

Success Story

EIGHTH AVENUE ELEMENTARY
Port Alberni, BC



Action Schools! BC

Eighth Avenue Elementary, a Port Alberni school of 172 grades K to 5 students, has been registered with Action Schools! BC since 2007. Action Schools! BC is a framework for action, providing diverse physical activity, physical education and healthy eating opportunities in six Action Zones.

Utilizing the Action Schools! BC framework for action, the staff at Eighth Avenue provide creative opportunities for healthy living throughout the school day. The principal, Lauralee Edgell, booked the two Classroom Action Workshops offered by Action Schools! BC – one on Physical Activity and the other on Healthy Eating – to support school staff in activating their classrooms and promoting healthy eating. The corresponding bins of teaching resources and equipment are used daily in and out of class time. Popular activities include dance, juggling, aerobics and playground games.



The staff have identified many ways to activate recess and lunch, as well. A cart loaded with equipment (such as hula hoops and Frisbees and Action Schools! BC bean bags and balls) is rolled onto the playground every day and students are encouraged to sign out equipment. The playground has also come alive with the help of a group of student leaders who took part in an Action Schools! BC Outdoor Student Leadership Training. In the session, the students were taught how to lead outdoor games like hopscotch, four square, tag, and Chinese Jump rope. On rainy days, students get moving to Action Schools! BC aerobics DVDs during recess in classrooms or the gym.

Healthy living is highly supported through school spirit events. The daily 10 minute Run for Fun often has a theme (e.g. Jingle Bell Run, Say No to Drugs Run) as does the monthly Spirit Day (e.g. Backwards Day or Wear Green Day). Ms. Edgell credits Action Schools! BC as the inspiration behind the creation of Spirit Day.

Since becoming an Action School, the school has also

introduced an annual Fun Fair that incorporates ten physical activity stations such as skipping, tug-of-war, and the three-legged race. Last spring, staff and parents created the Food and Fitness Fun circuit. Students were split into twelve groups that spent 1.5 hours each Monday at a physical activity and healthy eating station. Over six weeks, the groups participated in six healthy eating and six physical activities. The healthy eating highlights included trying new vegetables and fruit, food bingo, and making healthy vegetable pizzas. The top physical activity stations were dance, karate, yoga, and First Nations games, which were put on with the help of First Nations parents and a Native Education Worker.

Healthy Eating is encouraged throughout the day and a Breakfast Club and after school cooking club highlight the importance of eating healthy food. The school takes advantage of the Action Schools! BC Healthy Eating School Food Grant to provide vegetables and fruit for the Breakfast Club. Since starting the Breakfast Club, fewer children arrive late to school and there are fewer behavioural problems, as well.

The school also takes part in Play First Lunch, a change in the traditional scheduling order of lunch and playtime. Students go out to play first, then participate in the Run for Fun, and then eat lunch. According to Ms. Edgell, this has had an incredibly positive impact – not only has there been an enormous decrease in behavioural issues in classes, but students are eating much more of their lunches.

The dedicated and enthusiastic staff at Eighth Avenue have succeeded at providing diverse opportunities for daily physical activity and healthy eating and Ms. Edgell believes that the change, although very significant, was not hard because it was so needed. By taking advantage of all that Action Schools! BC has to offer, Eighth Avenue Elementary is excelling at integrating healthy living into the fabric of their school community in unique and creative ways.



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