

The ASBA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 stipulates that "Leadership and support are provided to school boards to share and implement best practices which address demographic and wellness challenges." This newsletter, "Health Matters", created by the ASBA Student Health and Wellness Task Force, will be distributed periodically and will support boards in their work of fostering student health.

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The principal: A key player in creating a healthy school culture

Comprehensive School Health (CSH) is a framework used to guide school-based health promotion by holistically addressing teaching practices, school policies, partnerships, as well as the school's physical and social environments. Despite the proven effectiveness of CSH in improving health behaviours and educational outcomes, we need more evidence of specific implementation strategies applied in a variety of contexts. Researchers from the University of Alberta sought to uncover the inner workings of CSH schools in more detail by interviewing CSH teachers, school health facilitators/champions, and more recently, several dozen CSH school principals. Collectively, results showed that the principal acted as a key player in the implementation of CSH and therefore directly influenced the cultural shift to be a healthy school community.

The main findings from the principal interviews suggested that they acted in a fluid role throughout CSH implementation, shifting and adapting as required by their school community and specific context. Principals worked to shift school culture by:

1. Priming cultural change, establishing the project as a school priority and role modelling expected behaviours.
2. Communicating the project's importance to others by acting as a spokesperson for CSH.
3. Negotiating concerns and collaboratively planning by actively engaging with others in the school community.
4. Holding others accountable to the changes by staying true to the project's vision, while still enabling others to take ownership.
5. Playing an underlying supportive role by providing positive recognition and establishing ongoing commitment throughout.

It was also revealed, however, that principals must embody a number of pre-requisite qualities prior to the implementation of CSH, in order to maximize its success. These core qualities included:

1. A clear understanding of CSH principles and pillars.
2. An alignment of CSH with the principal's core values.
3. A firm understanding of their individual school context.
4. Pre-existing trusting relationships with others in the school community.
5. Confidence in their position as leader.

These findings indicate that principals play a critical role in providing direction and determining the culture for their schools. They are clearly key players in the implementation of CSH, regardless of whether their school has another health champion present. Taken together, it is hoped that these findings and recommendations will inform effective school leadership practices, help to improve CSH implementation efforts and, ultimately, lead to improvements in health outcomes for children and youth.

Did you know?

We are pleased to announce that the **Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund** has received renewed Alberta Health funding until 2018. **Grants** offered to districts through the Wellness Fund support health and wellness among students using a Comprehensive School Health approach. Please check the following link for grant call updates <http://www.wellnessfund.ualberta.ca/en/Grants.aspx>
Welcome to the new Executive Director of the Wellness Fund, Ms. Colleen Wright.

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Source: Roberts, E., McLeod, N., Montemurro, G. M., Veugelers, P. J., Gleddie, D. L., & Storey, K. E. (2015). Implementing comprehensive school health in Alberta, Canada: the principal's role. Health Promotion International. 1-10, doi: 10.1093/heapro/dav083 (<http://www.appleschools.ca/files/PrincipalsRoleinCSH.pdf>)

Board resources

Concussion: Concussion is an issue within sports, physical activity settings and within school communities. Information and resources can be found at <http://injurypreventioncentre.ca/issues/concussion> to help school jurisdictions create and maintain awareness and policy to decrease concussions. For coaches and school sport leaders, an online training course is available at www.schoolcoach.ca.

AMA video: The Alberta Medical Association (AMA) is proud to partner with ASBA in the creation of a collaborative video, highlighting the AMA Youth Run Club and speaking to the importance of Comprehensive School Health. Watch the video here: https://youtu.be/QkhCFZAg_TA

What's happening

Shaping the Future 2017: To Be Wisely Aware – Ever Active Schools provincial conference

Space is limited and the days are counting down to *Shaping the Future 2017*, January 26-28, 2017 in Kananaskis. Save \$50 and register at <https://event-wizard.com/ShapingtheFuture2017/0/register/> before the early bird rate ends on December 23, 2016. *Shaping the Future* is a provincial school health conference that brings together education health and other sectors to support the wellness of students in healthy school communities.

Shaping the Future 2017 pre-conference: The Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) and Ever Active Schools are excited to partner together to offer *Students in Mind: An Upstream Approach to Student Mental Health*, with a focus on *Trauma Informed Environments* in a pre-conference on Thursday, January 26, 2017 at the *Shaping The Future* conference. The pre-conference will feature research, engaging conversations and personal and professional reflection. School trustees, senior school administrators, health professionals and teachers will leave empowered in how they can support student mental health within their school jurisdictions. Register at the *Shaping the Future 2017* conference link above.



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