

Roughrider lineman helps local students get a healthy start

Jorgen Hus, the long snapper for the Saskatchewan Roughriders, visited St. Edward School Wednesday morning to help give students an active start to the day. The school's Building Our Kids' Success (BOKS) program is a free before-school physical activity program intended to empower students, parents and staff to live a healthier lifestyle. The program is making a positive difference in schools, helping kids get their brains and bodies ready for a day of learning.

"The goal of BOKS' curriculum is to keep children moving while having fun," said St. Edward Principal Renée Cratty. "It's really exciting for the kids to have a player from the Riders here leading activities."

The program, organized and led by the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) facilitator and the school's Aboriginal student achievement coordinator, has been running at St. Edward twice per week since September. It consists of a warm-up activity, running, relay races and many other fun team-oriented games. Sessions end with a cool down that includes a nutrition talk about making healthy choices. Children then transition to the breakfast program before heading to class.

"We know there is a strong link between physical activity and nutrition and cognitive awareness," said Candace Bloomquist, HPS facilitator. "Through the program, children increase their physical activity levels by up to 80 minutes each week, giving them the ability to focus better in the classroom."

HPS is a partnership between Saskatoon Health Region and four Saskatoon and area school divisions, including Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. HPS aims to improve students' learning and well-being and support healthy school environments. HPS is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Innovation Strategy for Achieving Healthier Weights.

BOKS was developed by a group of moms who were inspired by the book *Spark* written by Dr. John Ratey. Dr. Ratey stated that "exercise is the single most powerful tool we have to optimize the function of our brains". Implemented in nearly 1,000 schools in the US and Canada, BOKS provides opportunities for children to be physically active and learn about nutrition.

With 45 schools and nearly 17,000 students, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools provides Catholic education from pre-kindergarten through Grade 12, rooting students in their faith, helping them grow in knowledge, and encouraging them to reach out and transform the world.

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