

High school students urged to 'be wise' about their health

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Every year, Fort Frances High School holds numerous conferences for its students with the purpose to “promote student achievement and well-being.”

This year, a youth conference entitled “Be Well. Be Wise,” held last Tuesday, featuring presenters from the Northwestern Health Unit, group activities, and a keynote by Dr. Greg Wells, an associate professor at the University of Toronto and senior scientist at The Hospital for Sick Children.

“We thought it was appropriate to bring in a partner like [the] Northwestern Health Unit,” said Andrew Harris, superintendent of education with the Rainy River District School Board.

“They could present around diet and around health and healthy eating, active living,” he noted.

“We thought that was a good message for kids.”

The conference drew students from Fort High, Rainy River High School, Atikokan High School, and the Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program.

In the morning, students at-

“He’s trying to get the message out to be proactive in your health,” Harris said.

He also noted the youth conference is beneficial only when the students are actively engaged in the message and the workshops provided.

Throughout the day, the students participated in the “Student Voice”—a set of questions provided to help them illustrate what they feel improves their overall well-being and athletic performance.

“The whole part of the conference was, ‘We want to hear what you have to say,’” said Harris.

Many of the ideas students believed were important to overall well-being was student leadership and mentorship, as well as being a positive role model by listening and supporting one another.

They also cited peer support against pressure and influence, taking part in various sports and activities, and helping each other succeed and perform well in school.

Students also said they always should ask questions and get the feedback of parents or teachers, and to be open to discussing anything on their mind.

“These are ideas coming from the kids.” Harris stressed.

tended three presentations promoting healthy food, mental health, and making healthy life choices.

After lunch and some fun and games, it was off to the Townshend Theatre for Dr. Wells' presentation.

Harris said Dr. Wells was chosen because he has an interest in speaking with students due to the work he does at Sick Kids hospital in Toronto.

His main message was how to "be better," and how diet, sleep habits, and mental attitude can affect our overall well-being, as well as how effective it can be in preventing future disease and complications.

"You know, their message is for all of us."

He added all of the feedback will be shared with teachers and leadership teams at the school, as well as the principals so they can share the "Student Voice" with their schools.

"We're going to ask the student leadership teams, 'How can you make a difference in your school being a student leader?'" Harris explained.

"These are the student messages that came out of the conference.

"Share it with teachers, share it with other students, and pick something to make a difference on next year," he urged.