

SPEECH

HONOURABLE DAVE HANCOCK  
MINISTER  
ALBERTA EDUCATION

HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES AWARDS CEREMONY

**GOVERNMENT HOUSE**

**3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.**

**JUNE 3, 2008**

***(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)***

Good afternoon and thank you for your kind welcome.

I'm going to keep my comments to a minimum today so we can celebrate the people who are here to be recognized.

It's been over a year since the Healthy School Communities Award was launched and I was pleased to participate in my previous role as Minister of Health.

Healthy U's goal is to promote better health for children, youth and all Albertans. The Healthy School Communities Award is a component of that program.

What a great feeling it is to be here to share in this celebration.

Today's award recipients have likely been promoting healthy behaviours for significantly longer than the award program has been in place.

Whether they've created messages on healthy habits, created programs to offer healthier alternatives in school cafeterias, or found innovative ways to teach students about the benefits of physical activity, they have done something to make a difference.

Healthier lifestyles do make a difference. They enhance a student's ability to learn, reduce stress on the health care system from chronic disease and increase the province's vitality.

Today's recipients are leaders committed to ensuring that school settings positively influence the lifelong physical, social and mental health of students. But they can't do it alone.

The reality is, today's students are increasingly over-weight and obese, and we are challenged to address and reverse this trend.

We need to look at this holistically. An active, healthy school community is one in which all citizens – teachers, students, parents, administrators, community leaders and business leaders work together.

It's about being consistent in modelling behaviours that show children it feels good to be physically active and make positive choices. We can do the small things to show our own commitment, as adults, to healthy and active lifestyles—whether it's walking rather than driving to the local store or picking a salad over fries at a drive through when we don't have time to prepare a meal at home.

Congratulations to the award winners. You should be proud of your great work. And, thank you to the selection committee for recognizing individuals, organizations and schools who have gone above and beyond for Alberta's students.

I encourage you to continue to demonstrate a leadership role with Alberta's students so they are equipped to enjoy long healthy lives and contribute to the vitality of tomorrow.

Thank you.