

# **Drop-ins, Theme Runs and Aboriginal Health Programming at Spencer Middle School**

## **Contact:**

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## **School:**

Spencer Middle School

## **Process:**

There have been many new initiatives introduced this year at Spencer to promote DPA. These include pedometers for staff and class walking challenges, drop in opportunities such as drop in gym, drop in dance, and drop in skipping, school – wide theme runs, an Honour our Health Aboriginal healthy living campaign, and the introduction of a DPA staff committee. Spencer has two sets of class pedometers that we have issued on a weekly basis to our grade seven classes. Classes track their daily steps for a cumulative weekly total, facing off against rival classes.

Spencer has introduced many drop-in opportunities this year, including drop-in gym, drop-in dance, and drop-in skipping. The drop in gym program has been offered Monday – Thursday, under supervision of an administrator for a half hour time slot. Drop in gym usually attracts around 25 – 40 participants, generally breaking down into a floor hockey game and ‘shoot around’ basketball.

School wide theme runs have also been introduced at Spencer Middle school this year. As many schools throughout the province, Spencer has traditionally participated in the annual Terry Fox run in late September. This run coincides with fundraising activities and is a community run, where local streets are closed for the duration of the run. New to the school this year is theme runs, including the December ‘Jingle Jog’, and yet un-named runs around Valentine’s Day, Easter and a June run. The Jingle Jog saw the grade seven through nines run around the school for a twenty minute period in consecutive classes. That is, the grade sevens ran in the first block, the grade eights in the second block, the grade nines in the third block. In each grade, classes would compete for cumulative totals in a friendly competition.

The Honour our Health Aboriginal healthy living campaign is a BC provincial program to promote healthy living. The Spencer All (First) Nations cultural awareness classes (and other interested First or non First Nation students) are taking part in a six week healthy living campaign, February 2 – March 13, 2009. The two staple initiatives of the campaign will be tracking daily steps with a pedometer and tracking daily consumption of a fruits & vegetables with a ‘munch card’. The Medicine Wheel, a cornerstone of Aboriginal knowledge, breaks the human into four aspects: the physical, the spiritual, the mental and the emotional. This six week campaign will focus class lessons on the physical aspect of the Human body.

Finally, Spencer has introduced a DPA staff committee this year, brainstorming and coming up with ideas on implementing ideas of DPA into the classroom. Members of this committee initiated Pro-D where Action Schools BC presented at our school, leaving with them eight activity bins at our school to use. This is a snapshot of



DPA activities provided at Spencer Middle school this year. Overall, there has been great participation and enthusiasm towards meeting the goals of DPA, whereas staff believes that healthy & active kids are happier kids who are better students.

**People Involved:**

Many of these initiatives have been school-wide, and the school has included the Leadership class, Aboriginal student body and DPA staff committee members in these initiatives.

**Key changes or results:**

Primarily, it has been an increased awareness and opportunity campaign for Spencer students: drop in activities, pedometers & walking challenges and school wide runs. Spencer already offered many opportunities for DPA, but we still face challenges with some of our 'inactive' kids.

**Challenges:**

There have been numerous questions & challenges, from: where & when do we fit this in? How do we effectively track and report on it? Will this DPA initiative stick or will it phase itself out?

Specifically, challenges with the pedometer program include pedometer usage- some grade seven's have taken the liberty to vigorously shake their pedometers in efforts to increase their daily steps, resulting in broken pedometers. In addition, many have also become lost.

With the drop-in programs, almost all participants have generally been the same group of boys, and there have been scheduling challenges with sports team practices as well as increased wear and tear on the PE equipment.

For the jogging initiatives, challenges were commonly associated with class scheduling and 'minutes in a day'. Teachers were generally supportive, but cognizant of the fact that initiatives such as a school wide run cut into their allotted classroom instruction time.

**Solutions/keys to success:**

Spencer Middle school looked at supporting existing DPA programs and focused on increasing the number of DPA opportunities for our staff & students to participate in.

A few broken or misplaced pedometers may just be the cost of doing business, and to improve the mix of student participating in drop-in sessions, the school has also offered drop-in dance and drop-in skipping on a once a week basis, supervised by teacher. These programs have been attended by small, but committed girl participants for the drop in dance and a committed coed group for skipping.

**Next Steps:**

The 60 pedometers will form two further class sets. Once they arrive, they will be used as class walking challenge sets for our grade 8 & 9 classes. As well, the First Nations class is currently participating in the Honour Our Health 6 week healthy living challenge, where 35 students tracking their daily steps; these pedometers will supplement those in use.

The next steps will be to look at scheduling and determine if the school wants to schedule DPA in school-wide initiatives- if so, how and when? Spencer Middle School is also looking at increased tracking and monitoring, and asking students to track their DPA through their agenda. The school is also looking at inserting DPA tracking sheets into the agenda booklet, and looking at an online tracking tool (Learn BC).

