

Forging the Health of our Future

The Healthy Start Spring/Summer 2014 Report

Strategy... Best Practice... Results!



Healthy Start/Départ Santé: A Window of Opportunity

Healthy Start is a bilingual, multi-level health promotion initiative aimed at increasing healthy eating and physical activity opportunities in early learning environments. Led by the *Réseau Santé en français de la Saskatchewan* (Saskatchewan Network for Health Services in French), Healthy Start was initially developed in Saskatchewan with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and has since expanded to New Brunswick.

The six pillars of the Healthy Start/Départ Santé approach

- An Implementation Guide designed to support health and well-being in childcare centres
- Partnerships
- Ongoing communication and information exchange
- Training and Mentoring
- LEAP BC™ evidence-based resources
- A comprehensive repertoire of additional resources

Healthy Start offers training and ongoing support to early years directors, educators, and cooks. By sharing a rich collection of resources, Healthy Start additionally works to ensure all those involved in the care of young children have access to information on best and most promising practices when it comes to nutrition and physical activity.

Since initial piloting in 2012, Healthy Start has demonstrated an ability to address needs and barriers at the level of the early learning centre and has been able to produce valuable information and change directed at children, their parents and their educators as well as influence a broader set of policies in French and in English in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. The initiative ensures it remains synonymous with '**best evidence**' and '**best practice**', integrating both evaluation and knowledge exchange components into all its activities. Ultimately, Healthy Start provides timely, evidence-based data that helps inform the coordinated implementation of early years healthy weights promotion strategies aligned with provincial policy and guidelines, such as Saskatchewan's legislated nutrition policy for childcare centres.

Early Intervention – The Time to Act is Now

As underscored in the Active Healthy Kids Canada 2010 report card¹, the percentage of young children with healthy weights is declining. Canadian statistics show that among children ages 2 to 5 years, 15.2% are overweight and 6.3% are obese². Young children who are overweight have an increased risk of staying that way in later childhood and may follow a trajectory of life-long risk and ill-health^{3,4}, especially if they belong to lower socioeconomic strata and minority cultural groups. Economically speaking, the impact is huge; in Canada, the cost of obesity is estimated at \$4.6 to \$7.1 billion a year in direct healthcare costs and other indirect costs, such as lost productivity⁵.

As the primary caregivers, parents have a large influence on the development of children's lifestyle patterns; however, over 54% of

Canadian children aged six months to five years spend approximately 29 hours per week in care outside their home⁶. A recent literature review of objectively measured levels of physical activity in childcare settings⁷ showed that the "body of high-quality evidence is consistent in suggesting that physical activity levels within child care centers are typically very low, and levels of sedentary behavior are typically high," such that these settings can contribute to low levels of physical activity in young children. Since many children are in these settings for a considerable portion of their waking hours, early learning centres have been identified as key settings for health promotion initiatives such as Healthy Start/Départ Santé.

Early childhood development is one of the social determinants of health and the environments in which young children are raised have a

long-term impact on their health and that of the population as a whole. Healthy Start directly addresses this determinant of health, offering a systematic approach to supporting both physical activity and healthy eating opportunities in early learning and childcare settings.

¹ Active Healthy Kids Canada 2010 report card – <http://www.activehealthykids.ca/ReportCard/ArchivedReportCards.aspx>

² Shields, M. (2006). Overweight and obesity among children and youth. *Health Report*, 1, 27-42.

³ Mei, Z., Grummer-Strawn, L. & Scanlon, K. (2003). Does overweight in infancy persist through the preschool years? An analysis of CDC Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System data, 48, 161-167.

⁴ Quattrin, T., Liu, E., Shaw, N., Shine, B. & Chiang E (2005). Obese children who are referred to the pediatric endocrinologist: characteristics and outcome. *Pediatrics*, 115, 348-351.

⁵ CIHI, Obesity in Canada, 2011 - https://secure.cihi.ca/free_products/Obesity_in_canada_2011_en.pdf

⁶ Bushnik, T. (2006). *Childcare in Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. Catalogue no. 89-599-MIE – No. 003. ISSN: 1712-3070-ISBN: 0-662-42634-7 Retrieved June 1st, 2012 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-599-m/89-599-m2006003-eng.pdf>

⁷ Reilly, J. (2010) Low Levels of Objectively Measured Physical Activity in Preschoolers in Child Care. *Medicine and Science in Sport and Exercise*, 42, 502-507.

Progress and results

OUR REACH TO DATE

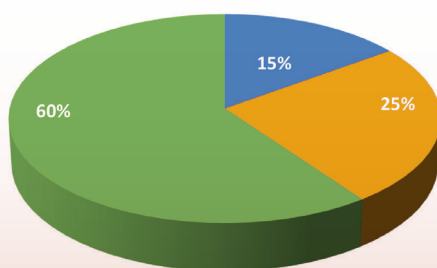
- 46 childcare centres trained since August 2013
 - 1356 children, 4339 individuals reached
 - 28 key organizational partnerships
- ... AND COUNTING!

Implementing Healthy Start – a year under our belt!

Healthy Start aims to reach at least one third of the early learning centres in Saskatchewan over a four-year rollout, including centres with children from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. From a pool of over 100 centres around Saskatoon, Prince Albert and the North East and in conjunction with two school divisions in Saskatchewan, Healthy Start has been implemented in 46 early learning and childcare centres, including expanding to 14 prekindergarten classes within our first year (2013-14).

Nearly 1400 children are participating in daily physical activity and are learning to acquire better eating habits through the Healthy Start initiative. Over 2000 parents were sensitized to the importance of physical activity and healthy eating, and encouraged to apply this knowledge at home with their children. Parents, educators, directors, and other early years professionals are further kept informed through our monthly newsletter, the *Healthy Start Sampler* and *Les découvertes Départ Santé* for the francophone centres.

Sociodemographic breakdown of children reached in Saskatchewan 2013-14



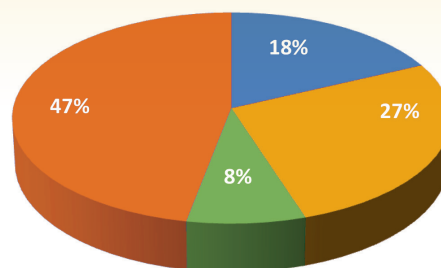
- Newly Immigrated
- Aboriginal
- Other

The Reach of Healthy Start

The various project teams (including our steering committee and advisory teams) have made over 4000 contacts and connections with partners, stakeholders, directors, teachers, educators, centres, parents and children in the last year in both Saskatchewan and New Brunswick.

Reach of Healthy Start in the Early Years Sector (New Brunswick)

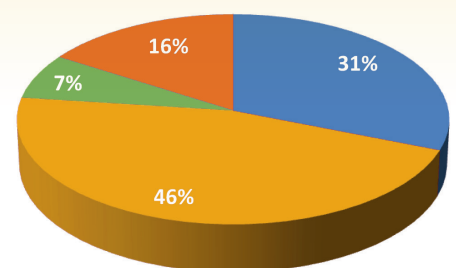
Total reach = 352



- Children
- Parents*
- Educators / Practitioners
- Partners and stakeholders

Reach of Healthy Start in the Early Years Sector (Saskatchewan)

Total reach = 3987



- Children
- Parents*
- Educators / Practitioners
- Partners and stakeholders

*No direct data was collected for parent reach. Value estimated by multiplying children reached by a factor of 1.5.

What We Have Heard From our Centres

Through various means of qualitative assessment, including one-on-one interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, advisory committees, and the ongoing collection of informal feedback, Healthy Start has learned much throughout initial piloting and over the first year of full-scale implementation. Here are but a few highlights:

- Caregivers have expressed that, prior to working with Healthy Start, they felt ill-prepared to offer opportunities for children to increase their physical skills and healthy eating habits. They felt these areas were not emphasized in their previous training and stressed that these components should be reinforced in theory and practice.
- Educators really like how the Healthy Start training and resources give them a chance to focus specifically on activities designed to improve children's motor skills; many recognized that before they were trained, they just let the children play games. They now understand that the children need to be taught *how* to move.
- Several centres have started their own gardens or have had staff bring fresh produce from their home gardens; a greater awareness of the impact of quality food has been reported.
- When asked if they would recommend the Healthy Start resources to other childcare centres, educators unanimously responded, "Yes"!

Cross-Canadian Partnership – expansion and adaptation in New Brunswick

Following the inception of Healthy Start in Saskatchewan, partnering with our team in New Brunswick came as a natural progression and has been a great fit, not only due to the province's prominent bilingual environment, but also due to its strong provincial focus on developing and investing in a unified approach to early learning and childcare. Over the next four years Healthy Start will gradually expand its work and will include a pilot, in both official languages in childcare centres in New Brunswick.

In just over a year we have gained tremendous knowledge and a wealth of experience through our New Brunswick Healthy Start collaboration. We are extremely pleased with the results of implementing in four centres and commend the New Brunswick team on their hard work, keen involvement and strong leadership in the implementation and evaluation of Healthy Start.

Through a strong partnership with the University of Moncton's *Centre de formation médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick*, Healthy Start has grown a fruitful relationship with *Active Kids / Jeunes actifs*, a provincial program based in New Brunswick. We have collaborated on the sharing of best practices, resources and trainings, as well as adding key components, like a more comprehensive nutritional focus.

Saskatchewan Public Health Nutritionists

Healthy Start works in close collaboration with many partners, including a provincial healthy eating committee – composed mainly of Public Health Nutritionists (PHNs) and researchers as well as the Ministry of Health and representation from across Saskatchewan's regional health authorities. Several of the PHNs work closely with childcare centres and collaborate with early years coalitions in the province. This group of committed individuals has demonstrated a keen interest in the work of Healthy Start and has been instrumental in contributing to the project, ensuring Healthy Start's nutrition guidelines maintain alignment with provincial early years regulations and recommendations. We are extremely grateful for the enthusiasm and strong commitment brought to this project by the PHNs and we look forward to continued learning and collaboration.

Our Impact in Action – A Snapshot of One of our Implementation Centres

Since Healthy Start arrived in the community of Tisdale, Saskatchewan, amazing progress has been made, especially at the Tisdale Tiny Tornadoes Daycare. Since teaming up with Healthy Start and completing the training:

- Staff have embraced the need for physical activity and healthy eating, not only in the lives of the children, but in their own daily activities as well.
- Staff ensure physical activity is a major component each and every day by appointing staff to lead daily activities to keep kids moving.
- An indoor space has been created and dedicated to active play – rain, shine, or Canadian snow!
- Menus have been overhauled to more closely reflect *Canada's Food Guide*.



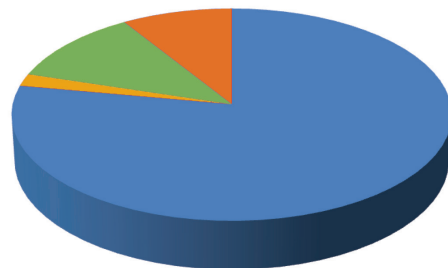
- Educators make sure to take the time to sit down with children at snack time.
- Children are more involved with preparing meals and are encouraged to try a variety of new foods.
- The 'Tiny Tornadoes' have teamed up with two other Healthy Start-trained centres in their region, building on collective enthusiasm to design a weekly collaborative movement program and a friendly physical activity community challenge.

Growing momentum: Partnerships, Collaboration, Commitment

Healthy Start has garnered support and commitment from parents, educators, and early learning centres, as well as a large list of key early years stakeholders across Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. Healthy Start continues to gain momentum each day and is continually expanding its network of stakeholders and partners.

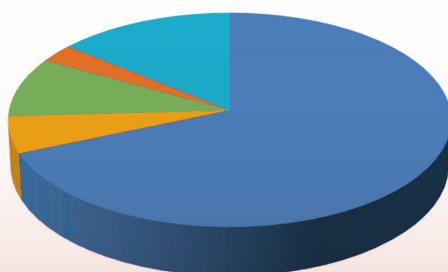
The main source of funding for Healthy Start comes directly from the Public Health Agency of Canada Innovation Strategy grant. However, the initiative would not be possible without the collective commitment of a long list of individuals and organizations at provincial, local and community levels. Demonstrating this strong intersectoral support, Healthy Start received **an additional \$121,400 in direct funds, in-kind contributions, and loaned staff time** over the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Annual Contributions (Financial and In-kind) 2013-14



- PHAC Grant
- Community Initiatives Fund Grant
- Saskatchewan In-kind
- New Brunswick In-kind

Annual Expenditures 2013-14



- Staff
- Travel
- Equipment, materials and resources
- Rent and Office Expenses
- Evaluation

Next Steps

Continued Roll-out and Train-the-Trainer

While year 1 of the Saskatchewan implementation focused on Saskatoon and surrounding areas, the North East (Melfort and Nipawin), North Battleford, and Prince Albert, year 2 will see the initiative head to Regina, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Swift Current, Estevan, and Weyburn. Roll-out continues in year 3 with a focus on La Ronge, Lloydminster, and other areas not yet covered in the province, with year 4 focused on Northern communities in Saskatchewan.

In New Brunswick, the pilot process will continue to expand across the province with a goal of implementing and evaluating at a total of 16 sites over four years. Because of a successful grant, New Brunswick will be able to add 8 additional sites, specifically targeting francophone childcare centres in the province.

To facilitate the implementation of Healthy Start across Saskatchewan, Healthy Start held a Train-the-trainer workshop in Moose Jaw on May 9th and May 10th, 2014. The workshop was a huge success, gathering 15 enthusiastic trainees who will facilitate the expansion and long term sustainability of the initiative by helping us train educators with Healthy Start in their own local communities, creating a ripple effect across the province. This train-the-trainer component was made possible through funding from the Saskatchewan Community Initiatives Fund.

WORKING TOGETHER, MOVING FORWARD – A Provincial Forum on healthy children, youth, and families

In an effort to have an ever larger impact on the long-term health outcomes of our children and communities, Healthy Start has taken the lead on a provincial Health promotion event, partnering with three other provincial health promotion initiatives – MEND (Mind, exercise, nutrition, Do it!), Health Promoting Schools Program and Saskatchewan *in motion*. The Forum is sponsored and hosted by our University of Saskatchewan partners. The forum aims to organize and host a gathering of key stakeholders in dialogue around healthy, active children, youth and families in the province and beyond. *Working Together, Moving Forward* will 1) identify and showcase synergistic opportunities for greater impact on the health of children, youth, and families, 2) explore ways to work together around provincial and local priorities on healthy living, and 3) work towards moving forward, growing and sustaining momentum for the health of our communities into the future. The event is taking place in Saskatoon on June 19th and 20th, 2014. Initial programming and registration promises a rich dialogue among a wide range of professionals, from on-the-ground community representatives, researchers, and health providers to provincial decision-makers.

Contact Us

At Healthy Start, we are always looking to hear from you, our community. In addition, we are continually exploring new partnership opportunities and collaborations.

Want to connect? Want to learn more? We would love to hear from you.

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Version française :

Le Réseau Santé en français de la Saskatchewan s'engage à assurer que toutes ses informations et publications sont disponibles en français et en anglais. Pour la version française, svp consultez notre site web.

Moving Forward Together Building and Sustaining Momentum

As the age old adage goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Holding true to this saying, promoting the health of an entire generation of children takes an entire community effort, from parents and educators all the way to decision- and policy-makers. Creating sustainable change requires all those who touch the lives of children to be involved and to work together. Developing strong buy-in and proposing sensible policy is one small key to creating positive and long-term change. Healthy Start has taken concrete steps towards promoting and developing policy around healthy eating, physical activity and workplace wellness in early learning settings.

Yet, developing health and wellness policy in early learning centres can be a daunting task for many – unless you partner with some exceptional individuals who are engaged and committed to the wellbeing of children and families in their communities. Since the initial pilot, Healthy Start has been developing a strong working relationship with **Kelsey Trail Health Region's Eat Well Play Well** health promotion group in north east Saskatchewan. This group, along with the Healthy Start team would like to explore and pilot an approach to health and wellness guidelines for early learning centres that aims to help directors and parent boards build capacity around developing and adopting health policies in their centres.

An initiative like Healthy Start cannot do this work alone. Continued support from partners, including the ongoing provision of provincially funded professional development grants for educators to help offset training costs, are key. But Healthy Start trainings are only the beginning. More can and should be done to ensure early childhood educators are adequately equipped with the necessary tools to promote healthy habits for life. To do this, Healthy Start should be further supplemented by complementary ECE curricula with an explicit focus on physical activity and healthy eating to ensure the healthy growth of our children.



Be active - Eat well.