



PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION FAIRS

ENHANCING STUDENT WELLNESS AND PROMOTING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

by Brent Bradford, Stephen Berg, Jennifer Landers

The May/June 2013 issue of Canadian Teacher Magazine included an article about organizing and implementing a Physical and Health Education (PHE) Fair—an event that introduces the school community to local resources that can help families maintain a healthy lifestyle (find that article by visiting the Archives page under “Articles - Healthy Living” at canadianteachermagazine.com). A PHE Fair is an effective initiative for helping educate school communities in terms of physical and health education, wellness, physical literacy and physical activity.

This article is a follow-up to share how Jennifer Landers, a school teacher from Alberta, implemented this initiative in her school. Since their successful event, Jennifer has come to believe that the PHE Fair influenced her school community positively and immeasurably.

For the last four years, I’ve been the Health Champion at my current Elementary School in North Central Alberta. From the beginning, I’ve been fortunate to have had an enthusiastic group of students delivering new and exciting initiatives to boost healthy food choices, enhance healthy movement choices, and promote mental health and wellness. Throughout these years, our school has developed into a community of excited and healthy movers and shakers!

However, last year I was looking for something different, something that would shake them up even more when considering the importance of student health and wellness. So I searched for strategies and ideas locally, provincially and nationally and attended a session at the NCTCA Convention (February 2015) in Edmonton in which the idea of a Physical and Health Education Fair was brought up as part of a resource developed by Brent Bradford and Stephen Berg for educators aspiring to become school PHE champions. The more we discussed the PHE Fair, and the more I read about it, the more it became clear that this was something my Health Action Team (HAT) made up of staff and 20+ students could (and should) tackle!

So, I began the process. First, I challenged the HAT to create interesting smoothie recipes. They, along with three parent volunteers, chose to be in charge of the “Healthy Smoothie Bar” for the ½ day event. It didn’t take long for the HAT to create healthy smoothies such as: Cosmic Monkey Blast (banana, coconut, vanilla yogurt and orange juice); Frozen Delight (strawberries, bananas, strawberry yogurt and orange juice); Blue Explosion (blueberries, vanilla yogurt and lemonade concentrate); and Berry Blast (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberry yogurt and orange juice).

Weeks before the event, the HAT was literally vibrating with excitement in anticipation of our PHE Fair. While the students were talking up the “Healthy Smoothie Bar” with their classmates, the other teachers on the HAT and I were busy selecting local community groups and individuals who we thought demonstrated physically active and

healthy initiatives in our town. We contacted about fifteen organizations and asked each of them to provide an interactive booth to keep the students engaged and moving rather than a static booth with posters or fliers. The end product included the following:

- Yoga
- Zumba
- A Local Gym
- Skyburst Music
- The Children’s Library
- Shine Gymnastics
- Kickboxing
- Aim for Success
- Jujitsu
- The Health Unit
- An independent Dental Hygienist
- Our Health Champion Coordinator
Mr. Stanton Swain with an outdoor obstacle course

We invited another school with whom we shared our building and asked Division 1 (Kindergarten – Grade 3) to participate for one hour from 12:30 to 1:30 and Division 2 (Grade 4 – 6) to participate for the same duration from 1:30 to 2:30. We also invited the Grade 7 – 9 students from the other school during the second time slot. Beforehand, teachers from the other school informed me that their students were barely able to contain their excitement all morning. In support of this, I have to admit that the HAT did an outstanding job advertising the event!

My Proud Observations

During the event, my heart was truly full when I observed all the students actively engaged, smiling, laughing, having fun, all the while learning about the many opportunities offered in our community to enhance their overall wellness!

In the end, I asked myself the important question, Did the PHE Fair deliver the intended “student wellness” messages?

Throughout the journey of planning, organizing, implementing and assessing our school’s first PHE Fair, my energetic and proud HAT certainly bought into the idea of overall wellness, but what about the rest of the school community? I believe this initiative truly reached the school community in an effective and positive way. In fact, a few days following the event, a grade six student, who was not involved in any student leadership activities throughout the school year, mentioned to me that he would like to get involved in the HAT next year at the junior high school level. If he has become interested, how many others will also make the effort to impact their classmates by investing in our school’s second PHE Fair while promoting the importance of student wellness? Exciting times ahead!

SUCCESS!

In addition to the vast array of student learning, a PHE Fair delivers a great amount of added value to the school community. PHE Fairs have been found to reach not only students, but staff members, parents/guardians and school community members, too. The following statements have been heard following PHE Fairs:

"I'm going to yoga classes now!"

"I'm way more aware of mental health issues from the health nurse's presentation!"

"Zumba! My daughter and I love it now!"

"There is so much more to wellness than being physically active!"

"My child came home and showed me how morning smoothies can be a healthy start to the day!"

"I love morning smoothies! A great and healthy way to begin the day!"

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Organizing and implementing a PHE Fair requires some effort from school members such as a PHE Champion like Jennifer Landers. However, what can be accomplished from initiatives such as these can reach high levels of learning for all—everyone involved learns! As can be understood when reading Jennifer's words, although a PHE Fair can enhance student learning on physical and health education topics, it's the greater community of school members who benefit too. A PHE Fair may prove to be as successful in your school as it seems to have been in Jennifer's school.

Brent Bradford (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Concordia University of Edmonton. Along with extensive teaching experiences at the elementary and junior high school levels, Brent also served as a Teacher Educator from 2009-2014 while earning a PhD. Brent's teaching has been recognized with several awards at both the school and university levels. Brent serves on PHE Canada's Advisory Board for Physical Education and Physical Literacy. He can be reached at brent.bradford@concordia.ab.ca.

Stephen Berg (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at The University of British Columbia Okanagan, where he teaches courses in the areas of Physical and Health Education. Stephen has received numerous awards for excellence in teaching and serves on PHE Canada's Advisory Board for Physical Education and Physical Literacy. He can be reached at stephen.berg@ubc.ca.

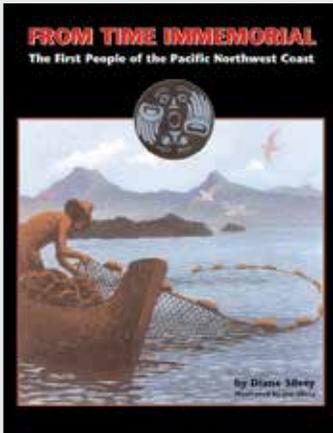
Jennifer Landers (MEd) earned a Bachelor of Education Degree (University of Alberta) and a Master of Education Degree (Penn State University). After teaching for five years with Red Deer Public Schools, Jennifer traveled overseas to teach in the Middle East for five years. She then returned to Alberta where she married and taught at Sunchild First Nations School for two years. Jennifer then settled at Eldorado Elementary School in Drayton Valley, AB where she teaches full-time Kindergarten and is the enthusiastic Health Champion. Jennifer can be reached at: jennifer.landern@wrsd.ca.





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FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL

The First People of the Pacific Northwest Coast

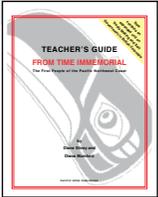
Pacific Edge Publishing is to be commended for publishing such an ambitious project. Both Diane and Joe Silvey have honoured the spirit and history of First Nations people, and they should be proud of themselves. This is definitely an asset to any classroom.

Jan Weiten, Literacy BC

- an honest survey of the history of the coastal First Nations from pre-contact to the present.
- a broad overview of traditional ways common to a large number of diverse groups.
- encourages readers to learn more about particular groups who walked the shorelines and forest trails of the Pacific Northwest.

TEXTBOOK FEATURES

Before You Read—prereading activities
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First Nations Today—issues facing First Nations today
Ask the Elders—opportunities to learn about the unique characteristics of local First Nations
What Do You Think?—questions that invite students to express their opinions about issues
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121 Illustrations and Photos



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