

REAL

Kids Alberta

The REAL Kids Alberta Evaluation

How is Your School Doing?



YOUR SCHOOL'S REPORT



The REAL Kids Alberta Evaluation

The Raising healthy Eating Active Living Kids Alberta (REAL Kids Alberta) evaluation is a joint project of the School of Public Health, University of Alberta, and Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW). The intent of this evaluation is to assess the impact of Alberta Health and Wellness's Healthy Weights Initiative and to provide some measurable behavioural and health outcomes for children in Alberta. For information on the Healthy Weights Initiative, go to: www.ech.ab.ca/healthy_weights_initiative.htm.

The first phase of the REAL Kids Alberta evaluation took place in the spring of 2008 with the next phase of the evaluation to be completed in 2010. A total of 3935 Grade 5 students and 4209 parents were surveyed from 174 schools across Alberta.

The evaluation of Grade 5 students included:

- the Harvard Food Frequency Questionnaire for Children and Youth (a dietary assessment tool) to assess dietary habits and nutrient intake
- self-reported information on physical activity, screen-time and recognition of AHW programs
- measurement of heights and weights to determine overweight and obesity from calculation of Body Mass Index.

The parents of participating students were asked for consent and to complete a survey to determine their socioeconomic background, support for health-related policy in schools and recognition of AHW programs.

The principals of participating schools were asked to complete a survey on school environment, implementation of provincial programs and recognition of AHW programs.

Summary of Results

- Among Grade 5 students in Alberta, 29% are overweight or obese. This is substantially higher than estimates from an earlier study in 2004, which indicated that 22% of Alberta children and youth aged 2 to 17 were overweight or obese.

- The majority of Grade 5 students are not meeting Canada's Food Guide recommendations; only 27% of students are consuming enough vegetables and fruits (a minimum of six servings per day is recommended).
- For all Grade 5 students in Alberta, 47% spend three hours or more per day in front of a screen outside of school hours. This exceeds recommendations from the Canadian Paediatric Society of two hours or less per day of total screen time.
- The majority of Grade 5 students are not sufficiently physically active; only 26% report being sufficiently physically active.
- Parent responses indicate strong support for a school environment that promotes healthy eating (90%) and daily physical activity (95%).

School Reports

Each participating school will receive a school report with results from the 2008 evaluation. Results specific to each school are compared to the provincial average for such things as:

- students' eating behaviours
- parental support of healthy eating at school
- students' physical activity and parental encouragement of physical activity
- students' sedentary activities.



For further information on the REAL Kids evaluation, please contact:

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HEALTHY EATING

Did You Know?

Schools

- Schools exert strong influence over students' eating habits and have been described as "the ideal settings to establish and promote healthy eating practices in children and adolescents."¹
- Students who are well nourished have increased test scores, improved attendance, reduced tardiness and better academic, behavioural and emotional functioning.^{2,3,4}
- Schools with healthy eating programs may reduce childhood obesity and improve students' dietary intake.^{5,6,7,8}

Students

- The overweight/obesity rate of Canadian children has doubled over the past 25 years.⁹
- In 2004, 59% of Canadian children aged 2 to 17 ate less than five servings of vegetables and fruit per day.¹⁰
- Almost half of Alberta students report consuming high-fat, high-calorie foods on a daily basis.¹¹
- Eating breakfast improves academic performance^{12,13,14,15}, yet up to 49% of students say they don't eat breakfast.¹⁶

Parents

- The more often a family eats meals together, the more likely the children are to eat fruit, vegetables, grains and calcium-rich foods and beverages. They also are more likely to feel connected to their families.^{7,17,18,19}
- Eating home-cooked meals is associated with healthier eating.^{17,19}
- Children of parents who eat fruit and vegetables and drink milk are more likely to do so themselves.²⁰



Canada's Food Guide

A ten-year-old child requires at least this number of servings every day:

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO:

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php

Vegetables and Fruit	6
Grain Products	6
Milk and Alternatives	3-4
Meat and Alternatives	1-2

HEALTHY EATING

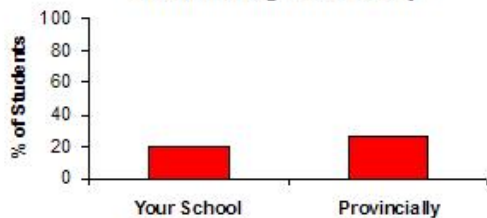
Results from REAL Kids Alberta for **your** school

Fruits and Vegetables

20%

of your students consumed at least 6 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Canada's Food Guide recommends a minimum of 6 servings per day for a ten-year-old child.

% of Grade Five Students Who Ate a Minimum of 6 Fruits and Vegetables Per Day

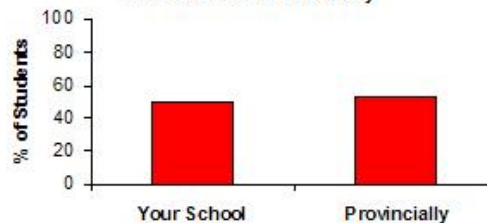


Milk and Alternatives

50%

of your students consumed at least 3 servings of milk and alternatives per day. Canada's Food Guide recommends a minimum of 3-4 servings per day for a ten-year-old child.

% of Grade Five Students Who Consumed a Minimum of 3 Servings of Milk and Alternates Per Day



Purchasing Milk and Juice at School

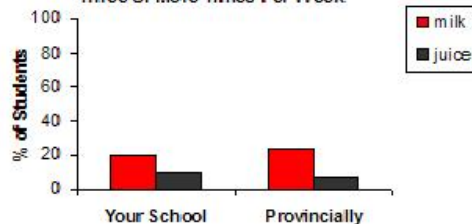
20%

of your students reported buying milk and

10%

buying juice at school 3 or more times per week.

% of Grade Five Students Who Reported Purchasing of Milk and Juice at School Three or More Times Per Week

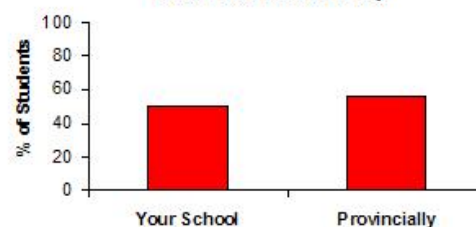


Other Foods

50%

of your students reported eating non-nutritious foods or drinks 2 or more times per day. This includes chocolate bars, chips, ice-cream, frozen yogurt, cookies, cake, pop, fruit-flavoured beverages, powdered/sweetened drinks, coffee, tea.

% of Grade Five Students Who Ate Non-Nutritious Foods or Drinks More Than 2 Times Per Day



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HEALTHY EATING

Parents' Opinions

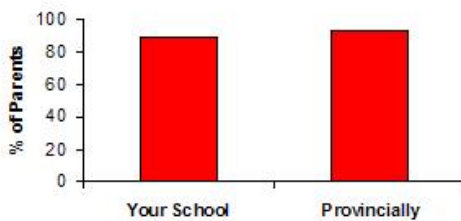
90%

of your student's parents agreed that schools should ban or limit the availability of unhealthy foods at school.

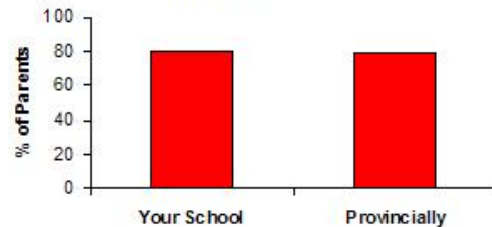
80%

of your student's parents agreed that schools should discourage or not allow students to bring unhealthy foods to school.

% of Parents Who Agreed with Banning or Limiting Unhealthy Food Availability at School



% of Parents Who Agreed with Discouraging or Not Allowing the Bringing Unhealthy Food to School



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Tips!

- Provide foods from the "serve most often" category of the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth* in vending machines, lunch programs, as snacks and at special events.
- Support school-wide campaigns to incorporate healthy eating in the school culture; e.g., fruit and veggie week challenges, Nutrition Month®.
- Provide nutrition education to students at all grade levels that is interactive and fun and focuses on building skills.
- Provide age-appropriate serving sizes of foods at all places food is served or sold in school.

In 2008, Alberta Health and Wellness released *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*. These guidelines provide schools with standards for food/beverage providers within schools. The guidelines apply to food and beverages provided or sold at school, including special events, lunch programs, vending machines, school stores and fundraisers. For a copy of the guidelines, go to: [www.healthyalberta.com/Documents/AB_Nutri_Guidelines_2008\(1\).pdf](http://www.healthyalberta.com/Documents/AB_Nutri_Guidelines_2008(1).pdf).

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Did You Know?

Schools

- Schools can instil an appreciation for healthy lifelong, physical activity behaviours and help children to acquire the skills and lifelong habits for physical activity.^{21,22}
- Physical activity is associated with improved classroom behaviour, as well as increased enthusiasm toward school and school work.²³
- Regular physical activity helps children reduce stress and aids in developing self-esteem. ^{24, 25}

Students

- 90% of children and youth aged 5 to 19 did not meet Canada's Physical Activity Guideline minimum of 90 minutes of physical activity a day.^{22,26}

Parents

- Behaviours started in childhood and adolescence tend to carry over to adulthood; 56% of Canadian adults 20 years and older are considered physically inactive.²⁸
- Physical activity levels of children and youth correlate with family physical activity levels.^{28, 29, 30}
- The majority of Canadian children aged 10 to 16 spend 4 to 6 hours a day in front of a "screen"²¹ and 2 hours or less of screen time per day is recommended. ^{31, 32, 33, 34}
- Physical activity can help achieve a healthy body weight and is associated with increased self-esteem and decreased depression and anxiety.²⁷

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Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children and Youth

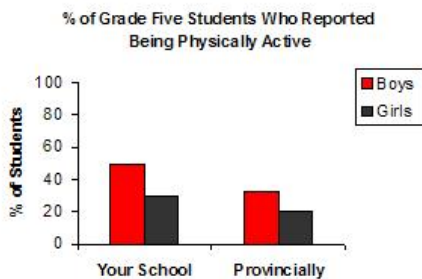
Children aged 10 to 14 should participate in at least 90 minutes of physical activity per day and reduce their non-active time spent watching TV and playing video and computer games. For a copy of Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children and Youth, go to: www.paguide.com.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Results from REAL Kids Alberta for **your school**

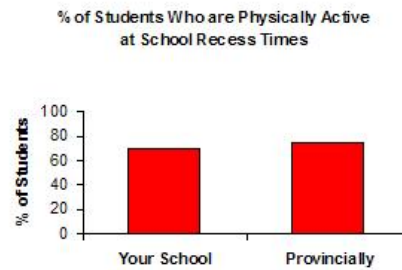
40%

of your students report being physically active.



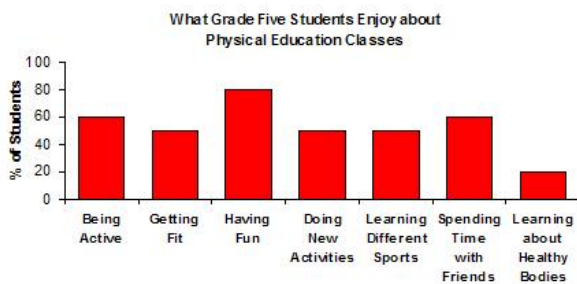
70%

of your students report being physically active during school recess times.



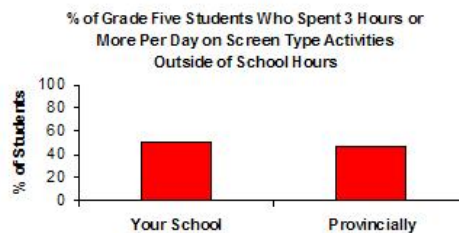
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Aspects of physical education classes that students enjoy.



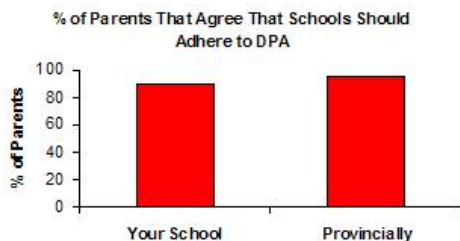
50%

of your students report typically spending 3 hours or more per day doing screen type activities outside of school hours. This includes watching TV, surfing the Internet and gaming.



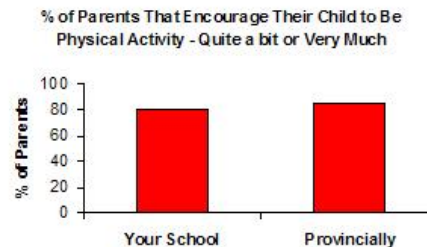
90%

of your students' parents agreed that students should adhere to the provincially mandated Daily Physical Activity (DPA) initiative.



80%

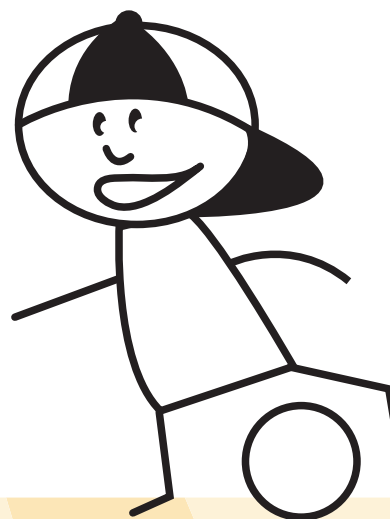
of your students' parents encourage their children to be active quite a bit or very much.



Tips!

- Increase student participation in physical education classes by dividing the students into small groups to decrease wait times.
- Develop outside activity circuits and an indoor walking circuit. Encourage staff, students and parents/guardians to use the circuits before school, during lunch time and after school.
- Encourage active transportation by providing a safe bike lock-up area for students and provide secure areas where students can leave equipment; e.g., inline skates, skateboards and helmets.
- Organize walking school buses for your school.
- Expand on current intramural programs by offering clubs that are fun and accessible for many students, such as running clubs, skipping clubs or dance clubs.
- Integrate physical activities throughout the day in a variety of subject areas.

For further ideas on how to increase your students' physical activity, see the Daily Physical Activity resource at: <http://education.alberta.ca/media/318479/dpa7.pdf>





YOUR NEXT STEPS



- For further information related to this evaluation, go to www.realkidsalberta.ca.
- Information from this report may be used to identify areas of strength within your school community or areas of concern that can be addressed by health promotion activities.
- Share the results with students, school staff, parents and community stakeholders, such as your Regional Health Promotion Coordinators from Alberta Health Services.
- Use the results of this evaluation to identify areas for collective action within your school authority.
- Go to www.everactive.org, the Ever Active Schools Web site, where you will find information about:
 - education of students, parents and staff
 - creating supportive physical and social environments in school communities
 - community partnership
 - assessment: Healthy Assessment Tools for Schools (HATS)
 - planning and policy development
 - assistance with promoting physical activity and healthy eating.
- Support parent or teacher requests to submit proposals to fund Healthy School Initiatives, such as the Healthy School Community Wellness Funds (www.achsc.org/wellness_fund.htm).
- Use government approved guidelines and resources such as the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth (www.healthyalberta.com).
- Go to the following Web sites for further information:
 - www.achsc.org
 - www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyPlaces/201.htm
 - www.appleschools.ca/
 - www.healthyeatingatschool.ca
 - www.actionschoolsbc.ca/content/home.asp
 - www.dashbc.org

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For more information
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