

APPLE Schools Empowers Teachers

The concept of project sustainability in schools is one of the goals of APPLE Schools' model, as implementation of the project continues after initial resources have been reduced over time. In order to fully examine sustainability, ten focus groups with teachers were conducted in APPLE Schools and results were analyzed to find facilitators and challenges for sustainability. Two factors supporting sustainability in APPLE Schools include facilitation and autonomy; and self-efficacy. Facilitation and autonomy allows the school staff to take ownership of initiatives promoting health and is an important factor influencing long-term sustainability. Increasing the self-efficacy of staff members to the point that they believed they would be able to continue as a healthy school once the allocated time for a School Health Facilitator (SHF) was eliminated, was viewed as a critical and invaluable role of the SHF.

*"Teachers reported that APPLE Schools, namely the SHF, facilitated the process of implementing comprehensive school health (CSH) and provided them with adequate support in order to promote sustainability through increased self-efficacy. In turn, this allowed teachers to have greater autonomy and accountability, which they viewed as essential. School-based programs that are able to focus on the skills, development, and motivation of a community of teachers within a school often benefit from the initial influx of resources, which can be used to fuel continued high-quality implementation when the intensive support is diminished."*¹

Staff in APPLE Schools

Staff involvement is essential for embedding CSH into the fabric of the school.

"I believe there are people here who will carry the initiative on (after) the School Health Facilitator" **Teacher**

"...we're building resources that will be here when the School Health Facilitator leaves, so those resources will always be available..." **Teacher**

"...what are our priorities at our school? Not what is [the School Health Facilitator] going to do? But what are we going to do? How are we going to take ownership?" **Teacher**

"the School Health Facilitator knows that in a few years she won't have a role in our school, so she's trying to make us all aware of what we can do and planning ahead for next year with ... some goals and activities and ideas we've all thought about." **Teacher**

What is APPLE Schools

APPLE Schools is a privately funded, innovative school-focused health promotion initiative that improves the lives of more than 16,500 students annually in 51 schools across Northern Alberta. APPLE Schools supports school communities through the development of healthy habits and changes to school environments in order to improve healthy eating, active living, and positive social behaviours for a lifetime.

¹ Storey, K. E., Cunningham, C., Spitters, H., Schwartz, M., & Veugelers, P. J. (2012). The sustainability of APPLE Schools: Teachers' perceptions. *Physical and Health Education Journal*, 78(3), 16-22.

