

Conference Panel Responses

#1 Student Question – How can we prepare students to be leaders in a sustainable wellness program?

- Trust them
- Give them an active role
- Meet with students on their own terms
 - Go to the students for meaningful feedback
- Variety of ages involved
- Provide leadership training opportunities
- Link their roles to special projects credit
- Be selective
 - Mentor those students initially
 - Branch out from there
 - Find the “natural” leaders
- Utilize leader from all grades and make sure they all have responsibilities
- Requires support from entire staff of the school
- Need to make links with a teacher/staff leader that can act as a model and collaborator
- Professional Development – by attending conferences such as these (students)
- By doing a student assessment of the needs of the school that makes more accountable and meaningful
- Ownership & involvement
- Communication
 - Invite and engage students
- Initiating multiple programs
 - Providing opportunities
- Meaningful involvement for students
- Mentorship is crucial
 - Process of involving students from younger grades
- Hands on activities
- Give students power to determine issues and action plan for issues
- Leadership groups in each grade in a school
- Alliances between H.S.’s and feeder Jr. Highs & Elementary
 - Continuity
- Peer mentors, older kids mentoring younger kids
- Positive social environment activities all year
- Geared and focused to elementary students so as they progress the positive focuses progress them
- School health mandate from Alberta government
- Consistent goal throughout school
- Consistent messaging buy-in from educators
- Schools create culture so that if lead teacher leaves the ideals remain in school
- School health evolves to include parents, school council, community connections

- Embrace culture ie. use of elders for Aboriginal populations – they can teach and be a value and priceless benefit to the school
- Have students assess the school’s health/wellness needs (like they are)
- Students guide direction with support of admin, teachers, school nurse
- There needs to be involvement and training of younger students for sustainability
- Get the younger students involved. Have these students do certain jobs to develop their leadership roles and as they progress through school they can advance in leadership
- Classroom student rep could be a junior leader for the classroom and advance to being a leader throughout school
- Use the CSAL binder to support the implementation of student lead initiatives (the CSAL binder provides lesson plans to support “leadership” curriculum)
- “Buy-in” from all teachers
- Teachers need to encourage the students to “fly” vs doing for them
- Start in younger grades, including feeder schools
- Partner with community groups – Boys & Girls, AADAC, city recreation, 4H, Lions Leadership Camps
- Keep doing Challenge Day
- Join AASCA (www.aasca.org) and go to their junior & senior high leadership conferences. The national association is called CASAA and they host CSLC every fall. This will build student capacity in amazing ways
- Start children at a very early age
- Identify “leader” type students both positive and negative and ask them to be involved in an “action” team. Must get a staff “Champion” or committee to spearhead

#2 Parent Question - How can parents, schools and community agencies improve communication with each other regarding Health and Wellness areas. How can we better the communication with the promotion end of it.

- We need a consistent message & support to promote that message provincially
- Strategy to support this message at a local level
- Communication & engagement
- Ask for specific help in specific areas rather than general
- Invite parents & agencies to be involved in specific ways
 - Create a database of how parents can contribute
 - Interest areas
 - Skills areas
- Keep meetings focused and time honoring
- Provide food at meetings particularly after school
- Recognition of volunteers
- Send home something parents & students have to do together eg. Health Scavenger Hunt
- Capitalize on well known role models to promote healthy living
- Free activities

- Chronic & continuous communication
 - Face to face at the table with all stakeholders
- Communication is key
- Given information through newsletter, parent/teachers nights
- Communication officer part of the school (google calendar)
- Needs assessment of what works for parents
 - Using technology like email
- Higher Systems level
 - District down
- Parent Council Member
- Do you have a Division-wide parent council conference/meeting/newsletter?
- Are the websites linked – everyone’s?
- Continue the parent spiritual wellness conference – nice work!
- Through newsletters, assemblies, school celebrations/councils ask parents, community groups to share their resources, skills, knowledge that could benefit our health/wellness goals/programs
- Make communications two way. Currently main flow is school to parents
- Common language when communication between groups
- Strong “school wellness action team” including parents, community members, students, admin
- Specific, finite tasks for parents who are very busy (small, manageable task)
- Small, manageable bits of info going to parents via email. Set school meeting agendas on specific topics and email out – if parents are interested they will come
- Lots of different forms of communication home (newsletters, emails, website)
- Strong communication of school vision to parents and multiple small tasks/ways they can be involved
- Use media, newsletter, PT interview, send out letters

#3 Principal Question – How do we improve communication between home, school and community?

- Hands on activities
- Lead by example
- Support for educators from outside resources
- Involve as many as possible no matter the budget
- Area for older students to play
- Student leaders to get people playing
- Parents don’t understand importance of nutrition
 - Teachers talking about healthy food choices, parents packing junk food in lunches
- Teacher’s Model
- Communicate: newsletters, posters in classroom, websites
 - School/student councils – awareness with websites
- Needs to be better opportunities for sharing information and ideas across schools and communities (easy and quick)
- How do we keep parents involved at the junior and senior high level?

- Need specialists for each subject in every division that are responsible for making these connections and have the time and resources to do so
- Has to be coming from the district
- Consistent message
- Parent/school/community buy-in/support
- Conferences
- Inclusion of all ages; students, parents, teachers, etc.
- Funding
- Put the power and faith in the students
- Balance between academics and health
- We need to have leadership from the province to help change the culture
- Build schools as community centre
 - Link Schools with library/fitness centre
- Build a philosophical framework that shows how things are linked
 - Understand what resources are available
- Share, don't duplicate services
- Need to have an understanding of what's needed for the schools
- There's a common need
- Modeling what's already being done by other schools
- Policy drives the change
- Staff training for health
- Healthy Schools Alberta model will bring active liaising and effective sharing
- Lobby MLS's – there is political receptivity to this topic
- Attend community/provincial forums (ie. AAMDC, Balanced Rural Communities Conference in April, etc.) Become a “player” in the circuit where decisions and bonds are made. Enter the political consciousness and, through presence, make change over time
- Communication between Provincial ministries and cooperation, shared goals and a vision of where our health as a province should be
- Legislation is required
- Change in our health system (more preventative focus)
- Establish formal relationships between post-secondary degree programs (education, K/N, health) to work more with schools and know what each other are doing
- Evaluation & dissemination of health plans/initiatives
- Better P.D. for teachers to support health
 - Joint P.D. with health professionals
 - Time (paid time) for teachers to team about what is successful and how to use it
 - Increased accessibility of health tools
- Accountability of AHS & AB Ed & Health outcomes in schools
- School health part of business plans for health & education
- Parent council meetings – invite community stakeholders
- School rep on local interagency meetings
- Include all parents not just the do-gooders
- Community nights for entire school

- Dietician into school to offer programs
- Add 'school health' to newsletters, e-newsletters
- Use social networking ie. Facebook
- Parent email contact list – those who agree
- Need to bring community organizations into schools more. Need to look at the schools that haven't been successful at this, only ever hear the positive
- Costs of healthy food in schools. How do we get rid of existing contracts that vending machines have already in schools
- We feel we need "school paid divisional" staff, responsible for "x" number of schools in each division to promote wellness. Each school could have a "champion(s)" and work with the divisional staff member. P.D. for these people to network, best practices, etc.
- \$ and human resources needed
- We need a provincial model that embraces a coordinated approach to implementation which links Health & Education at a local level

#4 Superintendent Question - What barriers exist in your school community or daily activities to prevent you and others from promoting healthy schools and making positive change? What success have you had in overcoming these barriers?

- lack of initiative-finding people to do the work
- moving from interest to action phase (follow-through)
- Should be both top down & bottom up simultaneously (can't wait forever for government)
- Resistance to mandates (buy-in needed)
- Health champs in schools to coach new teachers on easy implementation of DPA, curriculum-tied health, etc.
- Principal leadership is key
- Measurability is very tricky
- Integrating wellness in Division and school 3 year plan – remove idea of health being an 'extra' or 'add-on'
- Resource of time and funds can be barriers
- Flexibility (mental), resiliency and traditions at adult level
- Time factor
- So many expectations particularly on small staff
- Space for DPA
- Funding
- How to overcome successes?
 - Release time from grant \$
 - Equipment from grant \$
 - Chunk down the tasks
 - Think big - start small
 - Separate the important from the urgent
 - Focus on philosophical foundations & priorities
- Knowledge of the "movement"
- Teacher time to promote

- Putting academics ahead of the “Whole Student”
 - Course developed at University level to teach this element of teaching
 - Educating current principals/educators
- Admin buy-in
 - Solution: having “key” / “champion” principals speak to other principals
 - Principals propaganda
- Time/preparation time
- It's not valued
- Not everyone is involved
- PE/Health is secondary in some schools
- Parents (some) think their children can make their own decisions
- Teachers reward with healthy foods
- Each student get “celebration calls” home to promote “good behavior” or actions – teacher uses school cell phone to call during class
- Administrators focus on \$\$ raised from concession and don't want to get rid of them
- Token economies work in some schools
- Taste testing challenges so students experience other or different foods
- Encouraging/promoting cultural appropriate initiatives into the class or school
- School cafeteria
 - Habits
- Healthy choices at home and school
- Change of school culture
- Fundings
 - Profits
- Convenience
- Vending machines
- “Push” the school to implement change
- Make a difference
- Involvement
- Actually making health a TOP priority
- Taking health & wellness from a fad to a long-term main focus
- Starting from scratch (this is becoming less of a barrier, more sharing is occurring)
- Success – district wide health policy as well as annual health goals in each school
- Policy from the government needs to be in place so that all schools have the opportunity to make the shift toward healthy lifestyles
- Need physical education and health specialists at all levels of education to build skills and habits
- PE and health need to be prioritized and valued
- Funding – who should the funding go to?
- All need to speak the same language
- All need to have some agenda – know what we are trying to accomplish – similar vision for accountability, outcomes

- Need to develop these programs together & work toward common goal collectively
- Challenges & barriers:
 - People
 - Policy
 - Money
 - Facilities
- Mandate on school health from AB ED Minister
- AHS maintains funding for preventative programs ie. school health liaisons
- Ensure funding for lead health teachers, champion teachers
- Educators need to buy in to PD days to include or ensure information is heard

#5 Trustee Question - Having provided nearly three years of support and education, we are preparing to implement clear expectations to support students and learning in the areas of mental well-being, healthy eating and physical activity.

What advice and ideas do you have about implementing health-related expectations in ways that are reasonable for two distinct groups: students and adult employees?

- Role modeling is vital for influencing students
- Communicate ideas and success stories without pressure and judgment
- Share the human side and struggles with the stakeholders
- Keep 'connecting the dots'
- General mandated health policy (eg. Implement ANG), but SD's/schools add own details
- Have students make choices on how/what to implement health initiatives
- Give both groups choice
- Small goals
- Celebrate successes
- Educate teachers 1st on health stats and have support system
- Acknowledge hard reality of limited time & resources (starting point)
- Have staff wellness component – get teachers to invest in/care about own health and they will likely care more about whole school environment (eg. Staff wellness challenge)
- How do you get a staff to buy in?
- Start with small, go big
- Try to avoid setting up draconian expectations
 - Teachers should not have to “police” lunches
- Schools should serve HEALTHY foods
 - Encourage students to bring healthy foods from home but don't set up an attitude of judgment
- Give teachers an opportunity for discourse and dialogue/input
- Stay small and focus on it and then build on it
- Have someone go from school to school to help demonstrate how to implement simple change

- Need proper educations groundwork to inspire health and then implement policies
- Health and wellness teams including students, parents, teachers
- Research what is leading practices
- Include EVERYONE ie: bus drivers, custodians
- Walk the talk ie: no pizza @ board meetings
- Central offices are packed with pop – get ride of them
- Be the role model
- Include healthy food @ PD days
- Encourage/promote school health in community
 - Healthy recipes, dieticians
- Encourage walking buses
- Sharing circles –turtle time – in school
- Celebrate & honor where people/schools are at and support them in taking “small steps” forward
- Consider a “rubric” that honors a variety of achievement levels and provides examples of what achievement at each level looks like
 - This may help inspire people/schools to move to the next level
- Educate both groups – P.D., displays, sugar shocker