



Healthy Kids in Healthy Schools

November 11, 2014

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## Inactive Students in APPLE Schools increase physical activity

After two years of participation in APPLE Schools, Grade 5 students who were determined to be low-active students experienced an increase in activity 15.3% greater than that of low-active children from comparison schools. Comparison schools increased physical activity in the most active students, but did not affect the inactive students to the same degree as APPLE Schools. This study demonstrated the importance of school health promotion in affecting a reduction in health inequalities. As stated in the study:

*Investments in school-based health promotion, therefore, are not only a viable, promising, and important approach to improve physical activity levels and to prevention of childhood obesity, but they may also reduce health inequalities in physical activity.<sup>1</sup>*

## How did they increase physical activity?

When considering physical activity programming, APPLE Schools asks the guiding question, “Who is not there?” By identifying and discussing with students who do not normally participate in activities such as traditional intramurals and recess activities, adjustments can be made to include the students’ suggestions for participation. Focusing on cooperation, fun, and inclusive activities, allows less active students to increase their desire to participate in physical education classes, school-run events and after-school opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

Some sample physical activities that occur in APPLE Schools are:

- *Fun Fitness Fridays* - easy-to-modify fitness circuits set up for a full day so all students can participate
- *Physical Activity Leaders (PALs)* – student-led inclusive, non-elimination activities at recess
- *DPA Bins* - pre-built bins with one piece of equipment, and simple activity lesson plans that can be used in a classroom or gymnasium setting
- *Girls-only Intramurals* - offer female-friendly activities in a safe space for girls
- *Cooperative and Non-Competitive Intramurals* - focus on participation by providing attendance points and modified activity choices.

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*“Thank you for supplying us with gym equipment.” **Nayte, student***

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*“Now that I eat healthy and [can] be active each day life will be easier.” **Bryan, student***

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*“Thank you for purchasing our school DPA Bins. We get to play with them during class.” **Makayla, student***

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## What is APPLE Schools

APPLE Schools is a privately funded, innovative school-focused health promotion initiative that improves the lives of more than 15,000 students in 50 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.

<sup>1</sup> Vander Ploeg, K., Maximova, K., McGavock, J., Davis, W., & Veugelers, P. J. (2014). Do school-based physical activity interventions increase or reduce inequalities in health? *Social Science & Medicine*, 112, 80-87. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.04.032>

<sup>2</sup> Vander Ploeg, K. A., McGavock, J., Maximova, K., & Veugelers, P. J. (2014). School-based health promotion and physical activity during and after school hours. *Pediatrics*, 133(2), 371-378. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-2383>