APPLE Schools would like to acknowledge the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories, who share a history and deep connection with these lands where our team lives and works. We dedicate ourselves to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

We acknowledge that building relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is a work of the heart that requires a certain humbling to allow our hearts and minds to accept new, and sometimes challenging information, and act on it through questioning privilege and transferring it to those who have less.

The APPLE Schools team is committed to an ongoing reflection of our allyship as we move forward to create an inclusive, safe, and understanding country for all who live on this land.
What is APPLE Schools?
APPLE Schools is an innovative school-focused health promotion initiative. It improves the lives of ~21,000 students annually in 75 schools in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Northwest Territories. The project supports healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health by implementing the comprehensive school health model, and is governed by a board of directors chaired by Dr. Lory Laing.

Why do we need APPLE Schools?
Chronic diseases and obesity have drastically increased in children. According to the 2014 REAL Kids Alberta evaluation, 29 per cent of Grade 5 students in Alberta are overweight, and 8 per cent are obese. Healthy kids learn better, so APPLE Schools works with underserved school communities to make health an easy choice. Students in APPLE schools show a 35% increase in physical activity, eat 10% more fruit and vegetables, and are 40% less likely to be obese than in comparison schools. APPLE Schools helps students eat healthier, move more, and feel better about themselves so they can achieve more academically.


MISSION
To inspire and empower school communities to lead, choose, and be healthy by recommending and supporting measurable and sustainable changes.

VISION
Healthy Kids in Healthy Schools
In the 2020-21 school year, APPLE Schools reached:

- 20,505 students
- 2,451 staff
- 38,960 family members
- ~2,200 new students
- 75 school communities
- 3 provinces
- 1 territory

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According to the report, the organization reached significant milestones, including an increase of ~2,200 new students.
The pandemic continued to affect school communities throughout the 2020-21 school year. The good news is that there is hope in innovation, and tenacious school leaders continue to bring people together through healthy activities that spark joy for students. They have worked hard to strengthen their communities in isolating times. Health is at the forefront and a focal point of decision making, and the need for APPLE Schools’ support is greater than ever.

APPLE Schools has been able to thrive regardless of public health restrictions, and we continue to deliver programming in innovative ways that have high impact. This year we also learned of our project’s high economic impact; every $1 invested in APPLE Schools will save $8.60 in healthcare and indirect costs associated with chronic diseases – a very high return on investment!

Despite hurdles that the pandemic has tossed our way, we are looking forward and cementing the building blocks for impacting even more students across the country.

We are proud of the relationships we have built with school communities and district partners; in some communities, we continue to be a trusted partner since 2008. We look forward to reaching even more communities – we have been working closely with LEAP Pecaut Centre for Social Impact to strengthen our foundation for the next phase as we bolster sustainability and reach more Canadian children.

We extend an enormous thank you to the incredible support of our donors who recognize the value of our vision to make kids healthier for life and continue to support our work.

A very special thank you goes to the teachers, administrators, and students who continue to lead the way and show resilience throughout this global public health crisis. The health promotion work they committed to is paving the way for a bright future where the healthy choice is the easy choice for all.

Please enjoy this annual report of our impact and future path.

Jenn Flynn, Executive Director
Over 14 years of research demonstrates the positive impact of APPLE Schools on sustainable health habits in vulnerable school communities.

Children in APPLE schools demonstrate:

- Decrease in chance of obesity: 40%
- More fruits and vegetables eaten: 10%
- Increase in physical activity: 35%
- Improvements in quality of life, leadership abilities productivity and learning outcomes.
- Fewer mental health visits to the doctor during adolescence than peers who did not attend an APPLE school in their childhood.

Every $1 invested in APPLE Schools will save $8.60 in health care and indirect costs associated with chronic diseases.

INVESTED $21,932,233

$188,617,204 IN FUTURE HEALTHCARE AND INDIRECT COST SAVINGS

To support healthy kids in healthy schools, visit appleschools.ca or find us on social media.

References:
The greatest attestation of the project’s success comes from each and every APPLE school community. Throughout the year, the schools share with us all of the innovative, fun, and healthy initiatives that they choose to adopt as a community to enhance mental health, healthy eating, and physical activity. This is where students learn to embrace lifelong healthy habits, and where the APPLE Schools project comes to life.

**Traditional Learning on Ice**

Grade 11 students in Bill Woodward School in Anzac, Alberta, enjoyed the unique experience of learning to live off the land. They set nets under the ice and gathered fish to consume later. They walked away with the knowledge of how much work and skill it takes to successfully catch fish from start to finish. They also benefited from the insight of elder James Woodward, who carefully explained each step and why it was done that way. After pulling the nets, students learned how to filet the fish and collect white fish scales to use for scale art. Through this community partnership, the high Indigenous student population in the school had the experience of connecting with their culture, and other students learned new perspectives while enjoying physical activity and mental wellness through the great outdoors.

**Staff Wellness with the “Woot Woot Wagon”**

With the additional stressors of the pandemic, the importance of a positive school culture and staff wellness initiatives has come to the forefront in many schools. School staff at École Dickinsfield in Fort McMurray, Alberta, invented the Woot Woot Wagon. Volunteers packed the wagon with healthy snacks to surprise every teacher and educational assistant with a morning pick-me-up while ensuring that the initiative followed Alberta Health Services sanitation guidelines. These small acts of gratitude are essential to building a school community where everyone feels happy, safe, and supported.

“An afternoon outdoors may seem like merely playtime, but it was filled with incredible learning and growth. Mental wellness from fresh air and movement was a huge bonus after a few days of indoor recess. The students loved this activity and I saw how it spilled into other parts of their day – they built shelters in the playground at recess or using blocks or lego in the classroom.”

– Lisa Graves, Kindergarten Teacher

**Enriching Lessons in Outdoor Classrooms**

The kindergarten teacher at Annunciation Catholic School in Edmonton, Alberta, recognized the ideal opportunity to infuse a lesson with the APPLE Schools lens. After discussing winter shelters for animals and humans, she took the class outside and gave them tools to build their own shelter.

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– Lisa Graves, Kindergarten Teacher
Staying Zen with Yoga Pretzel Cards

Staff and students at Father Beauregard School in Fort McMurray, Alberta, are big fans of the APPLE Schools mental health bin – particularly the yoga pretzel cards. They utilize the cards to help students calm their minds and bodies, improve patience and boost confidence through yoga movements, including forward bends, back bends, partner poses and balance poses which are a hit with the students. The school health mentor spent time modelling these resources for new teachers in the school so that they too can promote positive mental health strategies to her students to build their resiliency.

Moving Through the Day with DPA

The school health facilitator at Upper Pine Elementary School in Rose Prairie, British Columbia, used APPLE Schools’ Daily Physical Activity (DPA) bin to engage young students in movement breaks. She went from classroom to classroom demonstrating fun, quick, and easy physical activities, and commented on how much the kindergarten and Grade 1 split class especially enjoyed the tennis ball and dice bins that had them doing push-ups and jumping jacks. Teachers also gave very positive feedback on behalf of the students, and used the sessions to learn how to implement the activities on their own.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

“Since 2015, Inter Pipeline has been a proud supporter of APPLE Schools. It means a lot to our people to be associated with their efforts to positively impact the mental and physical health of so many children in need by way of creating healthy eating habits. We look forward to continuing our relationship with APPLE Schools to strengthen and improve the health and well-being of the northern Alberta school communities within our operating areas.”

– Lorraine Royer, Director, Government and Stakeholder Relations, Inter Pipeline Ltd.
Unleashing Our Potential

In late 2020, APPLE Schools received celebratory news that steered our organization toward a new trajectory. Out of over 7,000 organizations engaged, we were selected as one of only 11 national projects for the LEAP Healthy Futures Accelerator by LEAP Pecaut Centre for Social Impact. As the top project selected, we will be working closely with LEAP for five years to scale APPLE Schools with the goal of supporting many more students. This has been a huge win for all involved – our team, board of directors, donors, and of course the school communities which will ultimately benefit as we advance our impact.

LEAP’s mission is to catalyze large-scale social impact by selecting, supporting, and scaling breakthrough social ventures – that’s us! They will help APPLE Schools to unleash our potential to improve health and reduce chronic disease in Canada.

“APPLE Schools had a solid foundation in leadership, impact, and scalability, AND was tackling the core of the Canadian healthcare problem. APPLE Schools’ intervention aims to truly transform the culture around physical activity, healthy eating, and mental health. Their evidence-based model, along with their persistent growth in communities, serves to highlight the incomparable impacts the organization makes. Additionally, APPLE Schools’ leadership is exceptional and has been integral in the project’s continued success.”

– Sabrina Ladha, Portfolio Director, LEAP

Students trying out a shoe balance challenge as just one way to stay active in class and build healthy habits.
Since being selected, we have hit the ground running to meet our bold ambitions. APPLE Schools’ operations staff have been approaching their roles with a renewed focus on building sound operational practices and sustainability. This new focus is strengthening our base for the next avenue in reaching more Canadians.

Guide to Implementation

Over the years, people from around the world have asked us about how we successfully create healthy school communities.

We are thrilled to have released our guide to implementation called *Building an APPLE School: A roadmap to sustainable healthy school communities*. This document is being used to guide health champions in any school through the journey of preparing to become a healthy school community, the work required to get there, and how to sustain the newly established healthy culture based on our award-winning model. This guide is allowing more Canadians to benefit from 14 years of evidence-based programming, and it is available on our website for all to access.

Supporting Schools Through the Pandemic

During a time when many in-person programs came to a standstill due to COVID-19, APPLE Schools thrived. School communities voiced an increased need for our support. There was a lack of COVID-friendly school wellness resources available, so we sprang into action to fill those gaps. We found, compiled, adapted, and created engaging resources for immediate use so that busy school staff did not have to. As a result of our determination to prioritize wellness during the pandemic, we saw stability in student mental health (see #2 in the Looking Ahead section).

The pandemic did not stop program functionality as schools continued to engage with APPLE Schools’ annual cycle creating action plans, connecting with their mentor, submitting action plans, and engaging in innovative, COVID-friendly healthy initiatives. This year, we shared resources to promote mental health breaks for both staff and students. To kick off the new school year we also created a wellness toolbox filled with fresh ideas to ensure both students and staff were moving regularly, eating well, looking out for their mental health – and of course, having fun!
Knowledge Exchange

APPLE Schools provided tailored virtual professional learning opportunities to health champions in APPLE school communities throughout the year. When we first adapted knowledge exchange events to the realities of the pandemic in early 2020, we were unsure how they would compare to our interactive in-person events. But post-event evaluation results validated not only the efficacy of the events in supporting health promotion in schools during a pandemic, but the high demand to host them in the first place. This year, we hosted three events in place of our usual two.

FALL 2020

A pre-event survey for APPLE school health champions and facilitators identified staff wellness as an increasing priority in schools. After all, teachers had been navigating stressful flip-flopping teaching conditions during a pandemic and managing to keep their students’ wellness at the forefront, making sure they were still meeting movement guidelines, nourishing their bodies and their minds. So this fall knowledge exchange geared focus on staff wellness initiatives to boost their mental health.

80 people attended including non-APPLE school health champions who wanted to expand their health promotion knowledge base, and staff from Alberta Health Services.

100 per cent of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the event enhanced their knowledge, skills, and attitude in facilitating the development of a healthy school community around physical activity, mental health, and staff wellness.

“I just really appreciate sharable resources that do not take teacher time to use. That way I can share what I know, and the choice is their own if they would like to use it or not.”

- School Health Champion
**WINTER 2021**

Often, post-event evaluation surveys indicate that attendees love having time to share with one another. While our events focus on ensuring that school health champions feel competent and confident to support healthy habits in schools, there is a major added benefit when people from various school communities exchange their rich knowledge. Our “fireside chat” themed knowledge exchange in February provided space for exactly that!

62 people attended

**SPRING 2021**

The spring knowledge exchange dedicated space to talk about sleep. We invited a guest from the University of Alberta School of Public Health who works in Health Promotion and Socio-behavioral Sciences and focuses on sleep research. She addressed concerns in schools about under slept students and what that meant for their health and academic capacities and got the conversation started about promoting healthy sleep.

55 people attended

100 per cent of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the activity resources and activities highlighted in the session (mental health, school-wide, and distanced physical initiatives) provided valuable learning for their role.

“Oh my goodness. You all always share such wonderful ideas and resources, and this event was no different. There are so many things we want to share with our school. We will use the innerhealthstudio.ca website for sharing breathing and relaxation techniques with the whole school during announcements with the principal via Google Meet!”

- School Health Champion

100 per cent of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that this event enhanced their confidence in their ability to support their school as a health champion.

“Thank you to the APPLE Team for your continued support through a challenging year. Health is more important now than ever and we’re fortunate to have passionate champions and supporters in you!”

- School Health Champion
Training
In gearing up for wider-scale impact, the APPLE Schools team has begun preliminary work on digitizing our training events.
A digital platform for our three-day in-person training sessions will create access to our world-class health promotion project to all schools across Canada and beyond, supporting even more healthy kids in healthy schools.

Shaping the Future
The annual Ever Active Schools Shaping the Future conference looked a little different this year. Like most events, it was hosted online. APPLE Schools was chosen to deliver two topical sessions: Go-To Strategies for Positive Mental Health in Schools, and Grab and Go! Physically Distanced DPA.
For the mental health session, we asked the experts – the teachers and school health champions – to deliver the fresh and innovative ideas for the video. The physical activity session came to life on video as APPLE Schools’ mentors were able to go into classrooms and demonstrate with enthusiastic students who were keen to try new activities.

Both sessions received over 400 VIEWS
More people are hearing about APPLE Schools, learning about who we are, and seeing the difference we make in communities. Engagement on our website and social media channels continue to grow as new audiences want to learn more about our unique, evidence-based approach to making students healthier for life.

In the Media

HundrED, an organization based in Finland, featured APPLE Schools for their vast, international audience. We submitted an article for their website praising the key to our success, which is the work that each autonomous APPLE school community chooses to do based on its unique needs.

Todayville Edmonton boasted about APPLE Schools being chosen by LEAP to scale the project. This exposure allowed us to inform new audiences about who we are and our high impact in local school communities.

Edmonton-based Apple Schools selected for LEAP’s Healthy Futures Accelerator
On the Socials

We thanked our donors for a successful year despite a pandemic in this Instagram post, which reached over 200 accounts.

Fort McMurray Islamic School shared with us on Twitter this photo of students enjoying a mental health break and reading time outdoors.

In the month of July, we had nearly 10,000 Twitter impressions and 800 profile visits.
During this reporting period, we elevated our LinkedIn profile to engage a professional audience in academia, government, non-profits, and corporations. Audience numbers and engagement have been on a steady rise since.

With well over 200 organic impressions, this post about our founding funder helped to achieve momentum on our new adoption of LinkedIn.

Turns out our Facebook audience was just as happy for us about the LEAP news as we were! This post reached nearly 2,000 people and had almost 200 reactions, likes, and shares.
Research is a critical component of APPLE Schools’ foundation, especially as we set our sights on stacking our building blocks higher. Almost 30 scientific, peer-reviewed papers over 14 years by the University of Alberta, School of Public Health, sets our organization apart and drives the high-impact results we continue to see. Evidence has been an essential tool for developing our world-class implementation model and will continue to be a source of strength as we move forward with our ambitious expansion goal. This year, four new publications were added to the bank of knowledge that will inform implementation on the path ahead.

1. The comprehensive school health approach is the most cost-effective approach, with up to an 860% return on investment on every dollar.

Cost-effectiveness and return on investment of school-based health promotion programmes for chronic disease prevention considered feasibility, acceptability, sustainability, new methodologies, and all relevant scientific evidence to optimally inform public health decision makers on school-based health promotion. It concluded that every $1 spent on APPLE Schools will reduce future health and social costs by an extraordinarily high amount.

This study was completed by John P Ekwaru, Arto Ohinmaa, Julia Dabravolskaj, Katerina Maximova, Paul J Veugelers.

2. APPLE Schools’ intensified intervention around mental health during the pandemic may have helped mitigate impact

Perhaps the most topical research has been Mental Health and Wellbeing of 9-12-year-old children in Northern Canada Before the COVID-19 Pandemic and After the First Lockdown. This study compared the mental health and wellbeing of a sample of APPLE school students two years before the COVID-19 pandemic and after school reopened post lockdown in fall of 2020. Researchers saw no negative trends in students’ responses regarding their mental health and wellbeing between pre-pandemic and post-lockdown. We recognize that many students did in fact suffer due to the pandemic, but these results may provide insight into the efficacy of APPLE Schools’ intensified intervention around mental health.

Healthy activities in APPLE schools during the pandemic were the norm, like this virtual Spirit Week at Christina Gordon School, where students celebrated Mismatched Monday and shared photos with peers to stay connected.
during the pandemic. This information will be instrumental moving forward as we continually adapt to a changing world and expect to mitigate impact in the face of more wide-scale environmental challenges.

This study was completed by Julia Dabravolskaj, Mohammed K. A. Khan, Paul J. Veugelers, Katerina Maximova

3. School health champions and other school staff were found to be key sources of physical activity or nutrition advice in their school networks.

A Social Network Analysis of Interactions About Physical Activity and Nutrition Among APPLE Schools’ Staff highlights the importance of all school staff in promoting health using the comprehensive school health approach, and the value of collective action through distributed leadership. All adults in the school play a central role within school advice networks.

This knowledge highlights the immense value of reaching even more school staff through our knowledge exchange events and resources. Higher participation will create a greater impact in supporting children's health habits as more key role models will feel competent and confident in their roles as key health influencers.

This study was completed by Kate E. Storey, Jodie A. Stearns, Nicole McLeod, Genevieve Montemurro

4. To promote health and academic success in children, interventions should include home-school based partnerships that address child sleep across many learning environments.

In the study *Sleep is healthy for your body and brain. “Use of student-centered photovoice to explore the translation of sleep promotion at school to sleep behavior at home, researchers explored students’ perceptions of sleep behaviour within the context of APPLE Schools’ approach to improving health behaviours. They found that school-based sleep promotion interventions that are grounded in the comprehensive school health approach hold promise for successfully shaping student sleep behaviour. We have already applied this research in one of our knowledge exchange events, where we focused on promoting sleep hygiene to students. We will continue to consider this knowledge as we work with school communities, including parents, to reach our greatest impact potential.

This study was completed by Melissa Bird, Christine McKernan, Genevieve Montemurro, Cary Brown, Jenn Flynn, Kacey C. Neely, Frances Sobierajski, Lauren Sulz, Kate Storey.

This Bill Woodward school health champion made fruit cups for school staff to ensure that while they were taking care of students, they also took care of themselves.
APPLE Schools continues to operate in a fiscally responsible manner, and financials are filed according to the Canada Revenue Agency guidelines. The fiscal year runs from September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021. For a list of our funders in this reporting period, see page 18.

“\"I feel very strongly that the APPLE Schools project is the singularly most effective public health intervention I have seen in my career in public health. It is a real world success in terms of promoting active living and healthy eating for children. Many health promotion programs look good on paper, and feel good when being implemented, but simply do not show measured evidence of actual behaviour change. APPLE does. By working with young students with school-owned and determined activities, and with broader family and community involvement, APPLE’s proven impacts are in themselves inspiring.\"”

– Lory Laing, Board Chair, APPLE Schools Foundation
APPLE Schools is a small team of dedicated individuals who wear many hats and feel very passionate about our roles in health promotion. Most of our team members have been with APPLE Schools for several years, being intimately involved with the growth and success of the project, including Jenn Flynn, who started as a school health facilitator in 2007.
2020-21 APPLE SCHOOLS

ALBERTA

Alexander First Nation Education
Kipohtakaw Education Centre

Aspen View School Division
Landing Trail Intermediate School (Athabasca)
Rochester School (Rochester)
Smith School (Smith)
Whispering Hills Primary School (Athabasca)

Beaver Lake Cree Nation
Amisk Community School (Amisk)

Edmonton Catholic School Division
Annunciation Catholic Elementary School
École Holy Cross Catholic Elementary / Junior High School
Our Lady of Peace Catholic Elementary School
St. Benedict Catholic Elementary School
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Elementary School
St. Kateri Catholic Elementary School

Edmonton School Division
Alex Janvier School
Athlone School
Belmead School
Brightview School
École Richard Secord School
Hillview School
Homesteader School
Inglewood School
Lee Ridge School
Prince Charles School
Sakaw School
Sifton School
Tipaskan School
Youngstown School

Elk Island Catholic School Division
Madonna Catholic School (Sherwood Park)
St. Luke Catholic School (South Cooking Lake)
St. Nicholas Catholic School (Sherwood Park)

Fort McMurray Catholic School Division
École St. Paul School
Elsie Yanik Catholic School
Father Beauregard School
Father Turcotte School
Good Shepherd School
Sister Mary Phillips School
St. Anne School
St. Gabriel School
St. Kateri Catholic School
St. Martha School

Fort McMurray School Division
Beacon Hill Public School
Christina Gordon Public School
Dave McNeilly Public School
Dr. K. A. Clark School
École Dickinsfield School
Fort McMurray Christian School
Fort McMurray Islamic School
Greely Road School
Thickwood Heights School
Timberlea Public School
Walter & Gladys Hill Public School
Westview Public School

Frog Lake Education Authority
Chief Napeweaw Comprehensive School

Mother Earth’s Children’s Charter School

Northern Lights School Division
Aurora Middle School (Lac la Biche)
Cold Lake Middle School (Cold Lake)
H.E. Bourgoin School (Bonnyville)
Glendon School (Glendon)
North Star Elementary School (Cold Lake)
Vera M. Welsh Elementary School (Lac la Biche)

Northland School Division No. 61
Anzac Community School (Anzac)
Athabasca Delta Community School (Fort Chipewyan)
Bill Woodward School (Anzac)
Conklín Community School (Conklín)
Elizabeth School (Elizabeth Métis Settlement)
Father R. Perin School (Janvier)
Fort McKay School (Fort McKay)
J.F. Dion School (Fishing Lake Métis Settlement)
St. Theresa School (Wabasca)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

School District 60 - Peace River North
Duncan Cran Elementary School (Fort St. John)
Upper Pine Elementary Junior Secondary School (Rose Prairie)

Manitoba

Swan Valley School Division
École Swan River South School (Swan River)
Minitonas School (Minitonas)

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Tlicho Community Services Agency
Chief Jimmy Bruneau School (Edzo)

Sahtu Divisional Education Council
Chief T’Selehye School (Fort Good Hope)
THANK YOU TO OUR 2020-21 DONORS

Project Donors

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Agence de la santé publique du Canada

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THE MELTON FOUNDATION

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