

Building an **APPLE** School

A roadmap to sustainable healthy school communities



APPLE
Schools

What is APPLE Schools?

APPLE Schools is an innovative school-based health promotion project. It works with schools across Western Canada to improve the lives of thousands of students each year. The project supports healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health by implementing the comprehensive school health approach for building healthy school communities. APPLE Schools is a registered charitable organization governed by a board of directors.

Impact of APPLE Schools

Research demonstrates that students in APPLE schools experience the following benefits:

- 35 % increase in physical activity.
- 10 % increase in daily fruit and vegetable consumption.
- 40 % less likely to be obese than students in comparison schools.
- Fewer mental health visits in adolescent years.
- Improved quality of life, leadership abilities, and learning outcomes.
- Healthier home environment due to introducing healthy habits learned at school.

VISION

Healthy Kids in Healthy Schools

MISSION

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

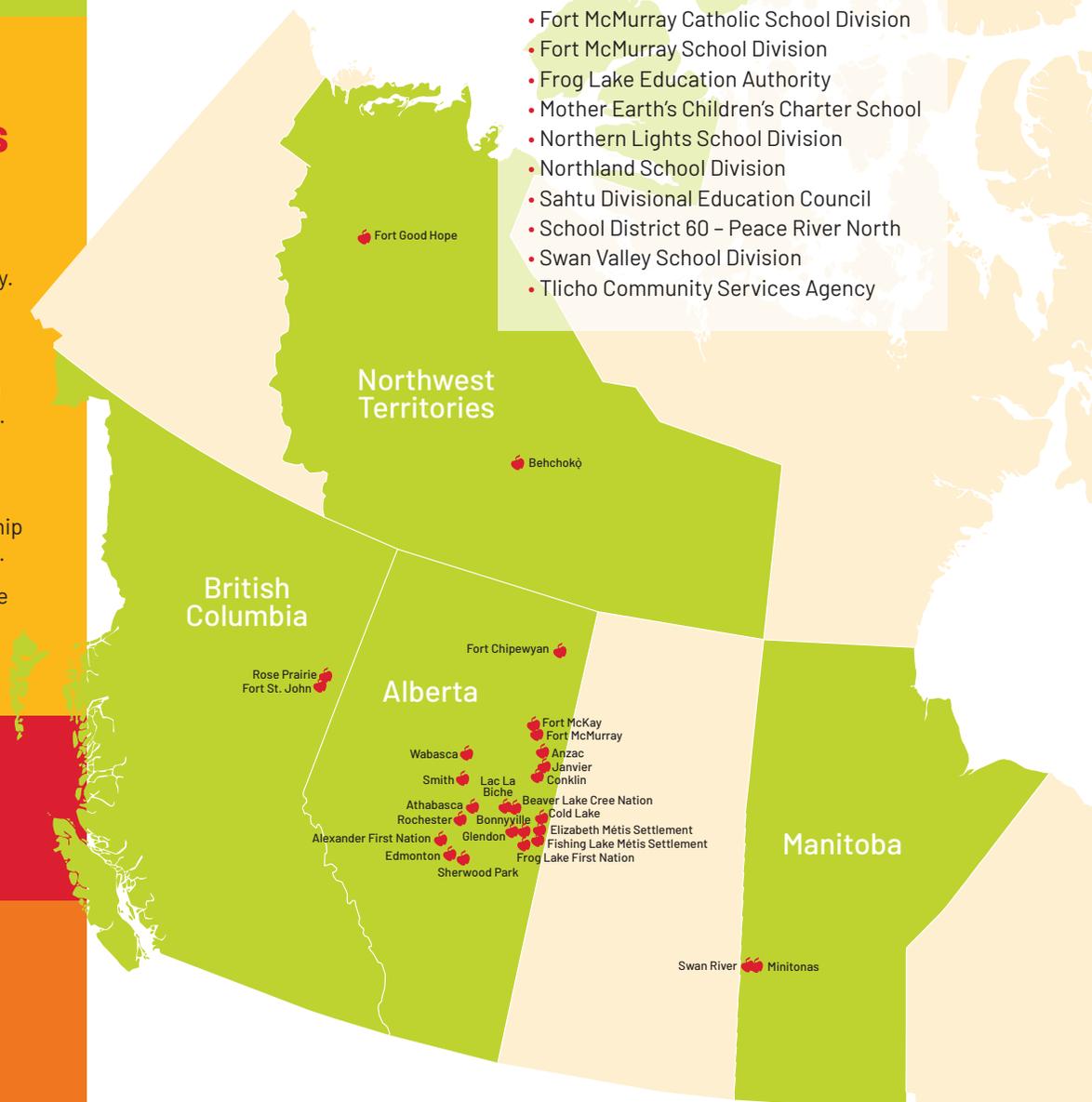


APPLE Schools

This map reflects APPLE School communities as of Spring 2021

School Jurisdiction Partners

- Alexander First Nation Education
- Aspen View School Division
- Beaver Lake Cree Nation
- Edmonton Catholic School Division
- Edmonton School Division
- Elk Island Catholic School Division
- Fort McMurray Catholic School Division
- Fort McMurray School Division
- Frog Lake Education Authority
- Mother Earth's Children's Charter School
- Northern Lights School Division
- Northland School Division
- Sahtu Divisional Education Council
- School District 60 - Peace River North
- Swan Valley School Division
- Tlicho Community Services Agency



www.appleschools.ca

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Welcome

We are excited about your interest in building a healthy school community!

This document is your roadmap to building a school environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice for life.

It will guide your school in developing a unique, personalized model for implementing the comprehensive school health approach to improve the lives of your students, staff, and families. It is based on APPLE Schools' experience and evidence-based approach and is meant to provide a solid sense of the road ahead and how to prepare so that you reach your destination successfully.

If you're reading this, you have likely already committed to becoming an APPLE school and probably have many questions. As a school leader, you might be thinking about where to start, what resources are available, intended timelines, staff engagement, and ultimately, how to make this a sustainable project.

There is great news! The APPLE Schools team has been on this road since 2007 and has learned a great deal from our partners in education, Indigenous communities, funders, and researchers. This roadmap is driven by scientific evidence gathered since 2007, the voices of more than 21,000 students involved annually, and current and past APPLE Schools staff. This guide will provide key elements and guidance to start you on your journey.

Change takes time but you won't be alone in making it happen. From the onset, you will get students, teachers, parents, and partners onboard so you can reach your destination together. Your school will work with an APPLE Schools mentor who will guide you through the process with expertise, support, and resources.

Creating school communities that are sustainably healthy is challenging but certainly possible. No matter how far along you are on your road to a healthy school community, remember to have fun and celebrate each step of the way, even when the victories seem small.

We are proud and excited to share our learnings with you. For examples and more detailed information about the project, please visit our website at appleschools.ca to find promising practices that can be implemented in schools across Canada.

As a school leader, you are at the starting point of supporting healthy kids in healthy schools and we are pleased that you have chosen to embark on this health journey.



Jenn Flynn
Executive Director, APPLE Schools

Definitions

This roadmap uses the following terms which you will see and use frequently in an APPLE school:

Action plan: An action plan outlines a school's unique health goals and how to attain those goals. Each APPLE school has its own action plan that reflects its specific needs. An APPLE Schools mentor works with school staff to review and renew the plan each year.

Administrator: For the purposes of this guide, administrator refers to a school principal or school assistant/vice principal.

APPLE Schools vs. APPLE schools: It's not a typo! The difference is in the uppercase/lowercase "s". APPLE Schools refers to the organization. APPLE school(s) refers to a school that the organization works with to implement the APPLE Schools model.

Comprehensive school health (CSH): An internationally recognized framework that uses a whole-school approach to support healthy school communities in an integrated and holistic way. APPLE Schools uses this approach to promote health.

Initiative: Refers to any action a school community takes to promote mental health, physical activity, or healthy eating. It can include things like planting a school garden, doing energizer exercises, mindfulness activities, hosting healthy celebrations, or taste tests.

Maintenance: Refers to year four or later of implementation for an APPLE school. The school no longer has a paid school health facilitator; instead, it has a volunteer school health champion from the school community, usually a teacher, who maintains and builds on healthy initiatives that were introduced in the first three years. At this point, the school has measures in place to sustain its healthy culture.

Readiness: Refers to the work that must happen before project implementation: connecting with districts, identifying schools, delivering presentations to prospective school communities about the project, confirming commitment with schools, interviewing and hiring school health facilitators, and collecting pre-intervention data.

School health champion (SHC): A volunteer school staff member in each maintenance APPLE school who acts as the bridge between APPLE Schools and their school community. SHCs drive healthy initiatives to ensure the school remains a healthy place. The SHC is mentored and supported by a school health mentor.

School health facilitator (SHF): A person hired by the school district to implement the APPLE Schools model in a new APPLE school for the first three years of the project. This person engages the school community to establish healthy practices and work toward maintenance. The SHF is mentored and supported by a school health mentor.

School health mentor (SHM): An APPLE Schools staff member who supports school administrators, school health facilitators, and school health champions in creating and maintaining healthy school communities. They provide customized school support, professional development, access to resources, and share best practices with schools.

Why Use the APPLE Schools Model?

Chronic diseases have dramatically increased in children. According to the 2014 REAL Kids Alberta evaluation, obesity rates in Grade 5 students in Alberta had reached 8.1%.¹ Children are being exposed to many chronic disease risk factors including poor diets, low levels of physical activity, and increasingly sedentary activities.²

APPLE Schools works with school communities to curb these negative health trends. Our innovative, school-focused health promotion project improves the lives of students and people in school communities. Research by Dr. Paul Veuglers has shown that students in APPLE schools have better nutrition habits, are more physically active, and experience improvements in quality of life, leadership abilities, productivity, and learning outcomes.^{1,3,4} The proven effectiveness of APPLE Schools is a compelling reason to be part of this project. Visit the [scientific publications page](#) of our website to see the research.

In addition to quantitative and economic evaluation, Dr. Kate Storey conducts qualitative research for APPLE Schools. This research documents project implementation as perceived by students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders, and explores potential barriers and facilitators in the implementation process. The knowledge gained from over 14 years of experience has been summarized in this guide, giving you the benefit of learning from the wisdom of parents, students, administrators, and other school health leaders.

The APPLE Schools model can be successfully adapted in schools with students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures; research has shown that the project can help increase opportunities for healthy habits in students experiencing health inequities.⁵ It provides students with positive experiences that translate into a lifetime of healthy living.

APPLE Schools is shifting the paradigm from chronic illness and disease treatment to prevention and sustainability. It has been recognized by the National Cancer Institute on the [Research-Tested Intervention Programs website](#) and received recognition from HundrED as a [top 100 global education initiative](#) of 2020.

This roadmap will create a sense of the journey that APPLE schools take to reverse unhealthy trends, how they move the needle from readiness to maintenance, how they get there, and how they stay there.



From Readiness to Maintenance

It takes one year of preparation, plus three years of substantial intervention for APPLE schools to achieve sustainability, which we refer to as maintenance. During those three intervention years, schools work toward a point where healthy initiatives are embedded in day-to-day life – the journey from readiness to maintenance.

Prior to intervention is the readiness stage, when APPLE Schools and school communities prepare to take on a long-term, school-wide health promotion project. It involves the work that must happen before the first year – connecting with districts, identifying schools, delivering presentations to prospective school communities about the project, confirming commitment with schools, interviewing and hiring school health facilitators, and hopefully collecting pre-intervention data.

APPLE Schools provides a high level of support when a school begins its first year of intervention, including:

- A hired and trained school health facilitator (SHF).
- Materials, resources, and tools to support implementation.
- Professional learning for school staff, SHFs, and community members.
- Ongoing support from and communication with APPLE Schools staff.
- Dedicated financial resources.

Over the three years, some initial resources and activities will remain while others will gradually reduce. The SHF position is phased out in year four and replaced with a volunteer school health champion as schools settle into maintenance.

	School Readiness	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4+ (Maintenance)
 School Selection	School is selected by school authority				
 School Health Facilitator (SHF)	SHF is hired	SHF in place with a minimum of 0.5 FTE	SHF in place with a minimum of 0.5 FTE	SHF in place with a minimum of 0.2 FTE	Transition to an identified in-school health champion (0 FTE)
 Resources	Resources provided to support implementation: i. Professional learning	Resources provided to support implementation: i. Staffing ii. Materials iii. Professional learning iv. Funds for action plan	Resources provided to support implementation: i. Staffing ii. Materials iii. Professional learning iv. Funds for action plan	Resources provided to support implementation: i. Staffing ii. Materials iii. Professional learning iv. Funds for action plan	Resources provided to support implementation: i. Materials ii. Professional learning iii. Funds for action plan
 Implementation	Project information shared with community and commitment formalized	Vision and action plan developed by school core committee	Action plan assessed and adjusted Policy developed by school core committee	Action plan and policy assessed and adjusted	Action plan and policy assessed and adjusted Health goals embedded into school plan
 Evaluation	Formal baseline data collected Report provided	Ongoing school assessment Report provided	Ongoing school assessment and formal data collected Report provided	Ongoing school assessment	Ongoing school assessment and formal data collected Report provided
A school health mentor provides ongoing support each step of the way					

Planning for Implementation

Before diving into the first year of implementation, APPLE Schools takes several steps to ensure that schools are set up for success.

School selection

To maximize impact and success, APPLE Schools works with school district leaders to gain support for creating healthy school communities within their district and to help identify schools that would benefit the most from the project. Criteria may include, but is not limited to:

- Socio-economic status.
- Number of students requiring additional learning support (e.g., students who need English language support).
- Capacity of the school community to adopt a major initiative.
- Administrators' commitment to provide leadership of a major long-term initiative.

Administrator and school commitment

Commitment is a big word, as are its implications. School leaders and members must make a full and genuine pledge to implement and support a healthy school community.

School administrators sit in the driver's seat, taking charge of the first step in developing commitment to being an APPLE school by building buy-in with the wider school community.¹² They connect with staff, parents, elders, students, and other community members about whether they want to become a healthy school using the APPLE Schools model.

A school health mentor (SHM) guides the school administrator in gaining support from their school community through delivering presentations to staff, parents, and community members, providing



one-on-one mentorship support, and connecting with each school on a regular basis.

SHM presentations help the school community to understand:

- Current health outcomes of school-aged children.
- Importance of addressing health and learning together.
- School autonomy, where schools set their own goals to create sustainable changes.
- Timeline for project implementation.
- Resources available to the school to create a healthy school culture.

Once the school administrator, with support from the SHM, gets buy-in from the school community and stakeholders, it is time for the administrator to sign a commitment letter with APPLE Schools on behalf of the entire school community. The letter is a formal indicator that the school community is ready to start implementing healthy changes at the school and signals that the entire school community agrees to support the work it takes to shift to a sustainable healthy school culture.

School health facilitator (SHF) selection

Change agents. We have all met them before and seen them in action. They are a key piece to ensure that positive and effective change takes place. The school health facilitator (SHF) is the individual who gets hired to be the change agent in the school.

A school health facilitator's (SHF) qualities are truly unique. There is no single degree or diploma that provides all the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to be a successful SHF. Effective SHFs are energetic, passionate about health, knowledgeable or eager to learn, respected as leaders, and they come from various backgrounds like teaching, kinesiology, psychology, registered dietitians, parents, or are local community/band members. They understand people and the value of relationships.

Having a dedicated, paid SHF position for the first three years of implementing the APPLE Schools model has been vital to the program's success at each

APPLE school. In APPLE schools, the school administrator, school jurisdiction, and SHM all work together to create a job description, and interview potential candidates together to find the person who is the right fit for the role.

The ideal SHF job candidate is someone from the local community because having prior knowledge and relationships in the school community are huge advantages for the role. The SHF could be a teacher, education assistant, or cook already working at the school or a member of the broader community. In rare occasions where the community has trouble hiring local talent, the SHF may be brought in from outside the community. Regardless, the school jurisdiction and APPLE Schools always choose the person with a positive can-do attitude to help the school successfully implement the project.

It is key to provide training and professional development for the selected SHF in the readiness stage so that he or she can effectively fulfil that role.



The Annual School Cycle

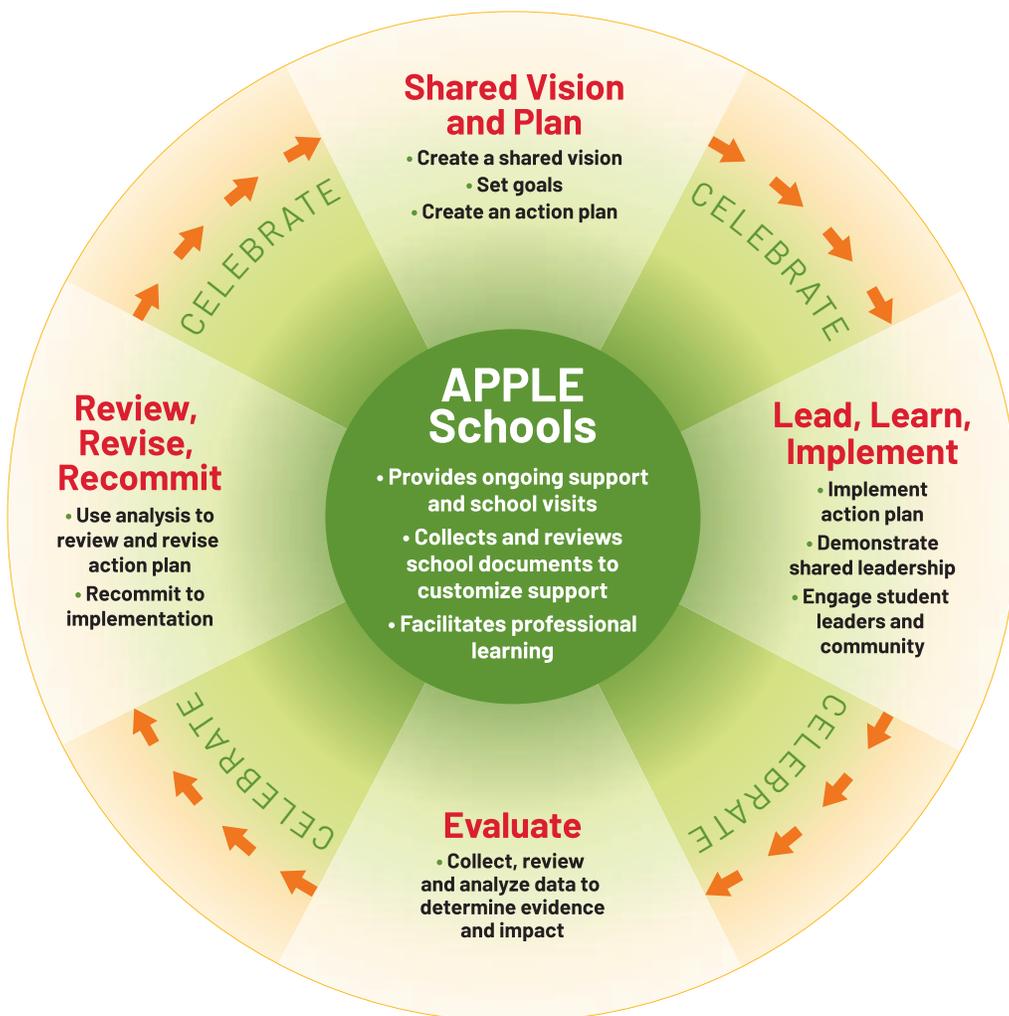
As each implementation year unfolds, the school health facilitator (SHF) and administrator in each school follow an annual cycle to support implementation and ensure sustainability.

Every year, each school:

- Creates and confirms a shared vision.
- Develops a unique action plan.
- Implements the activities outlined in the action plan.

- Determines evaluation practices to measure results.
- Examines data and works to revise the action plan as needed.
- Celebrates successes.

This annual school cycle has proven effective for APPLE schools and is depicted below. The school health mentor (SHM) guides each school through the process, step by step.



Shifting to a healthy community should include, but is not restricted to these actions:

1. Create a shared vision and plan

SHFs and administrators invite parents, elders, staff members, community members, and students to form a core committee. The core committee then guides the healthy school community work during this initial part of the annual cycle.

Actions include:

- Creating a shared healthy vision and mission.
- Identifying existing assets and school needs.
- Setting goals to reach the vision.
- Brainstorming initiatives to achieve goals.
- Developing an action plan using an [action plan template](#).
- Determining evaluation criteria to review annual progress.

During this part of the annual cycle, a SHM supports each school by sharing facilitation strategies for gathering input from all school community members on the development of the shared vision and action plan. The SHM guides school health champions (SHC) and SHFs through processes their school can use to outline what their healthy school will look like and develop a plan to realize that vision.

2. Lead, learn, implement

This part of the annual cycle is embedded in the day-to-day operations of the school community. When creating a healthy school community, members should follow the essential elements outlined in the next section of this roadmap to ensure the greatest impact.

Actions include:

- Demonstrating shared leadership by allowing school community members to take on lead roles in healthy initiatives.
- Developing engagement strategies to involve the entire student body in creating a healthy school culture.
- Role modelling healthy choices.
- Implementing the action plan and engaging the community in leading all aspects of the plan.
- Developing an in-school policy to provide consistent implementation of healthy school initiatives.

The SHM helps each school to reach its goals outlined in its school action plan through regular check-ins, professional development events, a bi-weekly e-newsletter, and sharing best practices and quality resources.



3. Evaluate

It's important to take the time to participate in or lead formal or informal assessments each year. This helps to determine whether the goals and activities outlined in the action plan are being achieved and are having a positive impact on students' health behaviours.

Actions include:

- Participating in formal assessments led by APPLE Schools in the readiness stage, year two, and year four.
- Gathering input from parents, elders, staff members, community members, and students through informal assessment tools such as the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health [Healthy School Planner](#).

The SHM helps to coordinate formal data collection depending on the year of the school's health journey. The SHM also provides information on informal assessment tools that a school can use to track its progress in creating a sustainable healthy culture from year to year. They also share facilitation processes that SHFs can use to ensure they gather all voices in assessing their school's impact on student health behaviours.

4. Review, revise, and recommit

This part of the annual cycle occurs at the end of the school year to reflect on and celebrate the accomplishments of the year. It should involve reviewing the assessments completed earlier in the school year to ensure there is school community input on what to revise in the action plan before recommitting to the project for the next year.

Actions include:

- Using assessments conducted in the evaluation part of the annual cycle to review and revise the action plan.
- Involving the school community when recommitting annually to implementation to ensure everyone is aware of the school's vision, goals, and school policy.
- Planning to educate new students, current and new staff, and administration on what it means to be an APPLE school.

The SHM meets with school community members near the end of the school year to review their school action plan, the successes and challenges they had around achieving healthy school goals, and to provide guidance on any improvements that may be needed. They also confirm each school's recommitment to making health a priority in the upcoming school year.

Don't forget to celebrate!

Think big, start small, and celebrate at every step along the way! Social media posts, thank-you cards, announcements at assemblies, agenda items at staff and parent council meetings, and the school website are all tools that can be used to share the news that a school is changing. Celebration is woven throughout the cycle, and the SHM will point out celebratory moments for the school and encourage it to do the same. APPLE Schools values having fun and believes that health is worth celebrating.



Eight Essential Elements⁶

As APPLE Schools has grown, staff and researchers have learned and developed best practices for making the change to a healthy school more seamless.

APPLE Schools has eight essential elements for successfully implementing the APPLE Schools model and creating a sustainable healthy school community. Dr. Kate Storey has captured the elements in her research titled *Essential Conditions for Comprehensive School Health*.

1. **Comprehensive School Health Approach**
2. **Dedicated Champion**
3. **Students as Change Agents**
4. **Administrative Leadership**
5. **School Autonomy**
6. **Professional Learning**
7. **Dedicated Funding**
8. **Use of Evidence**

For each of the eight essential elements, school community stakeholders have shared their stories of challenges, successes, and the lessons learned from implementing the APPLE Schools model. Their stories, included at the end of each element section, highlight the essential elements in action.



A **THINK ABOUT** > **ACTION** > **RESULTS**

diagram is included with the description of each essential element. The diagrams summarize how the essential elements might look in a practical way. They are not meant to be comprehensive diagrams of all the thoughts, actions, and results a school may experience, rather they are meant to give examples of how APPLE Schools incorporates each element.

THINK ABOUT

How do you picture your school community? To create a collective vision and get the results that you want, imagine your school next year, the year after, and into maintenance. What will your school look like? What changes might be made?

ACTION

What will you and your school community do to act on the vision? These are actions that you will implement to support the collective vision and to move toward effective change.

RESULTS

What are your ultimate health goals for your school community? Consider the positive and effective outcomes that will be evidence of healthy changes at your school.

Comprehensive School Health Approach

It is crucial to understand comprehensive school health (CSH) as a base for a school's wellness journey. APPLE Schools follows the CSH framework that is outlined by the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health. This proven approach is highly recommended across Canada as a method for improving students' health behaviours.^{1,2,6,7}

Health and education are interdependent. Healthy students are better learners, and better-educated students are healthier. Research has shown that the CSH approach is an effective way to enhance that link, improving both health and educational outcomes and encouraging healthy behaviours that last a lifetime.

This roadmap highlights some insights on the four components of CSH from the APPLE Schools perspective. All four components should be implemented when taking a CSH approach, and connections to the home, school, and community should be purposefully planned.

1. Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning include both formal and informal education based on provincial/territorial curricula, health guidelines, and CSH resources. The whole school community benefits from learning about healthy living, which allows project initiatives to be infused into the entire school. Students, teachers, and families should participate in both teaching and learning so that all school community members develop the knowledge and skills required to build healthy behaviours for life.

2. Partnerships and services

APPLE Schools' experience has shown that there is a strong correlation between a school's ability to sustain healthy changes and the number of partners that support the school's health vision. Organizations and services like local recreation centres, sporting agencies, and health-related agencies are often interested in contributing to a school's health vision and want to become life-long partners with the school community.

One of the most significant partnerships to nurture in a school community is students' families. The more that families are provided with opportunities to be involved in planning or leading initiatives, the more engaged they will become. Engaged families, elders, and caregivers tend to be more supportive of the project and help ensure that health messages are reinforced in the home and community.

Intentionally finding ways to include partners in the work to create a healthy school will support long-term sustainability of the initiatives being implemented.

3. Social and physical environment

The social and physical environment of a healthy school should boast evidence of a health promoting environment. Examples include posters, health-related announcements, mental health support, physical activity, and the serving and sale of healthy foods.

Intentionally building a healthy social and physical environment can create a warm and welcoming space where students feel safe and have a sense of belonging. In a healthy school community, the social and physical environment equally supports the learning that teachers carefully plan.

It is important to recognize that APPLE schools are like snowflakes – no two are identical. Implementing wellness using a CSH approach looks and feels different in each school, so social and physical environments are unique.

4. Policy

Each school should develop its own health and wellness policy. Forming a policy based on a school's unique vision for its journey and action plan establishes and solidifies expectations of the school community. Many provinces and territories in Canada have established provincial guidelines for health and wellness which can and should be adopted for the unique environment in each school. Schools should also learn about and follow existing district policies that outline school expectations around health and wellness.

THINK ABOUT

- Providing learning opportunities for all school community members to learn how to apply the CSH approach in their work.
- Engaging meaningfully and collectively with potential partners and stakeholders.
- Transforming your school's social and physical environment so that it supports and encourages health.
- Implementing existing health and wellness policies and developing a policy that is collaborative and supported by members in your school community.

ACTION

- Encourage healthy behaviours through bulletin boards, daily announcements, active recesses, and after-school activities.
- Invite elders, family members, and community members to join a core committee.
- Develop a policy that supports your healthy school community vision.
- Teachers incorporate health-related curricula into classrooms using healthy rewards, physical activity breaks, and cross-curricular activities with a focus on health.
- All school community members model actions that are aligned with your healthy school vision.

RESULTS

- Students achieve learning outcomes within a healthy environment.
- Community partners are engaged and lead the implementation of the action plan, increasing sustainability of your healthy school culture.
- Families are aware of health messages, policies, and programs in your school.
- School policies support consistent messaging across all areas of your school community.
- Your school adopts a positive culture that supports health both in and outside of the school.



There is a **THINK ABOUT** > **ACTION** > **RESULTS** **template** in Appendix 1 of this guide to use as a designated writing space to outline your thoughts about how each essential element will look in your school.



SCHOOL STORY

Comprehensive School Health Approach



This is what comprehensive school health looks like at one APPLE school.

Father Beauregard School has been an APPLE school since 2011 and we've been growing in our wellness journey ever since. We've sustained a healthy school culture because we followed the comprehensive school health (CSH) approach each time we introduced a health initiative.

An example of this is how we implemented Trail Tales, an initiative that I learned about through Ever Active Schools. It is about getting classes outdoors to enjoy the community's beautiful trails with a walking book, promoting both physical activity and literacy. To bring it to life, a book is selected, taken apart, and the pages are placed onto stands every 50-100 meters along a walking trail so students walk and read at the same time. Not only did it help our school to achieve an action plan goal, but it also connected to all four components of CSH, ensuring it would be sustainable and effectively support positive student health behaviours.

The partnerships and services component of this initiative is clear. We utilized a resource created by another health promoting organization that connected the school, students, families, and community members. To reach the whole community we advertised it on our school

community Facebook page to help foster student wellness outside of school hours and involve their families. We also reached out to the local radio station and organizations to bring their staff on the trails and promote this activity within the city.

The walking book is interchangeable so the teaching and learning component is achieved in many ways – it provides an opportunity to connect movement to curricular outcomes and any subject matter. Our school health champion met with teachers and the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit liaisons within our district to discuss future books to highlight Indigenous-based learning and curricular outcomes across other subjects while students are active outdoors.

To ensure sustainability, it is important that we implement initiatives that align with the policy component of the comprehensive school health approach. Not only does Trail Tales allow teachers another opportunity to meet the provincial mandate of 30 minutes of daily physical activity per day, but it also supports our healthy school policy and division wellness policy.

Trail Tales has been a great addition to our school wellness focus and encompasses the social and physical environment component. The staff and students have shown an increased sense of positivity and excitement about this project which has improved our social environment and literally expanded our physical learning environment.

By following the CSH approach to implement Trail Tales in our school, it has become a successful, sustainable initiative that will have a long-term impact on the health and well-being of all our school community stakeholders.

Jason Campbell

Principal
Father Beauregard School
Fort McMurray, AB



Dedicated Champion⁷

2

One unique element to every APPLE school is that its wellness journey is guided by a school health facilitator (SHF) or a school health champion (SHC). The SHF works in a school for the first three years of implementation, after which the role transitions to a volunteer SHC. The SHF's role is to create capacity in the school so that healthy school initiatives can be easily managed and sustained in year four by a volunteer SHC once the school moves into maintenance.

The SHF is a trained, in-school staff person who facilitates change, gains buy-in from all staff, and drives healthy initiatives. To accomplish this, they work with students, families, school staff, and community members to develop and implement the healthy school action plan. SHFs ensure the action plan meets the school's unique needs for

health promotion and that it is aligned with the comprehensive school health components.

The most important strength a SHF should have is the ability to build relationships. This person needs to guide the school to take ownership of healthy initiatives so that when the position phases out, the school community can sustain the healthy initiatives that the SHF helped introduce.

Like the SHFs, SHCs also facilitate capacity building with all staff members through role modelling initiatives and empowering others to take leadership roles. When the whole school community shares the load, it makes initiatives sustainable.

THINK ABOUT

- Implementing existing health and wellness policies and developing a policy that is collaborative and supported by members in your school community.

ACTION

- Encourage healthy behaviours with bulletin boards, daily announcements, and after-school activities.
- SHF/SHC attends and participates in training and ongoing professional development.
- SHF/SHC motivates others to take lead roles in activities, programs, policy development, and developing action plans.
- SHF/SHC hosts meetings with all school community leaders to determine goals and activities.
- SHF/SHC works closely with the school health mentor to ensure quality implementation.

RESULTS

- Your school has a dedicated and trained individual who leads and facilitates attainment of your school's health goals.
- SHF/SHC facilitates support for staff members, students, elders, parents, and community members who are active participants and leaders of change.

SCHOOL STORY

Dedicated Champion



This is what a dedicated champion looks like at one APPLE school.

As the dedicated school health champion at Dr. K.A. Clark School, it is my role to support the implementation of our school action plan and provide guidance to my school community on making our healthy school initiatives sustainable.

Being a member of the Dr. K.A. Clark school staff before I became the school health champion means I had already established relationships with the staff and students and possessed a strong knowledge of the school community context. This was a huge asset – it accelerated my ability to facilitate changes in our school that led to our shared vision for health and wellness. I was able to build on my existing relationships with my administrator, co-workers, and students to encourage them to participate in, take ownership of, and lead our healthy school activities.

I am intentional about sharing the knowledge and skills about healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health with my school community. I give regular APPLE updates at staff meetings and hold APPLE-specific meetings where I lead facilitated processes with staff on our healthy school goals and common vision, and how we want to achieve the goals as a team. I really value a team approach to health and wellness promotion, so I guide our school to create committees and teams to take on various initiatives. Throughout the years, we've had new administration and new staff members join, and due to the collaborative approach that I facilitate, they are able to easily integrate with our healthy school culture.

I have regular communication with our administration team, and they are supportive of my role as the SHC. I share the latest APPLE Schools resources or monthly campaign information with them so they can include it in the parent newsletter to ensure our families are receiving health messages that match what is being delivered at school.



My role to support and facilitate healthy school initiatives comes down to the relationships that I have with the staff and the culture of the school that we create. As I have worked hard with the school community to embed wellness into the day-to-day operations and in the community, I know that Dr. K.A. Clark School will be a strong advocate of healthy schools, with or without my presence in the building.

Alyssa Hennigar

School Health Champion and Teacher
Dr. K.A. Clark School
Fort McMurray, AB

Students as Change Agents^{9,10,11}

3

Students are the heart of the project and the reason for implementing comprehensive school health (CSH). They are also the first in the schools to embrace change, often before teachers or staff. Students who are invited to lead and be part of planning healthy school activities are more likely to engage with health promotion and communicate CSH messages beyond school walls. This makes them compelling change agents in the school environment and at home.¹⁰

Engaging students is the most effective way to create buy-in among all school staff and to get parents interested in the project. Students have the ability to successfully communicate healthy messages to

families and change families' health behaviours. Once engaged, family members can help support CSH and strengthen the project.

Examples of student leadership include starting groups like SWAT (Student Wellness Action Team) or PALs (Physical Activity Leaders) to coordinate healthy events and share ideas about what a healthy school looks like. Some schools have a buddy program to allow disengaged students to partner with a positive role model to help all students feel like they belong. Many schools also develop a whole-school leadership model through programs like Leader in Me™.

THINK ABOUT

- Students demonstrating leadership around health and creating a healthy school environment.
- Increasing student leaders' confidence and ability to work with their peers.
- Considering students who typically don't participate or take leadership roles engaging in healthy initiatives.

ACTION

- Teach students leadership skills to improve confidence and sense of involvement through things like leadership clubs and intramurals.
- Invite students to implement school-wide initiatives promoting a healthy school community.
- Identify students who don't traditionally participate in activities and create strategies to engage them.

RESULTS

- Students are leaders in planning, designing, and supporting healthy living initiatives in school.
- Students are leaders in their own health decisions and those of their school community.
- Students communicate and demonstrate healthy living inside and outside of school.
- Students who were previously not engaged in activities are active participants and take on leadership roles.

SCHOOL STORY

Students as Change Agents



This is what students as change agents looks like in one APPLE school.

The students at Youngstown School are strong leaders in the hallways, classrooms, and on the playground. They are eager to take on leadership opportunities that promote healthy eating, active living, and positive mental health while supporting our school action plan goals.

Our students are part of the APPLE Core Club. This energetic group takes on many leadership roles: they plan taste tests, make posters for healthy school-wide events, and spread news about healthy activities. We believe that students can be powerful advocates for change, and we take pride in fostering their leadership skills by involving them in planning and implementing activities in our school. Every month, a Healthy Hopper (a student who exemplifies leadership by promoting healthy living) is chosen in every class to celebrate their skills and attitudes and encourage them to share their ideas for making our school a healthy place.

One teacher spoke about how everyone benefits from strong student leadership in an active, healthy school: *"From the moment you walk through the doors at Youngstown School, it is evident that the students take pride in their leadership abilities to promote healthy living. From student-led morning announcements that spread a healthy message, to student-led assemblies that*

incorporate movement breaks, it is obvious that students have an important role in promoting healthy living."

Recently, our older students helped plan and run the Arctic Winter Games event. Grade leaders led groups of students around the school to participate in sport and cultural activities that are unique to the Arctic region. Since it was students leading one another through the activities, we saw children who are normally hesitant to participate enjoying themselves. They were jumping, dancing, and having fun while engaged in events that promoted sport and friendship.

Our students take great pride in making healthy choices. They spread healthy messages to their families at home. Recently, one parent commented that her daughter was begging for more fruits and vegetables in her lunch because of what she was learning at school. Our students are true leaders both at school and at home. It is wonderful to see their leadership skills extending beyond the walls of the school.

Corinne Dechene

Teacher and Former School Health Champion
Youngstown School
Edmonton, AB



Administrative Leadership^{12,13}

4

One of the most influential school community members is the school administrator. Not only do they have the capacity to shift the paradigm and bring about positive school changes, but they can lead others through commitment, role modelling, and action.

A critical element to effective change comes from the administrator's support of shared leadership, ensuring that the school health facilitator (SHF) or school health champion (SHC), families, students, and staff all believe that they can lead and affect results.

Demonstrated administrative leadership differs from passive leadership in that the administrator plays an invaluable role throughout the process of creating a whole-school approach. The administrator should be an active member of the implementation team rather than solely a strong supporter of other champions like the SHF or SHC. Teachers and SHFs indicate that active leadership by the school administrator allows for comprehensive school health (CSH) to become essential to the school's agenda and thus viewed as a priority.

"...it's a huge role because you really set the vision. Everybody is looking to you for leadership, so you have to carefully choose the direction that you want to head."

– APPLE school administrator⁶

THINK ABOUT

- Administrator empowering staff to be part of the change process and participate in professional learning opportunities.
- Administrator engaging your entire school community in the change process.
- Administrator supporting the SHF/SHC to effectively facilitate healthy school change.

ACTION

- Administrator works with the SHF/SHC to lead your school to develop goals and innovative strategies to create a healthy school community.
- Administrator is a role model for healthy living behaviours, attitudes, and actions.
- Administrator makes time for regular meetings with the SHF/SHC.
- Administrator supports embedding healthy habits into the overall operations of the school.

RESULTS

- All school community members understand and demonstrate that healthy living goals are an essential part of your school culture.
- All school community members model healthy behaviours.
- Health goals are embedded in the long-term school plan.

SCHOOL STORY

Administrative Leadership



This is what administrative leadership looks like at one APPLE school.

In 2019, Duncan Cran Elementary School was presented with the opportunity to become an APPLE school. As the school administrator I felt that our school's values and my vision for our school aligned with the APPLE Schools project. I pitched the idea of becoming an APPLE school with our staff because this long-term commitment required everyone to be on board, and they approved. I understood from day one that I need to play an active role in implementing healthy changes using the comprehensive school health approach to create long-term, sustainable changes.

I learned from the start just how important my role is in supporting the school health facilitator (SHF). I intentionally make it clear that her role is highly regarded, and that she should feel comfortable to connect with me about her work whenever she needs to, which sends a message to school staff that her role is valuable. To further maximize her impact, she always has designated "APPLE time" at staff meetings to present new initiatives or resources, lead collaborative processes, or answer any questions or concerns.

I recognize that I need to be an active participant in implementing the healthy initiatives outlined in our action plan, which our SHF-led core committee developed. As a member of this committee, I demonstrate my commitment to leading healthy school changes by communicating our healthy school vision during staff meetings, parent council meetings, whole-school assemblies, and through interactions with students.

I work with the admin team to send out monthly campaign newsletters to families and celebrate healthy school initiatives with families and the wider community on our school social media. I also involved myself as a key player with two action plan goals of renovating our school kitchen and refurbishing our school playground. I wrote grants, secured community donations, and sourced equipment and materials.



Being a part of the core committee highlights for me the strong connections between our school framework and action plan, and how to weave the two together to create sustainable changes. For example, to ensure the success of our school breakfast program when the SHF role transitions to a volunteer school health champion role, I have found funds in our budget to hire staff to prepare and deliver food. Embedding healthy habits into the overall operations of our school demonstrates to the school community that health is an essential part of the school culture.

Healthy choices are ingrained in our school culture, so I don't differentiate between whether an initiative is an APPLE Schools initiative or not. Leading our school with that mindset has established health as a priority for Duncan Cran School, and I feel confident the changes our school is making will stick around for a long time.

Griff Peet

Principal
Duncan Cran Elementary School
Fort St. John, BC

School Autonomy

5

An essential element of implementing the APPLE Schools model is preserving the autonomy of each school so it can develop its own healthy community based on local needs. Using a tailored approach is vital to building a sense of ownership over cultural changes in the school.

Each APPLE school creates a unique action plan that outlines initiatives to reach school-determined health goals. Initiatives are chosen by the school so it can build upon its strengths, assets, and needs.

As one teacher indicated, “Not every school is going to have the same way of doing things or have the same issues and needs. So if you can be flexible enough and respond to the things that are happening in the school, you’re in. I think the project is more beneficial that way.”

What is consistent across APPLE schools is the process of creating an action plan, determining existing assets, setting goals, and developing strategies based on input from across the school community. How those come to life will look different at every school.

THINK ABOUT

- Building a sense of ownership and direction for your school.
- Gathering voices from all members of your school community.
- Identifying what is unique about your school population, location, culture, and needs.

ACTION

- Create a core committee with representation from students, families, elders, and community members to plan healthy goals and initiatives.
- Develop your school’s health vision and action plan to create changes for your unique school community.
- Plan your school-specific initiatives to build on your school’s strengths, assets, and needs.

RESULTS

- There is a sense of ownership and buy-in to support your school’s health vision.
- Your action plan is implemented through a shared leadership model.
- Health and wellbeing are a primary focus and goal of your school community.

SCHOOL STORY

School Autonomy



This is what school autonomy looks like at one APPLE school.

Homesteader School has been an APPLE School since 2011, continually striving to promote a healthy lifestyle for our students and community. We realized early on that autonomy is a critical piece in developing buy-in from our staff and wider school community. It was refreshing to know that we could develop an action plan that would work at our unique school and for our students.

Working with our school health mentor, we were able to take a deep look at existing programs and supports within the school, like our intramural program. We came to realize that the students who signed up for intramurals were the same students who were active at recess. We also found that there was only a small number of female students taking part, and the programs were only offered to students from grades 4 to 6. As well, our intramural sports were all highly competitive, traditional sports.

If increasing physical activity levels at our school was our goal, then we certainly were not meeting it. So we changed things up! Having the autonomy to meet the needs of our students in a way that fits our school, instead of following a one-size-fits-all approach made an immediate and dramatic impact.

We opened intramurals to students from grades 1 to 6, holding separate programs for both divisions. We changed the focus from competitive sports to cooperative games and held separate intramurals for girls and boys in grades 4 to 6. The results were astonishing as participation rates of all students, regardless of grade and gender, increased dramatically.

Having the flexibility to make autonomous decisions about how to achieve our action plan goal of increasing activity levels in the school was key in bringing people to the table to make it a reality. It also allowed a high degree of authenticity to the process. As a school, we continue to look at ways for our community members to be involved in healthy activities and programs that support students in making healthy choices and becoming resilient.



Andrea Cooper

Principal
Homesteader School
Edmonton, AB

Professional Learning¹⁴

6

APPLE Schools provides professional learning to administrators, school health facilitators (SHFs), and school health champions (SHCs) so they can increase their own understanding of how to lead a healthy school community. They become equipped to educate school staff, elders, parents, and students on how to build their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to lead healthy changes.

Both SHFs and SHCs are provided with initial and ongoing professional learning to ensure they are confident in their ability to lead healthy, sustainable changes. The school health mentor (SHM) also provides customized ongoing mentorship to SHCs and SHFs through regular one-on-one meetings where they share successes, address challenges, and help the SHCs and SHFs navigate the school through the annual cycle.

Consistently, more than 85% of surveyed SHFs have stated that formal training strengthened their knowledge and essential skills for working in schools. A detailed description of the initial SHF training is included in Appendix 2.

In APPLE schools, the SHF or SHC ensure that teachers feel comfortable and confident incorporating healthy messages into everyday teaching in the classroom and delivering the health and physical education curriculum.

APPLE Schools also provides professional development specifically for administrators so they have a supportive network to share their successes and challenges with and can learn and share administrative practices for implementing comprehensive school health.

“...The SHF is teaching your kids but she’s also teaching you, so then you’re going to have that knowledge and then carry it forward when she’s not here anymore.”

- APPLE school teacher⁶

THINK ABOUT

- The knowledge and skills needed by community members to improve health in your school community.
- When and where learning events can be facilitated.
- Opportunities that will support the SHF/SHC and all school community members with ongoing learning.
- Local experts who can share wisdom (e.g., elders, or recreation and health professionals).

ACTION

- SHFs/SHCs, administrators, and school community members receive professional learning opportunities that increase their understanding of implementing CSH.
- SHFs/SHCs provide school community members with knowledge and skills to support your healthy school community.
- Administrators provide SHFs/SHCs time to attend professional learning events and share that knowledge with your school community.

RESULTS

- SHF/SHC and administrator have the confidence and competence to implement the comprehensive school health approach in your school.
- School staff have increased confidence and competence in delivering quality learning opportunities for students.
- School community members have increased confidence in using tools and resources that support healthy school changes.

SCHOOL STORY

Professional Learning



This is what professional learning looks like at one APPLE school.

As a school health facilitator, the professional development (PD) I received from APPLE Schools not only increased my confidence, competence, and knowledge in guiding my school on their healthy journey, it was also a catalyst to achieving a major goal in our school action plan.

When APPLE Schools highlighted DANCEPL3Y at a PD event, I saw a strong connection between the program and how it would improve health behaviours in our school and increase students' confidence and mental wellness, which were two goals in our action plan. Through the quality PD that I received from APPLE Schools, I had the confidence and skills needed to introduce the dance fitness program to my school in a way that would create positive, health-focused change.

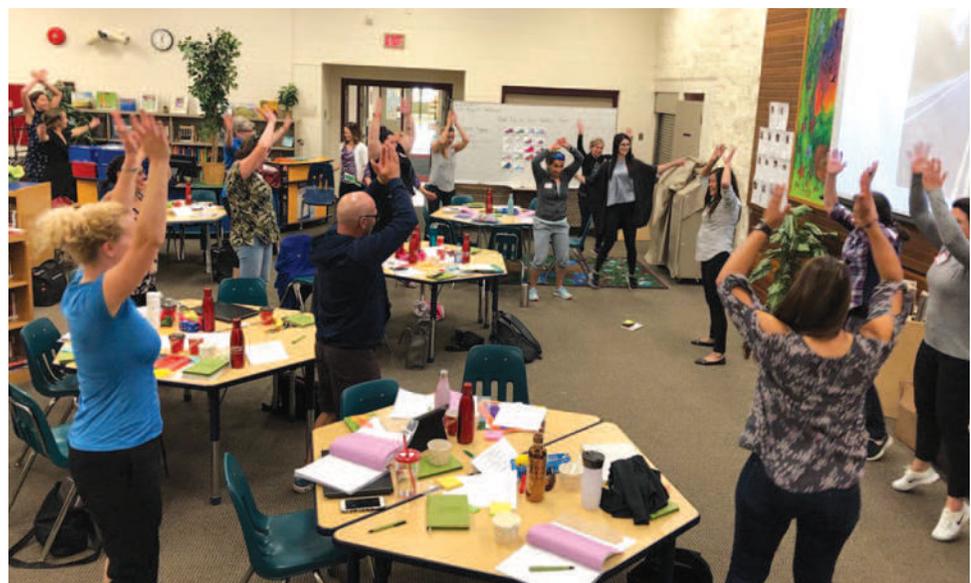
One thing I learned through APPLE-led PD events was to never do anything alone. So first, I approached our school core committee about introducing DANCEPL3Y to ensure I had support from key stakeholders. They were fully in favour of the idea, so I spoke to the school music teacher about partnering with me to implement it in our school. We created a dance recess club where we engaged students using plug and play videos from DANCEPL3Y.

The recess club was so successful that the music teacher and I became certified DANCEPL3Y instructors, allowing us to provide PD to staff to make them feel confident in incorporating the program into their teaching, and engaged our community in a new, fun physical activity. We introduced parents and guardians to it at our family games nights and parent nights, with our students being the biggest promoters as they raved about how much fun they had with DANCEPL3Y.

As a result of the knowledge and skills I learned at APPLE Schools' PD events, I felt confident in leading our school community to reach our action plan goals and sustain them. DANCEPL3Y is now an embedded part of our school community, and since introducing it, our school is much more engaged in finding ways to get students moving more consistently and vigorously.

Tina Skakun

Former School Health Facilitator
Vera M. Welsh Elementary School
Lac La Biche, AB



Dedicated Funding



Funding is a critical resource for each school to be able to lift the APPLE Schools implementation model off the ground and sustain a healthy school culture.

APPLE Schools provides funding to schools that gradually decreases over years one to three of implementation. During those three years, funding supports staffing, materials, professional development, and the action plan. In year four and beyond, a further

reduced amount is provided for materials, professional development, and the action plan.

The school health mentor also provides each school with tools and resources to approach potential partners that can provide additional funding to support action plan goals. Connecting the action plan's goals with funding allows schools to identify their priorities and builds in some accountability for those funds.

“The financial support from the project was huge. It’s not about questioning whether healthy initiatives are important. It’s about our primary role to be teachers and leaders of education...”

– APPLE school administrator⁶

THINK ABOUT

- Developing a budget for the action plan based on your school's needs.
- Identifying local resources, grants, and businesses to support healthy initiatives in your school.
- Sustaining your school's funding sources.

ACTION

- Engage school community members in conversations about how funds can best support the action plan.
- Apply for outside funding opportunities to support the action plan.
- Contact partners who can provide ongoing resources or donations to support initiatives in the action plan.

RESULTS

- Your school's action plan is fully funded and sustainable.
- The impact of the funds and resources are evident to all school community members.
- All school community stakeholders have a voice in the fund allocation.

SCHOOL STORY

Dedicated Funding



This is what dedicated funding looks like at one school.

Our school health champion team at St. Martha School intentionally seeks funding opportunities that will ensure the school can achieve the goals and activities outlined in our action plan.

I applied for grant opportunities that I learned through APPLE Schools' bi-weekly newsletter and was pleasantly surprised when we were approved for the Alberta Medical Association's (AMA) Youth Run Club and PC Children's Charity grants. These grants led to implementing new wellness initiatives that we would not have been able to do otherwise.

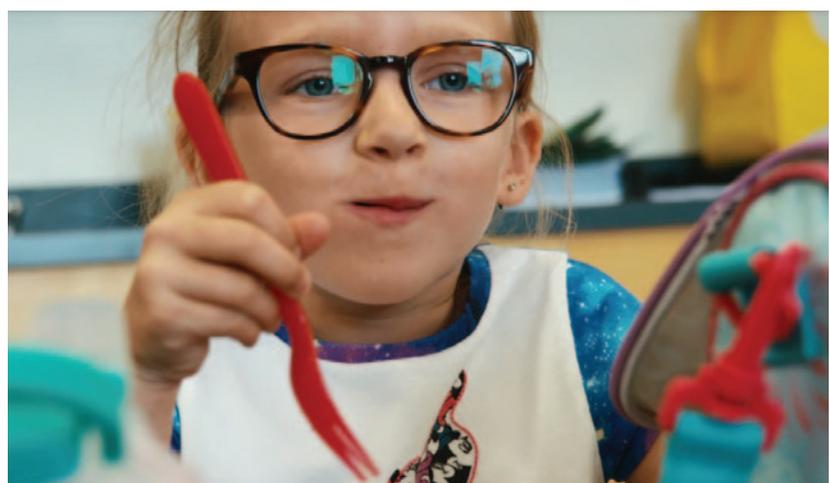
Our school was looking for new ideas to encourage physical activity for students. A run club was a great solution because it is accessible and encourages lifelong healthy habits. I registered my school for the free AMA Youth Run Club which gave me access to resources on how to lead a run club and a chance to apply for an AMA Youth Run Club grant. Applying for, and receiving the grant, gave our school extra funds to support our school run club. I wanted to ensure that no students were excluded from the run club so I talked to other school community members about utilizing the grant funds for new runners for students who could not afford them. The idea was approved, and the students were thrilled to receive this practical gift so they could join the fun and be a part of the run club.

And thanks to the funds from the PC Children's Charity grant, we were able to expand our existing nutrition program. We provided students whose families face a food shortage with choose-most-often snacks to ensure no one faced hunger barriers to learning. Our nutrition program feeds hungry students and benefits the whole community as it engages parent volunteers, teachers, and students, building a sense of community and providing invaluable leadership experiences for students.

Dedicated funding fulfilled the goals outlined in our school action plan. The grants allowed us to provide fun physical activity opportunities for all students and increase access to healthy eating options; plus, it decreased participation barriers on many levels for students whose families faced financial hardship. St. Martha's school environment is a healthier and more inclusive place thanks to dedicated funding. It is such a pleasure to see students benefit in ways that will encourage healthy habits for life!

Erin Martens-Walsh

School Counsellor and School Health Champion
St. Martha School
Fort McMurray, AB



Use of Evidence

8

A foundational aspect of APPLE Schools is the world-class research that is conducted in each school during its formative implementation years. APPLE Schools' use of evidence to improve practice is unique and serves as a guiding principle for the project. Whether the data is formal (conducted by an outside researcher) or informal (such as students surveying other students), it is an essential element for driving decisions and motivating change. Sharing data is important for continuous development and has a significant impact on helping school community members buy into the concept of becoming a healthy school.

APPLE Schools' formal research is conducted as a full process evaluation, including quantitative data measuring physical activity levels, healthy eating habits, mental well-being, sleep, leadership, and other outcomes as determined by a research advisory committee. Prior to project implementation, in the school readiness year, researchers collect baseline data. After that, formal follow-up data is collected on

two more occasions in years two and four if budget allows. Qualitative research continues to provide impactful implementation data to constantly improve practices in schools.

Each APPLE school receives a report that outlines detailed information on its students' health (without identifying any students), the strengths of and areas of improvement for the school environment and provides school-specific recommendations for action.

School community leaders can make changes to their school action plan based on the results from data collected through formal or informal evaluation. Using local school-level data is essential for planning, refining, and supporting the school action plan.

After the formal data collection years, there are other ways that schools can assess their actions like using the Joint Consortium for School Health [Healthy School Planner](#). Schools should ultimately be in the habit of using data to drive decisions.

THINK ABOUT

- How school-specific data would benefit your school community in determining its health needs.
- What current tools your school uses to gather input from the school community.
- What you will consider as evidence of change in your school.

ACTION

- Support the SHF/SHC or school community members in distributing data collection tools and ensuring staff are aware of the importance of data collection.
- Share the school reports with the broader community.
- Use data to make informed decisions on how to review and revise the school action plan.

RESULTS

- Your school meets its activity and improvement goals that were identified using data.
- Your school community uses data to review and revise the action plan to ensure healthy school initiatives are addressing student health behaviours.
- There are continual improvements in health outcomes and the school environment.

SCHOOL STORY

Use of Evidence



This is what the use of evidence looks like at APPLE schools.

While I was the manager at APPLE Schools, I witnessed the impact of formal and informal evidence on school communities' journeys in becoming healthier places. It always amazed me how data gathered from students and families often led to immediate change.

I recall one administrator's reaction to the school report she received from formal data collection. The report showed that almost 50 per cent of parents or guardians in her school felt they would run out of food each month before they had more money coming into the household. She was shocked by the data and quickly realized that asking parents to contribute a couple of dollars to supplement field trips, hot lunches, or other events could greatly affect a family and could mean losing a meal or excluding their child from an event. The administrator immediately stopped all fundraisers in the school and worked out other strategies to ensure all students could attend events and be fed lunches without their families having to pay.

In another case, teachers in one school were not making an effort to integrate health and wellness into their teaching. The school health mentor offered a myriad of support to engage the teachers; but playing an active role in creating a healthy school culture was not a priority for the staff. However, after receiving their school report, staff learned that parents knew more about health and physical education curricula than the students who were receiving the health lessons. This realization led to the administrator adding professional learning for staff to the action plan on how to deliver quality instruction to students on health and physical education, and teachers started taking ownership of teaching health and wellness in all areas of curriculum.

The research data also strengthened our organization to be more focused and evidence based. For example, the data showed that in the first year of implementation, APPLE schools had increased physical activity for the fit children but had not affected the activity levels for inactive students. The school health mentors and project staff refocused messages to guide



schools to engage the disengaged students. Suddenly, there were Girl Power and Boy Power activities at lunch and after school. They started doing Zumba, yoga, dance, and less traditional activities, played floor hockey with pool noodles, and had access to more outdoor activities. A subsequent evaluation demonstrated a 35% increase in physical activity, particularly for inactive kids.

Without the use of evidence there would have been no way to know whether mentorship and guidance for schools were truly having an impact or not. Paying attention to the data at the school level and the project level is key to making a positive, long-term difference to student health behaviours.

Marg Schwartz
Former Manager
APPLE Schools

Next Stop: Maintenance

So what happens after the first three years of the journey, when the school health facilitator says farewell to their school community?

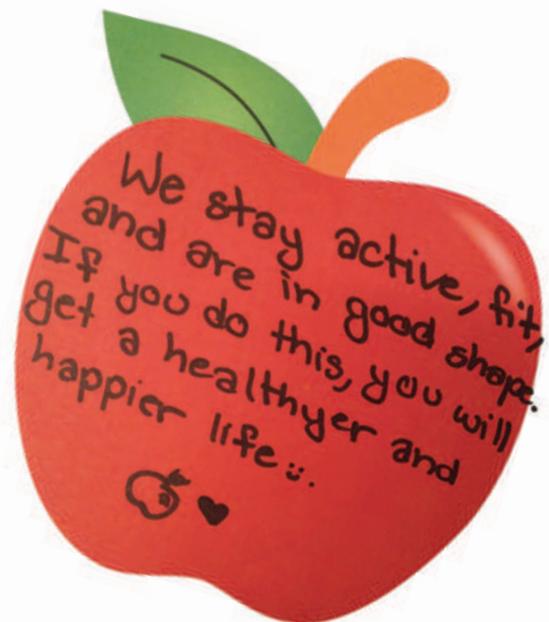
The journey is not finished. In fact, it continues with a new, ongoing phase.

In year four, a school community volunteer takes on the role of school health champion (SHC) to replace the school health facilitator. This is usually a teacher, but it could be any school staff member or member of the wider community, like a parent.

The SHC continues to keep health a priority in the school community by updating the school action plan and ensuring the school community continues working together to meet its goals. Most initiatives are already in place and the school community has already bought into being an APPLE School, so the SHC does not carry the load of changing school culture.

Being in maintenance does not mean SHCs are alone. A school health mentor continues to be a resource, guiding the SHC and their school community through the annual cycle.

There is no end in the journey to becoming a healthy school community. Once you reach maintenance, the work doesn't disappear, it just shifts direction. We would wish you good luck, but you don't need it because together we will take your school from readiness to maintenance. At each leg of the journey, APPLE Schools will be by your side to keep you on track and realize our vision of healthy kids in healthy schools in your school community.



School Health Facilitator Training Overview^{1,14}

APPLE Schools' implementation model is unique in that it employs the expertise of a school health facilitator (SHF) who works closely with an APPLE school community for the first three years.

Experience and research indicate the critical role of the SHF as a catalyst for ensuring healthy changes in a school community. Training SHFs to understand how they can impact a school's culture through the APPLE Schools model focused on physical activity, healthy eating, and mental health will play an important role in implementation success, ultimately supporting lifelong changes in student health behaviours.

Training is a carefully planned multi-day, in-person event where all SHFs share and learn together. Practical learning opportunities that demonstrate tangible tools and resources that SHFs can take back to their schools are provided. SHFs take away a toolbox full of facilitation techniques, information to share with stakeholders, and wellness activities that can be immediately implemented in their school communities.

This appendix provides an overview of the goals and topics covered during training, and the key messages that should be communicated to SHFs throughout.

Training Goals

All topics covered during training are guided by three goals:

1. SHFs will improve their competence and confidence to create a healthy school community.
2. SHFs will develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to fulfil their role.
3. SHFs will develop a sense of teamwork and provide support to each other.

Training Topics

APPLE Schools condenses school health facilitator (SHF) training into three eight-hour days. The agenda covers seven core topics. The order of topics outlined below reflects how APPLE Schools approaches training.

The order is not fixed and can be moved around to best meet your team's needs. Training facilitators should design the sessions to provide a clear understanding of each topic and cover the key messages, all of which are outlined below. While the topics are meant to provide an introduction to various concepts, attendees are not required to walk away with expert knowledge of the topics. Ongoing professional development will deepen their understanding.

Topic 1: Setting the Stage

Provide SHFs with an understanding of:

- APPLE Schools' approach in supporting schools to create sustainable healthy changes and generate an understanding of the overall project.
- The four-year process of *Readiness to Maintenance* (page 4) and APPLE Schools' annual cycle (page 7).
- APPLE Schools' eight essential elements (page 10).

Key messages:

- APPLE Schools uses eight essential elements, which have been captured by Dr. Kate Storey, PhD, as well as demonstrated practices that are a necessary part of the journey to a healthy school community. These will be highlighted throughout training and ongoing professional learning.
- *Building an APPLE School: a roadmap to sustainable healthy school communities* is a guide, not an exact prescription. While APPLE Schools has identified eight essential elements to creating a sustainable healthy school community, how and when those elements come together can look completely different from school to school. Those differences are something to embrace and celebrate.
- Once an APPLE school, always an APPLE school. The work of shifting to a healthy school culture is never over. Each year the annual cycle starts anew. Even after the school transitions to a maintenance mode, it still has access to a school health mentor and limited funding from APPLE Schools to support its action plan and school health champion.

Topic 2: What is Comprehensive School Health?

Provide SHFs with an understanding of:

- The comprehensive school health (CSH) approach and how it supports sustainable change.

It is important to take dedicated time early in training to explore the essential element of CSH as it is multifaceted. The other essential elements are woven throughout topics over the course of training.
- How the CSH approach incorporates health into all aspects of learning.

Key messages:

- Learning the fundamentals of CSH early on helps SHFs understand how to implement sustainable, healthy changes in their own school communities.
- The more a school can integrate all four components of CSH, the more likely its healthy changes will be sustainable.
- The four components should be applied to any new activity or initiative that a SHF introduces to a school to encourage life-long, healthy student behaviours.

Topic 3: Creating a Shared Vision

Provide SHFs with an understanding of:

- Why developing a shared vision within a school community is important for creating and maintaining a healthy school.
- How to facilitate a shared [visioning process](#) in their school communities.

Key messages:

- Creating a shared vision that includes input from all stakeholders in the community will foster a sense of ownership and buy-in among the school community.
- Each school is unique with its own set of needs, barriers, and strengths. Creating a shared vision that truly reflects the goals and challenges specific to the community builds autonomy.
- The annual school cycle (page 7) begins with creating a shared vision at the start of the school year. The remaining three steps of the annual cycle depend on the vision and guidance provided by that shared vision process.

Topic 4: Health Priority Areas (Mental Health, Physical Activity, Healthy Eating)

Topic 4 is an extensive topic that covers the three health priority areas: healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health. We recommend splitting it up over the three days with no more than two of the priority areas occurring on the same day as the content can be a lot to digest in a single day of learning.

Provide SHFs with an understanding of:

- The role of mental health, physical activity, and healthy eating in reducing chronic disease and increasing learning outcomes within the provincial curriculum.
- The expectations for their role in educating their school community on the three health priority areas.
- The materials, resources, partnerships, and services that are available to support mental health, physical activity, and healthy eating in school communities.

Key messages:

- SHFs do not need to be the experts in any of the three health areas; rather, they should be familiar with resources, guidelines, and policies that support their implementation within the school.
- When it comes to physical activity, look around and ask who is not participating. Aim to reach all students, especially those who are absent from physical activities, rather than the athletes. Look to incorporate movement into all areas of the school – whole school assemblies, indoor recesses, curricular linked physical activities, or in the staff room.
- SHFs are not the food police. They do not monitor student or staff lunches. They engage the school in deciding what food to supply to students, staff, and parents in the community, rather than personal food choices that people make for themselves. This ensures that the healthy choice is the easy choice for students when it comes to the food served and sold in schools.
- Supporting school communities with mental wellness is different from treating mental illness. At the school level, the school environment should support all students in developing their leadership qualities, identifying their strengths, and building their confidence to meet their highest level of potential.

Topic 5: Research and Evaluation

Provide SHFs with an understanding of:

- The value of doing formal and informal evaluation to determine if the school goals and activities are positively impacting student health behaviours.
- How to effectively communicate research findings to a school community.
- How to inspire excitement among school community members about being part of a research-based project with a proven track record of generating healthy changes.

Key messages:

- APPLE Schools' use of evidence to improve practice is unique and serves as a guiding principle for the project.
- Conducting evaluations and sharing the results is important for continuous development and has a significant impact on helping people buy into the concept of becoming a healthy school.

Topic 6: Role of the School Health Facilitator

Provide SHFs with an understanding of:

- The expectations for the SHF role.
- How to plan next steps for implementing the APPLE Schools model in a school community.
- The importance of working as a team with other SHFs to connect and share challenges and successes.

Key messages:

- The best skill for a SHF to possess is relationship building. Building positive relationships with the school community is paramount to the success of the SHF and fosters long-term sustainability of healthy changes.
- The SHF is a facilitator, not a doer. They use facilitation processes to gather input from school community members, then guide the school community to build and maintain a healthy school culture, versus doing it themselves.

Topic 7: Promising Practices

Provide SHFs with an understanding of:

- Health-promoting strategies that have been successful across various APPLE schools.

- Initiatives that intentionally encompass all four components of CSH.

Key messages:

- SHFs don't need to reinvent the wheel. There are a number of established resources that have proven success in schools which SHFs can implement to achieve sustainable, healthy changes like monthly campaigns, daily physical activity bins, taste tests, and healthy celebrations.

Examples of promising practices can be found in the [resource section](#) of the APPLE Schools website.

- At training, demonstrating promising practices provides hands-on learning experiences for SHFs and allows them to practice their facilitation skills. This also helps SHFs gain confidence heading into their new role and ensures they can lead the practices with their school communities.

Bits of Wisdom

There are two overarching principles that APPLE Schools has adopted and attempts to weave into as many training topics as possible.

- 1. Apply a health lens.** A phrase we often use to convey this message is to *apply a health lens to all school activities*. Becoming an APPLE School does not mean creating more work for your school community. It is about taking a closer look at what you are already doing and considering simple modifications that can be made to reach positive health outcomes. Things like changing the snack served after a school-wide Terry Fox Run or providing non-food rewards to recognize student accomplishments. Applying a health lens helps gain new perspective on how to make "the healthy choice the easy choice" in existing school activities.
- 2. Change takes time.** Each school starts at a different level of preparedness. Some adopt certain changes more easily or quickly than others. APPLE follows a four-year model of moving from readiness to maintenance and the speed at which changes occur within that timeframe will vary from school to school. Be patient and seek balance between pushing the community to adopt changes and providing them with the space and time to think, adjust, and accept these changes.

Tips for Effective School Health Facilitator Training

A school health facilitator (SHF) training event is designed to incorporate various learning styles, provide practical hands-on experience, and be fun and engaging. Over the years of providing training and knowledge exchange events, APPLE Schools has identified several key strategies that ensure the SHF training event is an effective learning experience for participants.

Adopting the following tips will ultimately model how SHFs should approach information delivery in their own school communities.

School health champions also receive ongoing professional development that demonstrates these tips for effective training. They too should incorporate the tips in their role as health champions when sharing information and leading healthy changes.

- 1. Theme:** Using a carefully chosen theme throughout training creates an opportunity to convey the objectives of the training event and each session in a playful way. It creates connections from one session topic to the next, adds flavour and fun to the event, and ensures the professional development event is memorable.
- 2. Role Modelling:** Training presents an opportunity to model desired facilitation techniques. The food and snacks served are nutritious and showcase ways the SHF can host staff wellness activities with healthy food options. The learning environment is set up in a way that ensures it is a safe space for participants to take risks, share their honest thoughts and opinions, and ask questions. The sessions demonstrate to the SHFs how they could confidently deliver the same information in their own school communities.
- 3. Partners:** APPLE Schools doesn't reinvent the wheel. Instead, we tap into the wisdom of our partners that support comprehensive school health (CSH) and the three priority areas. Whether they are local, provincial, or federal, it is important for SHFs and school communities to recognize the collective input and resources our partners provide to the important work around CSH. Invite partners to your training and ensure you highlight the resources and tools that they have to support schools. They can be experts who deliver content on some of the main topics or attendees that participate in parts of the event and share knowledge about the presentation content.
- 4. Learning Modalities:** Everyone learns differently, and it is important to offer various learning modalities throughout training. Use creative ways of teaching participants through graphic organizers, acting/creating skits, drawing, creating displays out of random objects, movement, storytelling, peer coaching, visualization, or group brainstorming. Using different learning modalities helps keep content fresh and engaging and caters to all learning styles.
- 5. Movement Break:** Adults are no different than kids when it comes to the need for regular movement breaks. Build intentional movement breaks into the daily training agenda. This acts as an effective modelling tool and keeps energy levels high so SHFs can stay focused throughout training. The learning environment is also set up so that participants can feel free to sit, stand, or move around as needed during sessions.
- 6. Make it Fun.** At APPLE Schools we value fun, and we communicate that value throughout the three days of training. By incorporating fun into the mix, SHFs are more likely to be engaged, create memories, learn, and be motivated to return to their school communities to start the work of building a healthy school community. This can include simple things like playing upbeat music when participants are entering the room in the morning and during breaks, decorating the room so it matches the theme, or incorporating games into your content delivery.
- 7. The Answer is in the Room.** New SHFs will have a lot of questions about their role and what it looks like in a school. Participants often forget that they already possess diverse knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can help answer questions from others in the room. Recognizing the strengths of the participants provides an opportunity for the SHFs to become experts and share their knowledge. For SHFs, hearing first-hand about experiences and challenges from other schools is very impactful and sharing among schools is something we strive to facilitate in training and professional development events.

Final Notes

The primary role of a SHF is to find ways to seamlessly integrate health into school processes and facilitate leadership in bringing a healthy vision to life. Initial training provides a strong foundation for SHFs to be confident in their role, understand the importance of relationship building, and gather the necessary tools to accomplish the tasks and demands required of them over the course of each school year.

In addition to the initial three-day APPLE Schools training, it is important to remind new SHFs that they will have access to a school health mentor (SHM) for guidance. The SHM will provide ongoing mentorship to SHFs throughout their three years working in the school through one-on-one meetings and monthly SHF staff meetings. SHFs will keep expanding their knowledge on a number of topics like action plans, facilitation processes, informal assessments, building a core committee, and running effective meetings.

Learning for this role is a journey and it continues long after the initial training. Even when the SHF role transitions to a SHC role, the SHM will provide ongoing mentorship through bi-weekly newsletters and professional development events with other APPLE schools.

Most importantly, training should inspire SHFs to lead their communities toward a lifetime of healthy choices. These choices should help them achieve sustainability in the school, as outlined in the professional development essential element. So, remember to inject fun and energy each step of the way, and enjoy the ride!

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