

Red Deer Public School District - committed to staff well-being

In the fall of 2012, Red Deer Public School District (RDPSD) accessed support from the Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund to support schools in creating healthy learning environments. Having developed and implemented the first ever nutrition policy in Alberta, the district felt it was time to expand their efforts into the areas of active living and positive social environments. In January 2013, Mary Appleton-Dias joined the district as the Comprehensive School Health Coordinator.

Appleton-Dias, with direction from the district Wellness Committee, jumped at the opportunity to target some of her efforts towards staff wellness. RDPSD recognizes that healthy staff are a key ingredient to student success. When staff are healthy they are happier and they perform better.

Getting healthy - one person at a time

During the fall of 2013, Brian Bieber and the Human Resources Department arranged for the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) to provide optional wellness assessments in schools throughout the district. Staff members were able to sign up for a "Chronic Disease Prevention (CDP) Body Composition Clinic. "This personal, confidential information helped our people understand their health in a new way" noted Appleton-Dias. In fact, "all schools and departments are looking at things differently these days" notes Deputy Superintendent Stu Henry.

Recognizing that there was a need to support behavior change, a "Brain and Body" power point was created. Health Champions across the district, shared it with

staff at each school, providing information on the body - brain connection; acknowledging that when our body's are properly nurtured (when we eat healthy and exercise regularly) - our brains are more effective. During presentations, staff were challenged to consider what they could change to improve their personal health, and what they could do together to support change within their own buildings.

Spanning the district

In recent weeks, RDPSD Schools have been invited to design an 8 week "wellness opportunity " for staff in the district. Honorariums are available to schools that require instructional time for their sessions. "The creativity is inspiring" noted Appleton-Dias. Fitness, yoga, spinning and healthy eating classes are some of the opportunities that have been identified. Appleton-Dias is working out the logistics, but classes will be available to all staff in the district - free of charge - starting in the new year.

Appleton-Dias shared that Mountview School "stepped up" even before this invitation was extended. Physical Education Specialist, Jeff Plackner, created a district wide wellness evening. Once per month RDPSD staff and their families are invited to take part in a fun event that "gets the blood pumping and the muscles moving". To date, staff have been able to take part in ultimate frisbee and capture the flag. November's event is volleyball.

For more information on the wellness initiative in Red Deer Public, contact Mary Appleton-Dias at: 403-342-3741.

ASEBP Wellness Resources

If you have coverage through the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP), be sure to check out some of our health services.

Apple-a-Day: This secure website offers interactive tools including health risk assessments, information libraries about prescription drugs and other health topics to improve your health and well-being. You can access Apple-a-Day via our website, www.asebp.ab.ca. Please note: A My ASEBP account is required. If you have trouble registering for an account, please contact a Benefit Specialist toll-free at 1-877-431-4786.

Personalized Health Coaching: Completing an Apple-a-Day health risk assessment provides you with a personalized health report and the option of free phone coaching with a certified health professional. Coaching is available in the areas of nutrition, physical activity, stress management and smoking cessation.

For Your Health: Each month, our Health Advisors provide insightful emotional, physical and nutritional health information via the *For Your Health* section of our website.

ASEBP's Health Information Line: Have a health question for a nurse, dietitian or fitness expert? Call an ASEBP Health Advisor at 1-888-431-5875.



Tips for Staying Well at Work

- ✓ Breathe deeply
- ✓ Move with your students
- ✓ Laugh
- ✓ Drink lots of water
- ✓ Pay someone a compliment
- ✓ Eat a nutritious lunch
- ✓ Choose "healthy" snacks that nourish your body & brain
- ✓ Get a good night's sleep