



Alberta Project Promoting
active Living & healthy Eating



Progress Report | JUNE 2011



Alberta Project Promoting
active Living & healthy Eating



Launch

On May 10, 2011 at St. Anne School in Fort McMurray, Indira Samarasekera, the President of the University of Alberta, hosted the launch for the expansion of APPLE Schools throughout Northern Alberta. The Minister of Education, Honorable Dave Hancock, was among the 200 delegates and hundreds of children that attended the day-long event. The event led to a great deal of local media and a heightened awareness of the program across Alberta.

Allan Markin hosted a dinner following the launch that was attended by Honorable Dave Hancock, Honorable Doug Horner, the President of the University, the Dean of the School of Public Health, the Superintendents of Fort McMurray's school boards, Marg Schwartz and Paul Veugelers as APPLE Schools representatives, and various representatives from the private sector. Lively discussions arose around the importance of child health in light of the future economy of Alberta. These discussions elaborated on the importance of studying the impact of APPLE Schools and their successful promotion of healthy eating and active living on children's learning.

Allan Markin receives an honorary facilitator jacket and a well-deserved hug.





The Honorable Dave Hancock was engaged with students and staff at the event.



Indira joins in the fun with students and facilitators.



Soya butter is not half bad!



The MC did a wonderful job of representing the children in APPLE Schools.



Indira and Allen enjoying their apple ladybugs.

Fort McMurray Update

Progress and expansion of APPLE Schools in Fort McMurray has been steady since January 2011. As of May 30, 2011, we finalized agreements with the six new schools and hired six dynamic School Health Facilitators to start working full-time in the schools in September. The new schools increase the number of APPLE Schools to ten, out of a total 16 Fort McMurray elementary schools.

The changes seen in the first four APPLE Schools are astounding, considering they have been staffed for only six months. It is difficult to capture everything that is happening in each school; however, there are some highlights below, shared by each facilitator to explain some of the changes that are occurring in the whole school communities.

Good Shepherd School – The message of APPLE Schools, healthy eating, and increasing physical activities is coming full-circle. Parents of children at the school are providing feedback to the administrator and facilitator about how happy they are to see their children requesting healthy foods to pack lunches that have all four food groups, and using the information and education from the classroom and newsletters to make healthier choices at home.

St. Anne School – After hosting the official launch of the APPLE School expansion, the school hosted it's own 'mini launch' to celebrate what APPLE Schools means for St. Anne. Healthy food, activities and slide shows were presented to capture what it means to be a healthy school community.

Timberlea School – Nutritious foods and physical activities are everywhere at the school - classrooms, hallways, whole school events, and most recently, the staff room. Staff at the school participate in a weekly salad club to encourage healthier lunches, and are currently in a pedometer challenge against Westview School staff to see which group can accumulate the most steps per staff member in attempt to win the first ever, Fort McMurray APPLE Staff Golden Shoe Award.

Westview School – During times of struggle in the community, Westview has reached out to lend a helping hand, and did so, the healthy way! The school hosted a community barbeque with door prizes to raise funds for a student who is battling cancer. Each class came up with a healthy-themed basket for the draw and the food served at the event included healthy choices of whole -wheat buns, fresh vegetables, apples and watermelon. Not only did the school display commitment to making the healthy choice the easy choice, the community responded by providing positive feedback to the administrator, staff and facilitator.

PIJASHIK – FNMI Update

The APPLE schools project is excited to begin a journey of partnership and learning with 7 FNMI (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) School communities in Alberta. These schools are based in Wabasca, Trout Lake, Genessee County area, Alexander First Nation and 3 inner city Edmonton schools. Schools were identified in collaborations with the school jurisdictions or education authority.

A Regional Manger was hired in mid-May and has visited each school. Seven School Health Facilitators who bring a wide range of talents for mobilizing communities, possess understanding of FNMI cultural needs, and have exceptional experience in working with rural, remote, on-reserve, or inner-city FNMI communities have been hired. Our newest team includes pow wow dancers, trained aboriginal games instructors, teachers and respected cultural leaders from across Canada.

As the name of APPLE Schools becomes recognized, the excitement about APPLE Schools' impacts grows. FNMI communities across Canada have begun to inquire about APPLE Schools and readily share their support for a project that works with communities using FNMI evidence-based practices while supporting sustainability within communities.

The possibility for future collaborations includes a partnership with Dr. Josephine Gwynn, Manager of Research and Evaluation for the "Many Rivers Diabetes Prevention Program" at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Dr. Gwynn has worked over a 10-year period with Australian aboriginal communities and is willing to share research tools, practical information and common issues. Dr. Gwynn anticipates aboriginal communities in Australia will have great interest in the FNMI APPLE Schools project.

We have responded to invitations from the First Nation, Inuit Health Branch of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Aboriginal Services Branch of Alberta Education to share information with these government partners. The interest generated, particularly within Alberta Education, will increase our profile within this ministry.

We look forward to the coming months as we embark on a learning journey that unfolds between cultures.

Edmonton Highlights

During the months of April, May and June school staff in all APPLE Schools were encouraged to participate in the Rainbow Lunch Challenge. Just as the students had completed a similar challenge, staff was encouraged to bring lunches that contained all four food groups every school day. Many staff mentioned that the challenge increased their awareness of making healthy lunches and allowed them to connect with students participating in the same challenges.

Throughout April and May over 150 students were invited to participate in Playground Activity Leaders (PALs) Training. Students gain the skills and knowledge to organize and run recess games for younger students at the school. PALs have been an integral part of APPLE Schools and increasing leadership skills in students and physical activity outside of class time.

Blessed Kateri School and **Lee Ridge School** were awarded the Alberta Milk Nutrition Innovation Award this spring. Schools received \$1000 to continue the positive work they are doing to create a healthy school community. For example, Wheel to School Day was a very successful event at Blessed Kateri and Lee Ridge school created an Easter egg hunt with plastic eggs filled with an activity suggestion, vegetables and fruit. Students did not miss the typical chocolate eggs.

In order to inspire an entire community to be more active, **St. Benedict School** and **Belmead School** participated in CBC's Live Right Now challenge. Students were encouraged to collect minutes of physical activity with their families which were translated into kilometers and tracked. The goal to "Race Across Canada" was achieved in a mere three week period.

St. Luke School is also working to get families more active over the summer. The school has partnered with Strathcona County to plan two summer challenges, a summer family activity challenge and a "21 Days to Eat at Home" campaign. These events are being organized to keep the APPLE message consistent while students are out of school for the summer.

Tipaskan School staff has taken an interest in staff wellness during the Rainbow Lunch Challenge held to see which APPLE School could accumulate the most days in the month where staff eat all 4 food groups within their lunch. The school catered a healthy Rainbow Lunch during their professional development day and burned off the calories doing a full hour of Zumba!

At *Landing Trail Intermediate School* in Athabasca the cooking club stirred up a unique problem. After making fruit smoothies with the students, the local grocery store sold-out of frozen fruit due to the demands by the students to replicate the activity at home.

Holy Cross Académie Internationale, students planted 24 Earthboxes and learned about growing their own vegetables. The boxes will be moved outside for the summer to allow community organizations access to the vegetables.

Lamont Elementary student council began a snack cart in April. Students taste-tested and selected the healthy items sold on the cart. All the items are sold at cost and so far over 200 items have been sold each day.

Sifton School celebrated their diverse community with a cultural potluck. Grade 1 students were asked to bring a dish of foods representing their heritage. All the dishes were nutritious and delicious.

St. Benedict School held a student-led health fair. Students researched a health topic and created a booth for staff and families to receive healthy living information. Topics included how to reduce sodium, the effects of pop on calcium absorption and the high quantity of sugar found in many foods. Everyone who participated learned more about healthy eating and physical activity.

Summary

APPLE Schools staff have been working hard to meet the needs of expansion into 40 new schools by Fall 2011. The training of the new staff will take place on August 22 and 23, 2011 for implementation beginning immediately following the training. The research staff are completing the qualitative data collection on changes to student behavior, determining economic benefits to creating healthy schools, as well as analyzing the current round of data collection. The exciting work of APPLE Schools continue to generate a body of knowledge that is the exemplary in Canada.





Alberta Project Promoting
active Living & healthy Eating



Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice