



PRAIRIE LAND PRIDE

Small schools preparing students for big futures.

Prairie Land Public School Division

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Developing and Encouraging Elementary Athletes

Most schools' extra-curricular sports teams focus on junior and senior high athletes. They follow the guidelines set out by the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association (ASAA).

However, more and more schools are putting together elementary teams in an effort to not only start developing skills earlier, but to foster a love of the game in younger students.

This was the third year for the Grade 4 to 6 girls basketball program in Hanna. Started by Angela Grott and Kristine Orr, the program provides an opportunity for young girls to learn the sport of basketball.

"We both played basketball and wanted to try to pass on the love of the game to a younger generation," explains Orr, adding if girls aren't in hockey or dance, there are not a lot of options during the winter months for girls to stay active.

The benefits of the program are getting kids interested in sports, learning structure in a team environment and learning new skills.

"With the program we do discussions on teamwork, leadership and sportsmanship. But most of it is all about FUN, which I hope we have been able to provide."

Most coaches will agree, that in the age of technology, it is even more important to provide opportunities for students to be active.

"Kids need opportunities outside the home to develop corpora-

This year, Saralyn, along with her husband Jeff, have put together Grade 5/6 cross country running, a Grade 5/6 boys volleyball team and a Grade 5—7 boys basketball team.

In addition to weekly practices the teams took part in various meets and tournaments.

Berry Creek Community School also runs elementary volleyball, curling, basketball and archery. They are also starting badminton and track and field.

"These teams work as a way to build foundational skills and create interest in sports for years to come," explains Darcy McKinney, Principal of Berry Creek.

By building a sports program from the ground up, students start to build and develop their skills at an early age.

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tive and individual mobility, endurance, and fine motor skills," explains Saralyn Stel a parent volunteer at Delia School. "No one can argue the need or benefits of exercise and activity at all ages."



Fun, teamwork and fostering a love of the game—that is what Coaches Angela Grott and Samantha Gallagher have provided for their Grade 4-6 Girls Basketball team.

Fostering the Love of the Game in Younger Students

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This can be beneficial for students who may not be naturally athletic but want to explore and participate in team sports.

"It takes special coaches to draw those kids in and keep them engaged when their skill levels are not yet developed," says Stel.

"A great experience at a young age will keep kids interested and feeling more safe and secure in the older sport opportunities that arise."

School athletics, particularly younger elementary teams, provides all students an opportunity to participate.

At Delia, BCCS and JCC, parents have been extremely thankful for the opportunity for their children to be able to get started in school sports.

Another hope for these younger teams is that these students will continue into JR/SR athletics. Many rural schools struggle with having enough students to run a team, but if the love of the game is developed early it can help JR and SR sports teams flourish.

"Building a strong elementary sports program will likely give you a higher chance of having enough kids to run these teams," said Stel.

However, more important than building athletes, Stel believes that these younger sports teams should be created with a "passion for the love of the game, to challenge our kids outside screen time, to provide healthy mentors to broken home children, to create young leaders and great teammates despite their skills.... with no ulterior motives."

It is not just traditional team sports that schools are opening up to elementary students. Many Prairie Land schools are part of NASP, the National Archery in the Schools Program, which allows students as young as Grade 4 to participate in archery.

Curling, which is quite popular in rural schools, has seen an influx of elementary students.

These teams practice alongside their junior / senior counterparts as well as participate in bonspiels.

With the help of dedicated coaches, the

opportunity for elementary sports is unlimited.

"Hopefully these opportunities create

a second home and safe space for kids to grow and learn to love physical activity," says Stel.



The Delia Bulldogs Junior Basketball team hosted a five team tournament in March. Participants ranged from Grade 5 to Grade 7. Coaches Darren Goetz and Jeff Stel said the team had a great first year.

Our colony students have done it again!!!
Students of the Hutterian Brethren have spent the last month collecting pop can tabs to raise funds. The funds will be used to purchase a wheelchair for a young person in Alberta.
Schools competed by collecting the most weight of tabs per student population with the winning school being awarded a class prize.
In the end, the classes ended up collecting an impressive 8,738 grams of tabs (approx. 21,432 tabs) so two prizes will be awarded!
First to Neu Muehl School who collected 342g per student and second to Blue Sky School who collected a total of 3010g!!!
Just another way the Colonies of the Prairie Land School Division are showing compassion and kindness in small yet measurable ways!

CONNECT WITH YOUR SCHOOL TODAY

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Kindness at Al-Amal



Al-Amal Academy celebrated Kindness through the month of February by making a beautiful Compliment Tree in the entrance to their school. The leaves were created by staff and students and contain kind words and compliments.



Prairie Land Archers headed to Africa this summer

Archery is extremely popular in Prairie Land. Students from Grades 4 to 12 take part and compete in tournaments across the province through NASP, the National Archery in the Schools Program.

This summer two Prairie Land students will be travelling to Walvis Bay, Namibia to compete in the 2025 AGA World Tournament.

Grade 11 students Logan Moggridge from Youngstown and Rylyn Bond from JCC will be travelling to Namibia in July.

"This is a very unique opportunity," explains Jessa Heatherington, teacher and archery coach at J.C. Charyk School, who will also be travelling to Africa as a coach, team manager and an adult archer.

"It's a life changing event." In order to qualify for the

world tournament, National team coaches take into account the students' scores from the past two years as well as recommendations from local coaches.

Canada will be sending three complete teams to Namibia.

The two student teams are made up of 32 students from across the country.

There is an adult alumni team made up of 16 archers, many who have previously competed at the international level.

Youngstown School alumnus Vance Laughlin is one of the returning archers who has been invited back.

"I'm really excited to have the opportunity again," said Laughlin.

Heatherington provides a unique perspective as a coach as she attended tournaments like this when she was in high school.

"I understand how they are feeling—excitement and nerves all at once."

Archery, in rural schools is often viewed as an individual sport—but the comradery and connections formed on an archery team are unlike any other.

"I like archery because I like the competitiveness throughout the sport and the fact I get to travel to different places and meet new people," explains Moggridge.

Bond and Moggridge both admit to being excited as well as nervous about travelling to Namibia.

"I am looking forward to shooting on my birthday in Africa," said Moggridge.

This is not the first time Prairie Land students have

attended the AGA World Tournament.

Two years ago, the division had four students travelled to

Limpopo, South Africa for the 2023 AGA World Tournament, where Canada placed first overall.



Logan Moggridge and Rylyn Bond are finishing out the Archer season and will then focus their sights on the 2025 AGA World Tournament in Walvis Bay, Namibia this July.



In 2023 Vance Laughlin (Youngstown), Natalie Karg (JCC), Holly Karg (JCC) and Sean Murphy (Altario) were part of the Canadian team that travelled to Limpopo, South Africa for the AGA World Tournament where Canada placed first overall.

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Prairie Land Pride is a bi-monthly publication focusing on the incredible work of our staff and students.

Celebrating Pink Shirt Day & Kindness



Students at Veteran School show off their pink shirts on February 26.

Sunny says, “Always be Kind!”



JCC School Support Dog, Sunny had a great time celebrating Pink Shirt Day with Miss Palmer and Mrs. Benedict!



Members of Consort School's Students Wellness Group did a Spinning Wheel activity for JR/SR High students. Students were asked to complete a kindness challenge (thank a custodian, write an encouragement note, pick up litter, encourage a teacher, etc.) They also won a fidget/stress relief item as well.



Elementary students at Consort School show off their pink shirts to celebrate kindness on February 26.



Kindness artwork from PLOA and HCA elementary students.

