

Glenview Elementary School's Story

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Glenview Elementary School

School District 57 Prince George

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Healthy Schools Team

We started off with a rather large Healthy Schools Team. Most teachers on our staff were interested in participating in the inquiry based approach, as our school had already been exploring inquiry based learning in other academic areas. Our staff was excited about the Resource Guide and enthusiastic about contributing to healthy schools. Our principal was also very supportive of the Healthy Schools Inquiry process. As the year progressed, the primary teachers felt having student led inquiry projects in this area was simply too overwhelming. By the end of the year, our core Healthy Schools group consisted of a large percentage of our Grade 4, 5 and 6 students (approx. 75 students) and 3 intermediate teachers.

Our Journey

All three intermediate classes started off by looking at the Healthy Living Performance Standards and having class discussions around how well our school was performing in each area. We talked about Glenview's strengths and areas for improvement. Classes also



participated in the 4 Pillars activity, which all teachers felt was particularly powerful and informative. Sandra Stewart's whole class participated in inquiry projects individually and in partners. Some inquiry projects were research based and some involved action based projects. Students looked at the type of garbage that was being thrown away each day in the classroom. They spoke to their peers about how they could make changes in terms of recycling and using containers for food instead of zip lock bags etc. Students wanted to make our school a more positive place so they found

inspirational quotes and placed them in strategic places around the school. Staff, students and parents found these sayings to be inspirational and even came to the class to tell the students. Students also felt that our bathrooms were quite messy. They took "before" pictures, put up signs about keeping bathrooms clean, spoke to their peers and then a week later they took "after" pictures to demonstrate the improvements made. Students wanted to make differences on the playground and were eager to join initiatives that sponsored any new activities. They joined the initiatives of the other intermediate classrooms and are looking forward to implementing all of their ideas next year in part two of our plan.

In Colleen Gurney and Sophia Raby's class the process looked a bit different. The two classes started a bit later in the year than Sandra's class and came up with 4 areas of interest – tackling the garbage issue outside, starting a healthy schools concession, providing extracurricular activities (clubs) at lunchtime, and having older students provide outside activities for younger students outside at recess and lunch. We learned throughout the process that it is important to have students on board that are truly interested and motivated by this topic. As a result, we had the students sign up for the project that they were passionate about and did not expect everyone to participate. We invited Sandra's class to join us as well. Each teacher chose to sponsor one of the projects. We had planned out a schedule with our librarian and principal to allow for a 45 minute block each week to meet with the students involved in the projects. Students that chose to not participate would be working on difference activities with our librarian or principal. We felt this was important so that students participating in the Healthy Schools inquiry would not always have to give up their free time at recess and lunch.



Due to unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances, we were unable to see this plan put into full action. Our intentions were good but time slipped away. Previous commitments took our time and energy and in the end we felt we were asking too much of ourselves and of



the students to implement yet another set of activities. We decided at this time that this plan was more of a two year project. We had made a lot progress and we knew the foundation was laid for the upcoming year. We did try to support 2 of the projects by having students meet at lunch. They created inquiry questions (ie. *How will creating fun, active activities at lunch for primary students help them lead a more active life?*), developed surveys to distribute to the rest of the school to collect information and help them with planning, and one of the groups even attended Action Schools training.

Reflections and Plans for Next Year

What We Learned?

- 1) This work is extremely important to the school community. Students are clearly motivated and enthusiastic about this type of work. They are interested in affecting

change within their own environment. They often just wanted to dive in and get started. They have fabulous ideas to share and are willing to spend time (even their own free time) to develop and implement plans.

- 2) Time continues to be a stumbling block/obstacle. With so many things going on in the school community, often being sponsored and supported by the same people, we have to start thinking of creative ways to balance everything. Teachers also need time to meet in order to work as a team to support the students.
- 3) Sometimes things are out of our control and we must be flexible to make changes or adjust our goals and expectations.
- 4) A healthy staff encourages a healthy group of students. As a staff we organized bi-weekly 15 min walks around the school with grades K – 7. We also decided we would no longer honour staff birthdays with a cake. Instead we celebrate with healthy snacks. We also began exercising three days a week for 45 min. We met after school and participated in a variety of aerobic activities. We paid to have a Yoga instructor come to our school to teach staff the basics of Yoga. All of these initiatives helped the staff connect and increase overall school spirit!

Plans for Next Year

Our plan is to continue on this work next year based on the great foundation we started this year, starting right in September. We will revisit our 4 projects and make decisions about when each group would be best suited to implement their ideas (year long, certain months of the year, etc.). We will try to work out a schedule similar to the one planned this year that will allow us to meet with the students during instructional time. We have now adjusted our time frame, looking at this being a 2 year start up plan. We feel building a strong foundation will lead to the best possible chance for creating a sustainable program here at Glenview. We still have the entire amount of the grant provided by DASH that we still intend to use for supporting the students ideas. We look forward to watching this program grow, change and inspire children at our school.