

LIVING HEALTHY

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MARCH, 2009

WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

ACTIVE SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS

New research suggests that play can be very important to a child's academic experience. Regular recess, fitness, or nature time can influence behavior, concentration, and even grades. Children who had more than 15 minutes of recess a day showed better behavior in class than those who had little or none (Barros, *Pediatrics Journal*, 2009). Students (and adults) need that short break because the brain needs that break. Children can benefit academically from physical activity during gym class and recess.

Another recent study of 33 Ontario schools involved in a healthy living initiative (students exercised every day and were discouraged from eating junk food) saw overall scores climb by 18% over two years in reading, writing, and math. This compared to a growth of 4% for similar schools not in the health program. Physically active kids are in a better condition for learning (Fishburne, *Globe and Mail*, 2007).

Active Schools Playgrounds is an initiative to help get students more active during recess and lunch. An active school playground will help students:

- Become physically active every day
- Return to classes ready to learn
- Become independent and creative in directing their own play activity
- Cooperate better with their peers
- Demonstrate less aggressive behavior on the playground
- Develop leadership skills
- Have fun and participate!

Western Health and the Western School District hope to offer a series of regional inservices on *Active School Playgrounds* this spring. At these sessions, one teacher from each school will receive hands-on training for a variety of outdoor activities and a School Resource Kit valued at \$350 to encourage kids to get more active on school playgrounds. More information will follow in the next few weeks.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Physical and Health Education Canada (previously known as CAPHERD) sponsors a national recognition program for physical education excellence in schools. The awards are:

Gold: 100 minutes of weekly Physical education delivered at least three times per week.

Platinum: 150 minutes of weekly Physical education delivered at least three times per week.

Diamond: Daily Physical Education for at least 150 minutes per week.

Congratulations to Humber Elementary, Our Lady of the Cape School, and St. Mary's All Grade School who have been recognized with Platinum Awards this year.

Don't miss this opportunity to receive a unique display banner and a congratulatory letter from Canada's Prime Minister. A fast and easy online application is available at www.capherd.ca

STEPPING OUT

Our Stepping Out activity for February was Jump Rope for Heart. Students could skip before school, at recess, or at lunch. If your school participated in this Stepping out activity, please let me know so I can put your name in the hat for the monthly draw.

The Stepping Out activity for March is Dance 'Til Your Heart's Content. Students can dance at lunch time, recess, or before school. New dances can be taught as part of the physical education class or just play the DVD, *6 Fit Kids Workouts*, available from Bill Allan at 637-4021. This DVD has four 5-minute and two 10-minute workouts that students really enjoy. Consider a huge dance session at the next school assembly.

WHAT'S NEW WITH THE SCHOOL FOOD GUIDELINES?

A number of schools have been looking to re-vamp their menu to keep in line with the Provincial School Food Guidelines and offer the healthiest choices to students. With this in mind, I recently reviewed the lunch menus and snack lists of many schools in the Western School District. Suggestions have been sent to school principals. Here are a few:

1. Sun Chips are too high in fat, DO NOT meet the SFG, and need to be removed.
2. Hot Dogs – Hot dog wieners are high in fat and MOST DO NOT meet the SFG. Some that do meet the SFG include Schneiders Light Wieners, Compliments Chicken Wieners, and PC Lean Italian Sausage.
3. Muffins – Muffins must be whole grain (i.e. oatmeal, bran). Added pieces must be fruit such as blueberries, raisins, or banana. Muffins made with white flour and chocolate chips do not fit the Guidelines.
4. Chicken Nuggets – Breaded chicken must be less than 15g of fat and 720 mg of sodium with more than 6% Iron per 100g serving. Country Ribbon and Valley House DO FIT as a Serve Moderately item.
5. Baked Fries or Wedges – Potato must be less than 4g of total fat (1 g of Saturated Fat) and 480 mg of sodium per 30g serving. McCain Oven Roasts Potato Wedges are a Serve Most item. Cavendish Farms Regular Shoestring & Regular Straight Cut and McCain's Superfries, Straight Cut, Crinkle Cut, & Golden Crisp are Serve Moderately.
6. Granola Bars – Some cereal bars fit the Guidelines and some do not. Cereal bars, cookies, crackers, chips, and snack bags must be less than 5g of fat (1g of saturated fat) and more than 0g of fibre per 30 g serving. Check the label or call to see if a particular brand fits.

To help schools, a Brand Name Food List has been started. This list available on the Healthy Students Healthy Schools web site at www.livinghealthyschools.com is being added to on a regular basis and has a wide variety of foods found in supermarkets. These foods are listed as Serve Most, Serve Moderately, or Not Included.

MARCH IS NUTRITION MONTH

March is Nutrition Month and this year's theme is **"Stay Active. Eat Like a Champion."** For more information, go to the Dietitians of Canada website. We would like to encourage classroom teachers and Living Healthy School Teams to plan a Nutrition Month activity to promote healthy living with your students. If your school has an innovative idea for Nutrition Month, please email bill.allan@wnlsd.ca to let us know so we can share that with other schools.

Here are some ideas that have been used in previous years:

Presentations for Students

Consider asking the local public health nurse to speak to students about healthy living. On the web page, there are Power Point presentations that could be used with students: *You Are What You Eat, Living Healthy, and Smoking: You're a Target*. To view, go to www.wnlsd.ca (follow links to Student Health/ Presentations).

Use the Web

Interactive activities are available on our web site at www.wnlsd.ca (follow links to Student Health/ Educational Materials). Here are just a few:

Nutrition Challenges

Use this web site with students with three different [Nutrition Challenges](#): a Nutrition Challenge Quiz, Crossword Puzzle, and a Scavenger Hunt with popular nutrition questions.

Nutrition Jeopardy

The [Nutrition Jeopardy](#) web site has dozens of questions and answers related to nutrition that could be used with elementary and junior high school students to create a fun activity for Nutrition Month. Go to www.wnlsd.ca (follow the links to Student Health/ Nutrition Month).

If you need help with the Healthy Students Healthy Schools initiative, please contact:

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