play can positively affect health and well-being. They discovered that play is more than just physical activity—it’s a way to unite people and create a sense of inclusion. These student leaders designed games and activities for cold-weather recesses and organized a school-wide community day dedicated to celebrating active play. During this event, the entire school participated in an art project aimed at building a sense of belonging.

At Belfast School, being a change-maker means *“building a sense of community to make others happy.”* Students realized that understanding their community and connecting with nature fosters a deep sense of belonging. They explored the natural spaces around their school through community walks, outdoor play and team-building activities, strengthening social connections along the way. For Earth Day, the student leaders organized a school-wide event with stations offering games and activities focused on environmental stewardship, land-based learning, cooperative games and outdoor play. The principal remarked, *“Our student change-makers have become key leaders in our school. We were delighted to see them lead the stations and confidently interact with students from all grade levels.”*

These stories highlight how students can drive positive change within their school communities. As educators and mentors, it’s our responsibility to create environments where every student’s voice is heard and every action is impactful. This approach nurtures the development of caring, innovative, and influential leaders for the next generation.



Photo: Courtesy of Pexels_goumbik



Over half the kids and teens we surveyed in our Everybody Plays Programming have jumped into new activities like dance, self-defence, curling, skating, and Indigenous games for the first time.

The Joy of Outdoor Learning

Practical Tips for Bringing Your Classes Outside

Nathan White

Athletic Director and Department Head of Physical Education, McNally High School



Photo: Courtesy of Pexels

During the pandemic, I found myself teaching both Social Studies and Physical Education (PE), with class durations extended to 2.5 hours. My Social Studies students soon started asking, almost pleading, to take our lessons outside. At first, I thought they were just trying to escape their position papers, but after seeing the positive effects the outdoors had on my PE students, I decided to give it a try. The results? Absolutely uplifting. Here's how you can make the most of outdoor learning with your students.

Tip 1: Boost Focus and Engagement by Changing the Scenery

If your students are struggling to stay focused in the classroom, a simple change of scenery can make a massive difference. When I took my students outside, their energy levels immediately shifted and they became more alert and engaged. Research from the Canadian Psychological Association¹ backs this up, showing that nature can significantly enhance attention and concentration. Next time your class feels a bit sluggish, try moving the lesson outdoors. The fresh air and open space will work wonders for their focus and participation (even in the winter!).

Tip 2: Use Nature as a Tool to Enhance Social and Emotional Learning

One of the most heartening changes I noticed when we moved outside was the boost in my students' moods. The usual stresses of the classroom seemed to melt away, replaced by smiles and laughter. According to the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada², there is a direct correlation between time

spent in nature and reduced stress and anxiety. To help your students unwind and feel more connected, consider making outdoor time a regular part of your schedule. Whether it's for a full lesson or just a short break, the emotional benefits can be profound.

Tip 3: Foster Creativity and Critical Thinking with Open-Air Discussions

Outdoor environments are fantastic for sparking creativity and encouraging critical thinking. I found that discussions flowed more freely, and my students' ideas became more innovative when we were outside. Outdoor learning can stimulate curiosity and problem-solving, which I saw firsthand. If you're looking to inspire your students, try holding debates, brainstorming sessions, or even quiet reflection time outdoors. The natural surroundings can provide new perspectives and fuel their imagination.

Conclusion: Simple Steps for Big Results

Bringing your classes outside doesn't have to be a complicated affair, but it can make a big difference. From enhancing focus to reducing stress and boosting creativity, outdoor learning offers a host of benefits that can enrich your students' educational experience. Start with small steps—maybe a weekly outdoor session or even just a few minutes of fresh air during a long lesson. You might be surprised at how much joy and engagement this simple change can bring to your classroom. Give it a try, and watch your students (and your teaching) flourish!

Footnote

1. Canadian Psychological Association. (n.d.). Psychology works fact sheet: Benefits of nature exposure. <https://cpa.ca/psychology-works-fact-sheet-benefits-of-nature-exposure/>
2. Child and Nature Alliance of Canada. (2020). Outdoor play and learning in schools: Pitch deck. https://childnature.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PITCH-DECK_OUTDOOR-PLAY-AND-LEARNING-IN-SCHOOLS.pdf



Why Should Alberta School Communities Promote Active and More Sustainable Transportation Modes for School Travel?

Tracey Coutts
Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

Some data to consider: According to a baseline Family Travel Survey collected by Ever Active Schools between 2019 to 2024 in Alberta, 32.8% of families (n=6190 responses) use active modes of transportation most often for trips to school, while 36.7% of families (n=6403 responses) use active modes most often for trips from school. 22.6% of families surveyed opt for more sustainable transportation options, such as school busing, municipal transit and carpooling, for trips to school, while 23.7% exercise these options for trips from school. These are pretty significant numbers. Let's take a closer look at the why.

Baseline Family Travel Survey (2019-2024)

Transportation Mode	Trips to School (n=6190)	Trips from School (n=6403)
Active Modes	32.8%	36.7%
Sustainable Options	22.6%	23.7%

Extensive benefits are the pay off when students and families make the choice to travel actively for school trips. Of course, the obvious benefit is increased rates of daily physical activity for children and youth (and additional family members who decide to tag along), but there are so many others to consider:

“Children who walk to school have been found to have higher academic performance in terms of attention/alertness, verbal, numerical and reasoning abilities; higher degree of pleasantness and lower levels of stress during the school day and higher levels of happiness, excitement and relaxation on the journey to school. Walking to school can further foster personal growth by developing a sense of independent decision making, emotional bonds with peers and the natural environment and road and traffic safety skills”¹ (University of Toronto, Why Walking to School is Better than Driving Your Kids).

Additionally, when more students and families choose to walk, wheel, ride the school bus, take municipal transit or carpool, traffic volumes and congestion around the school site are reduced. When there are fewer vehicles, there are fewer interactions between them and vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists, etc) which improves safety.



“Tie your shoelaces, Alberta. change is here.”

-Tracey Coutts

Fewer vehicles also equates to reduced emissions which is an important factor in air health. What's more, with global emission reduction targets looming, active transportation is a climate action that many families can adopt. Active School Travel (AST) is also more cost effective, reducing fuel and other transportation costs for families.

School readiness and project set up

- **Assess readiness:** Before getting involved in an Active School Travel (AST) project, the school community should first assess its readiness.
- **Comprehensive School Health (CSH) Framework:** Ever Active Schools utilizes the CSH Framework to engage and support school communities. School administrators are encouraged to review the University of Alberta's Sircle Lab's Essential Conditions for Taking a CSH Approach to gauge readiness.
- **Form an AST team:** If readiness and will is confirmed, the next step is to form a school AST team. This team should include representatives from all stakeholder groups:

school administrators, staff, students, school council members, parents and caregivers and community members.

- **Familiarize with the toolkit:** The AST team should familiarize themselves with Green Communities Canada's School Travel Planning Toolkit to understand the process, timelines and expectations.
- **Connect with municipal committees:** It is recommended that school teams connect with municipal Transportation Advisory Committees to raise awareness and build support for their AST project.
- **Review curricular connections:** School administrators and teaching staff involved in the project should review the AST Curricular Connections resource to understand how the project can support the curriculum, especially if students are to take a leading role in the project (which is recommended).

And away we go!

The School Travel Planning (STP) process provides the tools

necessary to help school communities address traffic safety issues at their school sites and increase the number of students and families choosing active and more sustainable transportation modes for school trips. Given that the STP toolkit was designed with students in mind, there are roles for them to play throughout the process. This intentional inclusion empowers students while the process itself helps them to build civic literacy. Through involvement in STP, students engage in the research process - from baseline data collection (travel surveys, traffic counts and observations, walkabouts), to issue identification and analysis, to creating a problem-solving statement, to action planning and implementation, to follow up data collection - using their own school's data while helping to solve traffic congestion and road safety challenges at their school. Of course, students are not expected to shoulder this challenge alone: school AST teams, school councils, community organizations and municipal Transportation Advisory Committees all play a role.

In addition to those tools that exist as part of the STP toolkit, the following are recommended to support evaluation, encouragement, and education interventions: (a) **bikewalkroll.org** - an easy and engaging online survey tool to help understand how students travel to and from school (b) **AST event days** (*International Walk to School Day, Winter Walk Day, Earth Day, and Wheel Week*) provide encouragement in every season for school communities to get outdoors and get active (c) **Clean Air Responsible Schools (CARS)** by **Inside Education** and **Alberta Airsheds** provide expertise in air health education and assessments to help us better understand the links between our travel choices and behaviours and the environment.

When a school community commits to AST, it is not just one school community that benefits. Given that STP is an evidence-based approach, the data collected throughout the process is extremely valuable to school jurisdiction and municipal transportation decision-makers. AST successes can be easily shared and the project scaled to additional schools, jurisdictions and municipalities, compounding the benefits for all. Tie your shoelaces, Alberta. Change is here.

Reference:

1. University of Toronto. (n.d.). Why walking to school is better than driving your kids. Retrieved from <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/why-walking-school-better-driving-your-kids>

Ready, Set, Resources!



Jamie Anderson
Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

Chesa Peter
Health and Wellness Consultant,
Ever Active Schools

Ever Active Schools is ramping up resource development for the K-6 Physical Education and Wellness (PEW) curriculum! In partnership with Alberta Education, we are creating a brand new suite of digital, student-facing resources in English and French, made available for free on the new Learn Alberta website. With the start of the curriculum renewal process in 2022, we know that teachers continue to develop comfort and confidence with the programs of study and are seeking locally-developed and accessible content for their classrooms.

In the spring of 2024, we began a consultation process to better understand the resources that teachers are using, how they use them, and what they are looking for to advance their implementation of the new PEW curriculum. Through surveys and focus groups, we gathered educator voices and completed a scan to map out the resource landscape and identify any content gaps. We learned that teachers are looking for high-quality, flexible, tech-friendly and free resources that are engaging, inclusive and interactive for their students.

Access to technology varies widely amongst schools and

classrooms, and our respondents indicated that they use digital resources less often in PEW, compared to other subject areas. While websites, PDF downloads, and videos were the top three types of digital resources currently accessed by the teachers we surveyed, they shared that they wanted to have access to interactives, audiocasts, and simulations—formats that provide more opportunity for student engagement.

Eighty-three percent of respondents (n=67) indicated that access to high-quality resources would impact their teaching and learning in PEW. Equipped with this rich feedback, we have set out to build a collection of curriculum-connected and ready-to-use resources that include audiocasts, multi-format posters, digital card decks, interactive slides, and more.

Our first resource drop includes “What We’ll Learn” posters, which summarize the PEW organizing ideas and related knowledge, understanding, skills and processes (KUSPs) for each grade level. They feature student-friendly language, with the eight organizing ideas crafted as “we will” statements and the KUSPs as “I can” statements, intended to support the development of assessment-capable learners.

They also include key vocabulary that teachers can use to build a common language around well-being across subjects and spaces. Teachers can download and print these posters for use in their classrooms or purchase large-print poster sets from the Ever Active Schools online store for their hallway or gymnasium.

Stay tuned as more resources are released throughout the school year, and be sure to look out for opportunities to pilot resources in your own classroom!



“What We’ll Learn” posters, developed by Ever Active Schools.



Four Reasons to Try The Podclass for Professional Development

Katie Mahon

Director of Relationships,
Ever Active Schools



Photo: Courtesy of Freepik

Podcasts are a rich source of information, stories, and entertainment, covering a surprisingly wide range of topics: the history of the elevator, the secret world of moss, Dolly Parton, and much more. Many of us listen to podcasts while cooking, traveling, or exercising. But have you ever considered using podcasts as part of your professional development? Ever Active Schools launched a podcast in late 2020 called The Podclass. Intended as an educational resource, our hosts chat with professionals in health, education, and well-being to explore connections between the three. Here are four reasons why podcast listening is an excellent form of learning:

1. Learn while being well

Podcasts and portability go hand in hand. Because you're only using one sense (hearing), you have the opportunity to do other enjoyable activities simultaneously. Whether you love long walks, crocheting, cooking, or soaking in a bathtub, listening to podcasts allows for intellectual stimulation while doing something good for your well-being.

2. You set the schedule

You've just finished a long day in the classroom and aren't up to sitting at your computer for another webinar. Or you were excited to hear your favorite speaker at an event, but a last-minute appointment came up and now you can't attend. Let's face it, our days don't always go as planned. The beauty of podcast learning is the incredible flexibility of when you can listen! Episodes start when you're ready, you can pause and pick them back up, and they're available for re-listening if you want to hear them again.

3. Access them anywhere

If you've got an internet connection, you've got access to podcasts. Most platforms let you download episodes to your device in case you want to listen offline. If you find yourself traveling through areas with spotty connectivity or don't want to max out your data

plan while going for a bike ride, a bit of pre-planning lets you listen to that expert you've been eager to hear from.

4. Be part of a community

The flexibility and portability of podcasts lend themselves to individualizing your listening experience, but that doesn't mean you have to learn alone. Podcasts are a great way to use a "flipped classroom" approach with your professional development—listen to an episode or series, and join discussions to further your learning. This can be through informal conversations with peers or organizing a group or club to meet and dissect episodes. Alternatively, many podcasts have communities of listeners sharing thoughts and prompting discourse on social media platforms like Facebook groups, Discord servers, subreddits, Twitter threads, and more. These groups can help answer questions and dive deeper with you into episodes or shows.

Check out The Podclass from Ever Active Schools: We talk with experts and practitioners about a variety of comprehensive school health topics and explore practical ideas that teachers, or anyone who interacts with children and youth, can start using the very next day.



Scan code to listen
or go to everactive.org/podclass/

THE PODCLASS
CONVERSATIONS ON SCHOOL HEALTH



The **Fitzy** Challenge

We hope you absolutely loved the stories we shared this year and found some awesome value in them! Did you keep an eye out for Fitzy throughout the issue? Now's your chance to shine! Below are the questions we teased at the start of the magazine. Got the answers? Follow the instructions to enter our draw and you could snag up **\$150 CAD** worth of fabulous goodies from the Ever Active Schools store! We're talking Social and Emotional Shuffle Cards, Outdoor Learning Quickdraw, Neuromuscular Training Warmup, and so much more!

Questions

1. How many times does Fitzy appear in this issue?
2. What is Fitzy doing on page 11, 14, 17 and 33?
3. On page 27, Fitzy is in a yoga pose. What article is on that page?

How to Enter:

1. **Scan QR code** or go to www.everactive.org/findingfitzy/ and follow the instructions
2. **Email your entry** to: info@everactive.org. Be certain to include your full name, complete mailing address (including postal code) and phone number.

Contest Rules

Entries: Maximum of 2 entries per person

Eligibility: Must reside in Canada and be 18 years or older to enter

Entry Method: All entries must be submitted through the official contest entry methods provided in this magazine

Contest Deadline: Closes at 11:59 PM on December 31, 2024

Winner Selection: Winners will be selected randomly from all eligible entries and will be contacted by January 6, 2025

Prizes: One (1) Ever Active Schools Store Bundle valued at \$150 CAD. Prize is non-transferable and cannot be exchanged for cash

Claiming Prizes: Prizes will be mailed to the winners once their identity is verified

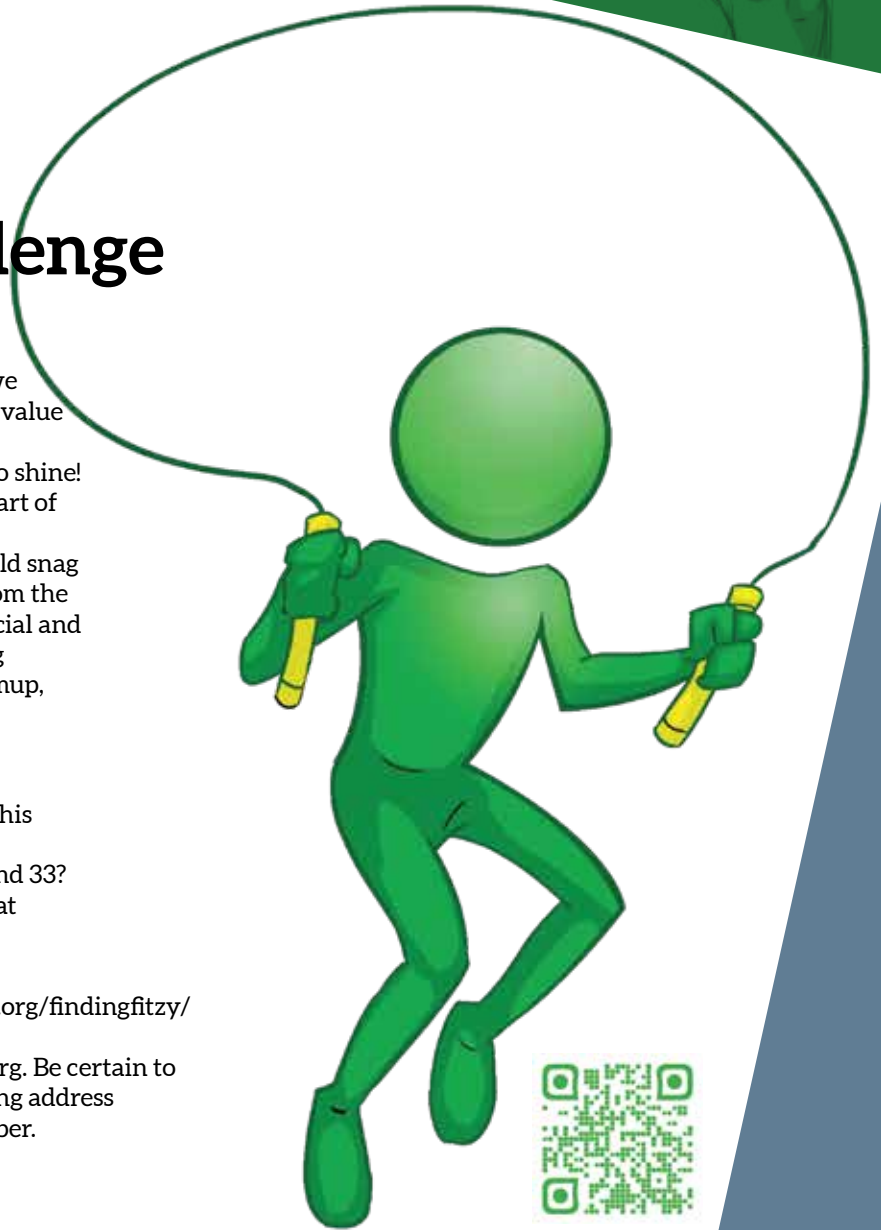
Publicity: By entering the contest, participants consent to the use of their names and entries for promotional purposes by Ever Active Schools, without additional compensation

Exclusions: Staff, Board members, and Advisory Council members of Ever Active Schools are not eligible to enter

Disqualification: Any attempt to tamper with the entry process or gain an unfair advantage will result in disqualification

Responsibility: Ever Active Schools is not responsible for lost, late, incomplete, or misdirected entries

Contest Modifications: Ever Active Schools reserves the right to modify or cancel the contest at any time without prior notice





Reach

274,024

Total people reached

750

Daily average

1,405

Products/services delivered

Breakdown

70%

Engaged with us as individuals (e.g., through workshops or resources).

29%

Reached through school-level interactions.

<1%

Through school authority or association-level interactions.

Unique Schools /Programs

559

Up from 460

Equivalent to all schools in: Edmonton, Red Deer, Airdrie, Lethbridge, Grand Prairie and Saskatoon combined!

Teacher and Staff

5,882

Total Reached

Approximately two-thirds of the entire staff at Edmonton Public Schools.

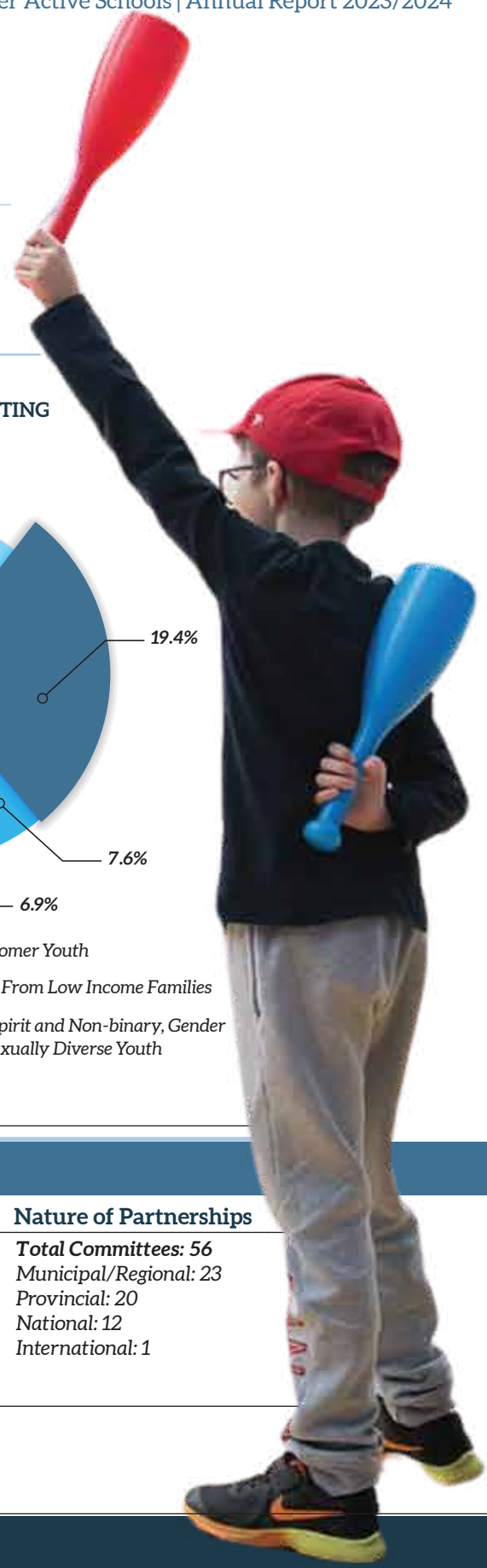
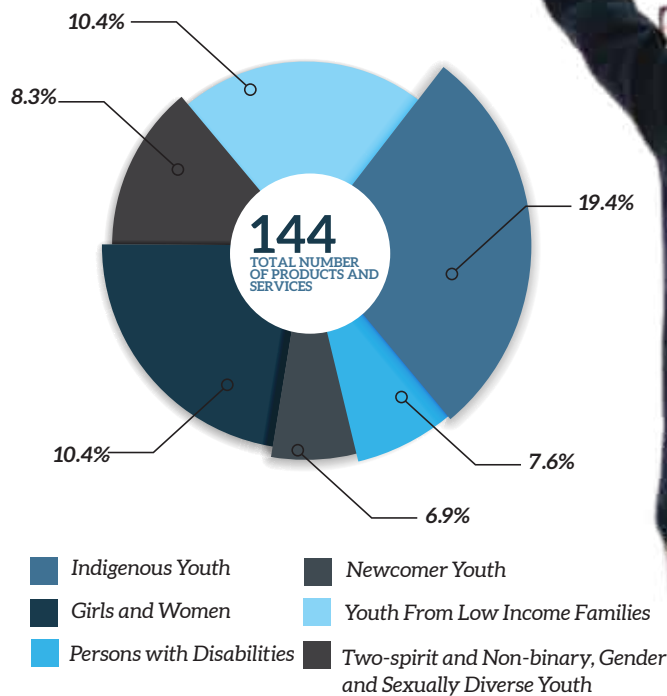
Children and Youth

77,807

Total Reached

Equivalent to more than 1.5 times the population of the Northwest Territories.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES SUPPORTING PRIORITY POPULATIONS



Partnerships

167

Unique

39

New

Partnerships by sector

Health: 20
Education: 36
Recreation/Active Living: 77
Research: 6
Private: 6
Other: 22

Nature of Partnerships

Alliance: 43
Sponsorship: 13
Contract: 29
Win-Win: 65
Shared Venture: 17

Nature of Partnerships

Total Committees: 56
Municipal/Regional: 23
Provincial: 20
National: 12
International: 1

Support and Development

Participants supported to develop/reinforce an average of 5 partners



Read full report

EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS



SHAPING *the* FUTURE

2025

JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 01

**FAIRMONT CHATEAU
LAKE LOUISE**

TREATY 7

[EVERACTIVE.ORG/STF](https://everactive.org/stf)

Learn More:

