

SUCCESS STORY

Cardston Elementary School



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

This quote comes to mind when I think about the Cardston Elementary School (CES) community. CES is a large K - 6 school (approximately 800 staff and students) located in beautiful southwest Alberta. The school runs under the leadership of Principal Mark Bennett, and is strongly supported by the staff, families and the community of Cardston.

Three years ago, Annette Bright, Char Berry, Kathy Schow and Lynda Stewart took a risk and stepped forward to initiate Comprehensive School Health (CSH) strategies that mobilized the school community into making healthier lifestyle choices. The results have positively impacted not only the staff and students, but the community of Cardston as a whole.

These individuals continue to engage staff members, parents, students and community members to support many healthy initiatives for the school within the following focus areas: healthy eating, physical activity and positive social environments.

Due to a substantial donation from the local Kinsmen, staff and students partake in Fruit Fridays. Once a month the school's parent council collects, prepares and delivers fresh fruit to 702 students and 100 staff members. Fruit fact sheets are provided to staff and students outlining the health benefits of fruit consumption.

In addition to Fruit Fridays, fresh delicious and nutritious smoothies are sold at the Tiki Hut two Wednesdays a month. This offers the students healthy snack alternatives and ideas they can make at home as well. Each month a different flavour is featured. The success of the Tiki Hut is due again to dedicated parent volunteers and Grade 6 leadership students who ensure the drinks are ready and served on time. First Choice Savings and parent volunteers have helped to make this a success.

In the area of physical activity, CES prides itself on offering intramural programs, after school sports and has a designated area for gymnastics in one of the corridors in the school. This allows the students to have active movement breaks throughout the day. And of course we must mention the Cardston Kids' Marathon (<http://www.cardstonkidsmarathon.com>). In spring 2011, close to 1,400 registrants from Cardston and neighbouring towns gathered to run the final mile of their marathon together beginning at the elementary school and ending at the Remington Center. Lunch and snacks were provided by the community members and school council volunteers. The Cardston Kids' Marathon was initiated by Patricia and Dwayne Beazer and has inspired the school and community as a whole: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e78HBNXYVo&feature=related>.

In the area of positive social environments, the healthy school committee engages fellow staff members to become 'Health Coaches' for the Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle groups. Each group consists of eight to ten students from Grades 1 - 6, and a staff member (health coach). The purpose of the cross-grade groups is to promote healthy living and a positive social environment. The Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle groups meet, create a greeting signal and discuss and experience healthy lifestyle choices. These groups also reinforce community connectedness and improve school spirit.

Adult leadership is an important component when implementing comprehensive school health, but student leadership is an integral part of the process as well. The CES student leaders attend the annual Ever Active Schools, Healthy Active School Symposium (HASS) in Lethbridge, help develop an action plan for their school and assist with the implementation of the initiatives.

Cardston Elementary School is an excellent example of what it takes to have a successful comprehensive school health program. They have school, home and community leaders that are willing to initiate, plan and implement healthy strategies that benefit the students within their school, and they also support one another to positively impact the whole community of Cardston! At Cardston Elementary School Healthy Students are Strong Students! Congratulations to CES as they live and model their school motto: "Climbing Ever Stronger!"



Ever Active Schools

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