APPLE Schools is a school-focused health promotion initiative that impacts the lives of almost 30,000 students annually in 87 schools across British Columbia, northern Alberta, Northwest Territories, and Manitoba. It improves students' lifelong eating, physical activity, and mental health habits using a comprehensive school health model. APPLE Schools is governed by a board of directors chaired by Dr. Lory Laing.

The need for APPLE Schools

- Less than 1 in 5 children and youth in Canada are meeting national movement guidelines for physical activity, sedentary behaviours, and sleep.¹
- 70% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.²
- 27.5% of children and youth are overweight or obese.³
- COVID-19 public health measures worsened these negative health trends.

APPLE Schools works with underserved school communities to make health an easy choice. Students in APPLE schools show a 35% increase in physical activity, eat 10% more fruit and vegetables and are 40% less likely to be obese than in comparison schools. The project helps students eat healthier, move more, and feel better so they can achieve more academically.

Greetings from the Executive Director

Welcome to the very first edition of your newsletter! As we all patiently await the green in the leaves to arrive, we thought, what a great opportunity to share all the many momentous happenings in the APPLE world.

First and foremost, I would like to express my warmest gratitude for your continued support of our project. On behalf of all our APPLE school communities, we would like to say thanks for the impact you make in each school community every day!

One of our many announcements is that our return on investment has jumped to more than $215M in future healthcare and indirect cost savings. What a cause for celebration!

Also, the latest APPLE Schools research to contribute to the world of health promotion is the first to capture children’s voices around their decline of well-being due to COVID-19 lockdown measures. What can be more compelling and honest than hearing from our children? The results of the studies underscore the crucial need for APPLE Schools to continue promoting health and wellness, making schools safe, healthy, and fun.

Together, we continue evolving and innovating to meet this rising demand for APPLE Schools, both current and potential. The APPLE Schools Foundation is working to find new funding opportunities to expand our impact to more vulnerable, underserved children. And we need your help in meeting this intensified demand.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting students in APPLE schools as they learn, grow, and develop into healthy leaders. Please take a few minutes to read on, reflect on the impact of your support, and celebrate!

As always I look forward to any comments, feedback or opportunities to share more about healthy schools communities.
COVID-19 Pandemic Through the Eyes of a Child

The latest APPLE Schools research to contribute to the world of health promotion is the first to capture children’s voices around their decline of well-being due to COVID-19 lockdown measures.

Katerina Maximova, PhD, from the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, gathered in-depth information on students’ lived experiences of COVID-19 and perceptions of its impact on mental health and lifestyle behaviours. Her research found that school closures prompted deteriorating lifestyle behaviours, mental health, and well-being of children, particularly those in socioeconomically disadvantaged settings.

This research reinforces the increasing need and stresses the importance of the APPLE Schools project in schools. Now more than ever we need to continue our journey to prioritize school as a place for kids to feel safe and healthy, where they have a sense of belonging. We need to continue to ask for student feedback on what this looks like, and how we can create it. Their voices are crucial in determining the next steps.

Full Research Papers:

- It's Very Stressful for Children*: Elementary School-Aged Children's Psychological Wellbeing During COVID-19 in Canada
- Perceived changes in lifestyle behaviours and in mental health and wellbeing of elementary school children during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Canada

Infographic sample from one of the papers. View the full infographic.
APPLE In Action: New Shoes Make the Dream Work

Tracy, the school health champion at Father R. Perin School in Janvier, Alberta, knew that opportunities for physical activity fell short at school. Even when running clubs or programs were created, students still faced a barrier of lacking appropriate footwear and could not always participate. The APPLE Schools mentor worked with school staff to research and apply for a grant from Jumpstart; they won $3,000 toward new running shoes for kids! Tracy said students were thrilled and put the shoes on right away, feeling excited about participating in indoor physical and commenting on how comfortable they were. The school is also working on increasing intramural time and starting a walking club to give these students more opportunities to move and play.

Health Tip: Prioritize a lunchtime walk to get active during the day and enjoy the sunshine. Try starting an optional office lunchtime walking club where staff can keep each other accountable and walk together.

Uptick On Return On Investment

Updated calculations show that our donors have now invested more than $25M in healthy futures for kids over 15 years, putting savings in future healthcare and indirect cost savings at more than $215M – a tremendous return on investment!

This $25M investment came from you, the supporters and donors who value creating safe and healthy school communities for generations of vulnerable students. Thank you!
APPLE Schools Now
Reaching 30,000
Students in 87 Schools

For years, school principals who have moved on from APPLE school communities have been asking us how they can bring the APPLE model to their new school. They witnessed firsthand our program’s powerful ability to affect health behaviours and wanted to continue the momentum in new communities. We listened to them and saw an opportunity to empower more communities to lead, choose, and be healthy. So we made it happen!

We launched a group of schools called APPLE ally schools, which are all led by APPLE alumni principals who know what it takes to build a healthy school community, and volunteer health champions. They are part of a pilot program to see if we can impact health behaviours using a slightly altered approach. We are partnering with researchers to measure the impact of this new approach to hopefully reach even more vulnerable students in the future.

13 new schools in Edmonton, Sherwood Park, and Fort McMurray joined the APPLE community this year, supporting even more healthy kids in healthy schools – almost 30,000 students in 87 schools, to be exact!

Fun fact: Every K-12 student in Fort McMurray is now in an APPLE school, truly making it a health-focused city using our evidence based model.

Read our official announcement

We are thrilled to join the APPLE school community and family, and to allow the kids to bring awareness to their health outside of the school. - School Health Champion, Jan Reimer School, Edmonton.

APPLE In Action: Start the Week With a Big Breath

Our Lady of the Prairies School in Edmonton, Alberta, is part of our new group of APPLE ally schools, and they sprang into action with healthy school-wide initiatives. After connecting with the APPLE Schools mentor to get practical advice on how to improve health behaviours, they adopted Mindful Mondays where Grade 6 students take leadership roles to guide breathing activities or meditation to help students bring calm to the week.
They also integrated Wellness Wednesdays for students to share healthy living tips with the school or demonstrate an energizer activity. This has been building buy-in from the older students because they feel a sense of ownership and control, and illustrates to the younger students that health is a priority. They kicked off their healthy APPLE Schools journey with success!

School Instagram Post: “Kicked off our @APPLESchools initiative with our students with a Mindful Monday activity led by our leadership student, Mia!”

Health Tip: Box breathing is just one way to calm your nervous system when you feel anxious. Breathe in deeply for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds. Repeat 4-5 times.

Brag-Worthy News Stories

University of Alberta Recognizes APPLE Schools As a Game Changer

Folio, the University’s journalism publication, recognized APPLE Schools’ 15 years of tremendous impact on student health across Canada. It celebrates APPLE Schools as a one-of-a-kind game changer and emerging brand in the health promotion world.

Thanks to Folio’s robust audience base, APPLE Schools’ story was shared with thousands of new people:

Facebook Impressions: 14,365
Twitter Impressions: 2,437
LinkedIn Impressions: 11,081

Championing a Path To a Healthy Culture

APPLE Schools has completely shifted school-wide health behaviours in Aurora Middle School, in Lac La Biche, Alberta. Colleen Moghrabi is the school’s longtime dedicated school health champion and she has witnessed incredible leaps in a growing healthy culture and embedded healthy choices in all corners of the school.
APPLE In Action: Authors of Their Wellness Journey

APPLE Schools research has shown that school autonomy is necessary to improve health behaviours. So the health champion at Bill Woodward School in Anzac, Alberta, and the APPLE mentor work together to create impactful initiatives based on the community’s unique strengths, assets, and needs. Most recently, the school hosted a culturally relevant Wellness Week. Most of the school’s population is Indigenous, so two days were spent connecting to Dene and Cree cultures. Students enjoyed drumming and traditional hand games, and received a mindful colouring book created by visual artist Jessica Powder, a member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, which connected art with Cree words and American sign language. Working with our staff to tailor support for Bill Woodward school made Wellness Week a memorable event for students to get active and connect in a memorable way.

Colleen Moghrabi

“...The approach to health and wellness that APPLE Schools offers is truly invaluable! They have helped to change the perspective Aurora Middle School has on comprehensive school health, have influenced students to make the healthy choice, the easy choice, and have supported staff to implement healthy changes in their classrooms to allow students to reach their full potential.

Colleen Moghrabi

Health Tip: Colouring is a great way to relax and unwind, even as adults. Try picking up an adult colouring book at a bookstore near you, and take colouring breaks to unwind your mind.

Or, order Jessica Powder’s colouring book, called A Cree Journey Through Colouring, which is funded by APPLE Schools donor Mikisew Group.
APPLE Schools’ knowledge exchange events continue to be in demand. School staff are seeking the latest, most innovative ideas and education to promote wellness, and we are always ready to provide for them and ensure they feel confident and competent in their health champion roles.

APPLE Schools brings experts and health champions together virtually three times a year to set their school communities up for success in creating lasting change. We have hosted two events since September.

We use feedback from health champions to determine content, and always keep the subjects new and fresh. This school year we brought in experts to share the latest on creative ways to promote daily physical activity, inclusion in physical activities, engaging FNMI students, staff wellness, teaching the new food guide, and much more.

- In a post-event survey, 100% of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the knowledge exchange event enhanced their ability to support their school community as a health champion.
- 100% said they found the knowledge exchange event valuable.

Whether in-person or virtual, APPLE Schools’ knowledge exchange events always get people moving their bodies.

Feedback:

I found this knowledge exchange the best one yet!

We were so happy to have Indigenous resources shared! Always would love more!

I love listening to all the different things educators are doing. I always leave with a few takeaways.

Our staff compiled all the ingenuity shared in our February event and neatly packaged the ideas in a shareable resource to inspire schools.
APPLE In Action: Brrring On the Snow!

The health champion at École Swan River South School in Swan River, Manitoba, wanted to increase outdoor physical activity for students during the winter. She was able to use APPLE School implementation funds to purchase winter kits for students so they can learn how to build snow structures and shelters outside. She said the students had a blast playing in the snow and really embraced winter while connecting with one another. The activity provided a great mental health break, and met the goal of promoting movement! APPLE school communities find opportunities to promote wellness in every environment, and implementation funds allow them to do so.

Health Tip: If winter is not your friend, start small and try simple activities, like a brisk 10-minute walk to re-energize. Or, rent cross-country skis or snowshoes, and grab a friend for an adventure!

APPLE Schools is a non-profit organization that relies on gifts from generous donors. Click to support healthy futures for vulnerable kids. DONATE TODAY.

Stay connected with the latest happenings at APPLE Schools and the communities we work with. Follow @APPLESchools.
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