

LIVING HEALTHY



http://web.wnlsd.ca/student_health

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WESTERN HEALTH/ WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

PAINTING LINES ON THE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND – EASIEST INTERVENTION EVER TO ENHANCE STUDENT HEALTH!

Children today get far less physical activity that they did just a few years ago. As a result of this inactivity and poor nutrition, Newfoundland & Labrador has the highest prevalence of Type 2 diabetes in North America and the highest prevalence of obesity in Canada.

The solution is simple – better nutrition and more physical activity. The following interventions are cheap, they are easy, and they should be among the first items addressed by any school attempting to increase overall physical activity for students.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE RECESS

In addition to the health benefits, Harvard researchers suggest that children benefit academically from increased physical activity during recess. Researchers have found much better classroom behavior among those who had an active 15-minute break (or more) during the school day.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of the importance of physical activity for academic performance, the duration of time for recess in nearly 40% of the schools in North America has been reduced to a point where children no longer have enough time to go outside for active play. If you wish to view TV reports about the health benefits of an active recess, check the web site <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/press.htm>

PAINTING SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS

To encourage Western District schools to establish active recess and lunch times, stencils were purchased last year to paint designs on school asphalt for a variety of classic games, i.e. hopscotch, four-square, snakes and ladders. Student activity increased dramatically once this was done. After the winter, however, this paint needs to be touched up. Studies have shown that **giving the playground a fresh coat of paint can drastically increase physical activity levels by as much as 40%**.

To help schools with the painting, the Western School District has agreed to subsidize the cost of a refresher kit. Students could help do this touch-up during an art or health period on a nice warm day. Even if a school does not have pavement, solutions may be found like some schools did last year in using a nearby parking lot or tennis court. In May, I will try to get the stencils to those schools that never got them last year. Let me know if you need them.

REFRESHER KIT

1 Gallon White Paint 1 Gallon Red Paint
1 Gallon Blue Paint 1 Gallon Yellow Paint
12 Paint Brushes (50 mm)

This package contains everything you will need to keep your playground refreshed and operating like new. The regular price for this kit is over \$200, but with the subsidy we can offer this to schools now for only \$50. If your school would like to order this kit, let Bill Allan know by Friday, April 30, at bill.allan@wnlsd.ca

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Providing students with inexpensive equipment for use on the playground can also have a similarly impressive impact on activity levels. Last year, we distributed to K – 6 schools jump ropes, frisbees, playground balls, and bean bags. More equipment will be distributed at the regional active playground sessions in May.

3 EASY STEPS TO GET STUDENTS ACTIVE

1. Arrange for a group of students or volunteers to sweep up loose sand and debris from the asphalt area to be painted. Take push brooms from home.
2. On a warm dry day, have a class go outside for their art or gym period to repaint last year's markings. (Stencils are available for schools who wish to borrow them.) Students should wear old clothes.
3. Teach the students various playground games in gym or health class (hopscotch, double dutch, skipping rhymes, four square, tag, ultimate frisbee).

REGIONAL SESSIONS FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

In April, an invitation went out to K – 6 Physical Education teachers to attend half-day training sessions for Active School Playgrounds. **Each participating school will receive a playground kit containing resources that can be used to get students active**, i.e. skipping ropes, basketballs, flying discs, soccer balls, bean bags, playground balls, hacky sacs, and more. Sessions will be from 1:00 – 4:00 and will be held at three locations:
E.A. Butler, McKays Thursday, May 20
Pasadena Elementary Wednesday, May 26
Viking Trail, Plum Point Tuesday June 1
(We hope to offer more sessions in Labrador in September.)

The half-day sessions will have a different agenda from last year, but the sharing of activities by physical education teachers will remain a priority.

The District will pay the mileage to travel to the regional site and car pooling will be expected whenever possible. Schools will need to make its own substitute arrangements for teachers. If the physical education teacher would like to attend, please email me at bill.allan@wnlsd.ca by Friday, May 7. (If you would like to attend but cannot with this arrangement, please let me know.)

STEPPING OUT CHALLENGE

The Stepping Out activity for March was the conclusion of the Wonder+ Fitness Challenge. This activity was held over two months so two schools that completed this challenge were chosen for the \$100 prize draws. The two schools that were drawn are Long Range Academy and St. Lewis Academy. Each of these schools will receive a \$100 cheque for fitness equipment. Congratulations!

For April, schools had a choice for the Stepping Out activity, either Jump Rope for Heart or Walk on Wednesdays. **If your school completed either of these activities please e-mail Bill Allan to let him know.** Another draw for \$100 will be held in early May for those schools that participated.

The final Stepping Out activity for May and June will be the Walk Across Newfoundland/ Canada Challenge. Students are challenged to walk from St. John's to Port aux Basques, a distance of 906 km.

(Larger schools may increase their distance and go 6734 km across Canada to Vancouver or to any other location.) Determine a 1 km distance in the gym or near school that students can walk safely. Some Physical Education teachers have begun their classes with a 5 - 7 minute run, totaled up the number of laps run, and converted the laps into kilometers per class. Other schools have had their students go for a walk before class in the morning. Track their progress on a map or keep on going throughout the year to any destination. A draw for the \$100 will be held in June.

SUPER ACTIVE SCHOOLS AWARD

Western and Labrador-Grenfell Health and the Western School District would like to recognize schools that have made great strides in providing healthier environments for students. Criteria have been established to guide schools in their efforts. So far, eight schools have applied for the Super Active School award and will be recognized at the principals' meeting in May:

- St. James Elementary - J. J. Curling
- Legallais Memorial - C.C. Loughlin
- Lourdes Elem. - Pasadena Elem.
- St. Michael's Elem. - St. Thomas Aquinas

The deadline for applications is Friday, May 7. The form for applying can be found on the web page listed at the top of this newsletter.

KIDS EAT SMART FOUNDATION

As the end of this school year approaches, the Kids Eat Smart Foundation is excited that the number of KES Clubs in the province has now topped the 200 mark! The goal is to ensure that all children attend school well-nourished to be ready to learn. Each new Club brings us closer to accomplishing that goal. All students are welcome at the 202 KES Clubs throughout the province where a healthy breakfast, lunch, or snack is available at no charge to the students. The Kids Eat Smart Foundation would like to thank all volunteers and supporters for making this another great year. *Good Eating = Good Thinking*
