



BC Cancer Agency

CARE + RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Prevention Programs

Healthy Living Schools



Knowing that the experiences of young people in school can lay the foundation for a healthy adult lifestyle, in 2004 the BC Cancer Agency Prevention Programs launched *Healthy Living Schools*. All schools in British Columbia from K-12 were surveyed to determine whether they address the key preventable risk factors for cancer. Specifically, we looked for programs and policies that address tobacco cessation, sun safety, and a balanced approach to diet and physical activity that includes offering healthy food and beverage choices. Those schools that were providing leadership and education in these areas were certified as *Healthy Living Schools*.

Since then, we have repeated this process several times. New schools have obtained certification, and schools that had already demonstrated their commitment to healthy living were recertified. Each school that is making an effort to address these key areas of health promotion and education receives a certificate along with tools and materials to assist their efforts. This direct contact between the Prevention Programs and schools also provides opportunity to promote partner initiatives.

Our team of Prevention Educational Leaders (PELs) works closely with their local Health Authorities and school districts to help children and their families understand that what they eat, their level

of activity, whether they use tobacco, and if they practice sun safety all have a lasting impact on their health and well-being. Furthermore, through *Healthy Living Schools* we promote Ministry of Education initiatives such as Daily Physical Activity (DPA), Tobacco Free schools, and the School Fruit and Vegetable program, all within the context of comprehensive school health.

We use a population health approach to provide up-to-date, evidence-based information to the education community, including presentations at school district meetings, workshops with teachers at Pro-D days, and consultation with Parent Advisory Committees. Prevention Programs staff also partner with regional Health Authorities and other stakeholders to assist with initiatives and facilitate connections through our well-established province-wide network of health educators.

The resource *Hi5Living.org* was also created to help high-school students complete their Healthy Living Plans and learn about active and cancer-preventive lifestyles. This award-winning website is a complete resource that can be used by both educators and students. For more information about *Healthy Living Schools*, contact a Prevention Educational Leader in your region; a list can be found at www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/Prevention.