

FOOD PROMOTION AND EDUCATING FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH: CONNECTING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Introduction and Background

- According to Statistics Canada, 31.5% of Canadian children are overweight or obese, and 75% of those children will become overweight adults. Alberta is certainly no exception, with a 22% combined rate of childhood and youth overweight.
- The health of Albertan children does not merely pivot on addressing the public health problem of childhood obesity, it also requires that we provide children with the skills and knowledge to make healthy choices in a complex food environment.
- An evidence-based *Media Literacy and Food Marketing Lesson Plan* has been developed for elementary school children out of CIHR and AIHS-funded grants. The *Lesson Plan* has been piloted, and refined in light of feedback from children and teachers. To date, over 300 children across Alberta have taken the program, with extremely positive results.

Meeting Purpose

- Connect relevant stakeholders, providing the forum for critiques, collaborations and possibilities emerging from connecting media literacy to food.
- Develop a generative network between research and research stakeholders—a network that is innovative and creatively extends connections beyond what might be the typical approach to partnerships.

Participants

University of Calgary

Dr. Charlene Elliott*; Tannis Baker*; Dr. Meaghan Brierley*; Dr. Shelly Russell-Mayhew; Dr. Dianne Gereluk; Dr. Angela Alberga; Dr. Victoria Campbell-Arvai; Jewel Loewe; Megan McKinlay

University of Alberta

Jillian Avis

Ever Active Schools

Joyce Sunada; Karis Langvand

Alberta Health Services

Amber Arnold; Donald Barker; Tyla Day; Chris Lineker; Theresa McIsaac; Theresa Riege; Bethany Singleton; Sheila Tyminski; Elaine Williams

'NSTEP

Deb Hymers; Sam Hustej;
Darlene Schindel

Calgary Catholic Schools

Mary Beth Mulligan

Calgary Board of Education

Nadeen Halls; Heather Pearcey

Be Fit for Life Centre

Megan McKinlay

* Organizers

Breakout Discussion Highlights

- The timing of the meeting coincided with ongoing curriculum redesign activities in the province of Alberta. Participants envisioned a place for the learning activities in the context of this process.
- Participants recommended the learning activities be integrated into teacher education materials at the post-secondary level, introducing teachers to “healthy role-modeling” practices.
- The learning activities are broadly applicable, and may potentially be embedded across the elementary and high school curricula (e.g., high school Career and Technology Studies courses). The learning activities support a cultural shift in how to interpret media information, supporting “smart consumers.”
- Adults also find the food marketing environment challenging—specifically newcomers to Canada, those with mental health considerations, and seniors—expanding dissemination possibilities.
- First Nations (particularly communities in the north) as well as rural and remote-rural communities, are further proposed audiences.
- Structures need to be put in place to help those who have a vested interest in children’s health to continue to collaborate on wellness issues.



Future Possibilities

What would you most like to see (and what would be the most productive for you) in terms of ‘next steps’?

Curriculum Integration

1. Extend *Media Literacy & Food Marketing I and II* across the school year and across curricula to meet the learner-centered, inquiry-based needs of the curriculum redesign.¹
2. In support of the literacy goals of Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS), make available the learning activities to Alberta teachers, building on and supplementing other literacies such as physical literacy, and early literacy.²
3. Begin the process of approval of the *Media Literacy and Food Marketing* learning activities by Alberta Education.

Teacher Training and Engagement

1. Develop a strategic plan to “educate” teachers at the post-secondary level.
2. Participate in Professional Days and Teachers’ Convention.
3. Develop inservicing materials (e.g., video and webinar).

Evaluation

1. Assess the materials in terms of teachers, students, caregivers, the curriculum, and the environment.
2. Peruse recommended resources.
3. Engage an assessment team.

Significant Audiences and Immediate Collaborations

1. Provide the learning activities to adults through dietitians with AHS.
2. Provide the learning activities to nurses who work with preschool-aged parents through AHS.
3. Share the leadership and new knowledge provincially: Be Fit For Life, ‘NSTEP, Physical & Health Education Canada, and the Health Promotion Coordinators (AHS) of the Comprehensive School Health (CSH) approach.
4. Develop resources for Ever Active Schools to conduct workshops, present materials on their website, and house resources.

Dissemination and Research Opportunities

1. Publish a report about the meeting in Apple Magazine; share the research and learning activities with Community Organizations.
2. Consider crossovers in research areas that critically evaluate how media targets children.

1. <http://education.alberta.ca/media/6950988/moststudentlearning.pdf> 2. <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/aisi/themes/literacy.aspx>