

Letter of Information

Study Title: A novel APPLE Ally model to deliver health promotion in schools: programming and evaluation

Introduction: Canadian children are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing, and lifestyle behaviours, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further increased these concerns. The emerging evidence is clear: mental health issues, unhealthy eating, and sedentary behaviours among children have increased significantly since the beginning of the pandemic. Since your child's school is part of the APPLE Schools initiative, your child is asked to consider participating in the research study we (researchers at the University of Alberta) are conducting in collaboration with APPLE Schools. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary - your child does not have to participate and can withdraw at any time during the survey. It is important that you read the information in this letter. It includes details that we think you need to know in order to decide whether you want your child to participate in the study.

About the Study: APPLE Schools is a school-based health promotion initiative that delivers a successful intervention to promote healthy living and mental health to kids in 87 elementary schools in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Northwest Territories. Since 2008, we have surveyed students, their families, and school principals to see if the program improves students' mental health and wellbeing, and lifestyle behaviours, and this year your child's school is participating. This study aims to find out what grade 4-8 students eat, how active they are, how well they sleep, and how they feel. The school district and the school principal have already approved this research.

How can your child take part? All grade 4-8 children are invited to participate in this study. We will ask them to complete a 40-60 minute survey on a web-based platform during school time. We will not collect any personal information (such as names) from your child. We will share with teachers a video that outlines survey instructions and will guide students through the survey. A research staff member will be available via telephone to answer any questions that arise. Your child's teacher is not part of the team conducting this research but will be in class at all times to support the students. By taking part, your child will not miss out on any classroom lessons.

Your consent for your child to participate in this study is assumed unless you indicate otherwise. **If you do not want your child to participate, please 1) email the research coordinator (dabravol@ualberta.ca) OR 2) fill out the [opt-out form](#), OR 3) notify your child's teacher within one week.** If we do not hear from you, we will assume that your child can participate. Prior to the survey, your child will be asked by their teacher whether they would like to participate. If they choose not to participate, it will not affect their grades in any way. If you change your mind

about your child's participation, you will have 60 days after the survey administration to contact the research coordinator and have your child's data removed from the study.

Benefits: A summary of the results of this survey will be shared with the school principal. This report will not include your child's name. All answers are kept private. The school report will provide the principal with tailored recommendations to improve mental health and wellbeing, and lifestyle behaviours of students over the coming years. Additionally, findings may help us expand the APPLE Schools initiative to more schools across Canada. Your child may not benefit directly from taking part in the survey.

How researchers will use this information: Students in other schools are also being asked to take part in this project. Results of the study may be presented to various audiences (including at conferences and to the public) and published in scientific journals, reports and conference proceedings. Your child will never be personally identified in any publication, report, or presentation based on data collected in this study.

Risks: It is not expected that taking part in this study will harm your child in any way. Teachers will be trained to identify students who may appear distressed during the survey. Surveys will include information about provincial support resources and the Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868) in the unlikely event a student gets distressed.

Confidentiality: The data extracted from the online surveys will be encrypted and stored on a secure drive, in locked server rooms with card-restricted access at the University of Alberta. All data will be stored a minimum of five years.

Approval: The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board (Pro00119951) and has been approved by the school board and the school principal. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office (reoffice@ualberta.ca).

Thank you for taking the time to review this information. If you would like to know more or have questions, please contact the Research Coordinator, Julia Dabravolskaj at dabravol@ualberta.ca.

Contact information:

Julia Dabravolskaj (Research Coordinator): dabravol@ualberta.ca

Dr. Katerina Maximova (Principal Investigator): katerina.maximova@unityhealth.to

Tracy Lockwood (APPLE Schools): tracy.lockwood@appleschools.ca

Dr. Paul Veugelers (Co-investigator): paul.veugelers@ualberta.ca