



# Learn Better

in Active Spaces & Places

## Toolkit

Everything gets better when you get active.



# Active Spaces. Active Bodies. Active Minds.



To help students and teachers sit less and move more during the school day, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has teamed up with ParticipACTION and Recreation Newfoundland and Labrador, to develop the **Learn Better in Active Spaces and Places Toolkit**.

This toolkit is designed to get school administrators thinking about how they can incorporate a movement culture for their teachers and students that supports them in reaching their recommended physical activity guidelines.

Contrary to popular belief, students who sit still all day do not perform better in school. The **Expert Statement on Physical Activity and Brain Health for Children and Youth** shows that those who participate in physical activity are more focused, have longer attention spans and better memories than their less active peers.

In fact, movement is critical to improved learning. The areas of the brain dedicated to memory and learning are larger in physically active students than students who are less active. In other words, students with busy bodies, build bigger brains.

The Expert Statement also shows that students who get their hearts pumping before a test show stronger brain function and typically score better than those who are less active. More aerobically fit children also have stronger problem-solving abilities.

To help support learning in students, and succeed in and out of the classroom, we need to get them moving more each day.

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# School Day Ideas

Elementary



## Ideas teachers can use during the school day to encourage elementary students and teachers to move more



Introduce activity breaks throughout the day using ideas from the **Active Schools** initiative in Newfoundland and Labrador – even 2-3 minutes can make a huge difference by breaking up sitting and allowing students to move around. Depending on the age of the child, they can even take turns leading the class in activities.



Find a little extra time for movement – **extend recess** once in a while and have **outdoor equipment bags** ready and available for students to access. Every little bit helps.



**Take your lessons outside** – the outdoors is a great place for students to learn, while also having more opportunities to move. Added bonus: children naturally move more when they're outside.



Be a good **role model** – let your students see you enjoying physical activity. The more you move during the day, the more they will too. If children see that you value physical activity, best case scenario, it rubs off on them too!



Place **stair wraps** of encouraging messages on the stairs. Better yet “gamify” those locations like a game of Pac-Man going up the staircase to make it a fun activity for all to enjoy!



**Join in at recess or lunch** – balance supervisory duties and participate in some of the activities with your students. It reinforces the idea that activity is important for everyone.

# School Day Ideas

Elementary



Don't let clouds rain on your physical activity parade – on rainy days use recess time to be active indoors. **Walk, wheel, skip, or jump the halls or stairs.** Put on some music in class and dance around. Try yoga or gentle stretching. There are plenty of indoor options out there!



Create and promote **active hallways** by placing stickers/decals in the hall or on the stairs to encourage movement from one place to another. Implement low activity movement rules as students move from one space to another (ie: walk with knees high, take lunge steps or reaching high and low on walls throughout the hallways to get some stretches in).





# School Day Ideas

Junior High and High School



## Ideas teachers can use during the school day to encourage junior high and high school students to move more



Start up an **after school bike club**. This will encourage students to ride their bikes to school in the morning and participate in an activity in the afternoon before heading home for the day.



Talk to your students about the importance of being physically active – it may sound obvious, but talking to students about the benefits of physical activity and teaching them about the positive effects for their bodies and brains can go a long way. Remember **everything gets better when you get active!**



Don't use the removal of opportunities for physical activity as a punishment. Physical activity leads to better behaviour and better attention in the classroom.



Ask the students what lunch time activities they are interested in trying. Students are more willing to participate in an activity they are interested in. As a start, suggest activities such as pickleball, geocaching, square ball, dodgeball, or slacklining.

# School Day Ideas

Junior High and High School



5 

Connect with School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador's **Participation Nation** program on tips and ideas on how to establish an outdoor adventure club that will enhance your students appreciation for the great outdoors. You could also partner with your community recreation department for supports including access to equipment and other resources.

6 

Break up extended periods of desk sitting by offering quality daily physical activity challenges throughout the day. Try these **7 streak challenges** for students to try!

7 

Set a physical activity goal for your class and make it a fun competition. Or if you have **activity trackers** handy, try to get to a million steps by the end of the school year.



8 

Visit a local community trail or a walking path near the school and take a nature walk. Make it educational by teaching students all about the Newfoundland and Labrador plants and trees along the way.

# Blog Article



## How physical activity can boost your students' brainpower

According to the 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card, Canadian children still aren't active enough, earning a disappointing D+ for Overall Physical Activity. Being physically active has countless, well-known benefits, from building strong muscles to improving sleep and preventing chronic disease.

But, in case we need another reason to encourage students to be active, research shows that physically active children also have better brain health and perform more effectively in and out of the classroom.

Fitting physical activity into your students' day might be easier than you think – and the argument for why they need to get moving has never been more convincing.



How can you apply this to your students' daily life? Encouraging students to get to school on foot or by bike is a great idea any day of the week. But encouraging them to walk, wheel, or ride on test day may give them an extra edge. If active transportation isn't an option, encourage them to speak with their parents to provide them with a skipping rope, or ball and glove – anything that will encourage them to squeeze in a quick endorphin blast before their big moment!

Of course, this shouldn't only happen on test day. Any activity is better than none. But scientists now know that making these physical activity breaks a habit in the long term can actually trigger brain growth in children, more specifically in the section committed to memory and learning (the hippocampus). Now, how's that for motivation?



### A boost in heart rate can boost their grades

**Studies** have found that when students get a burst of physical activity before a test, their brain volume actually changes in the section committed to executive control, function and attention (the basal ganglia), leading to better test scores!



# Cont'd



## To think outside the box, students need to get outside of their classrooms!

So, now you know that more movement can trigger better memory and stronger test results. Still not convinced? Consider the times you've seen your students struggling to get over a mental hump or to come up with a good idea.

Encouraging your student to take a physical activity break boosts the odds of them having their "a-ha" moment. Being active has been shown to significantly improve creative capacity and helps to think outside the box. This applies to their artistic endeavours, but also to countless other scenarios when creativity is called upon, whether that's coming up with a strategy to score on the soccer pitch or even navigating how to deal with friend drama.

And who doesn't want to foster their students' creative leadership and problem-solving skills?



## To be fit, is to be focused

Okay, this is one we all get. A wandering attention span can be incredibly frustrating. You can probably easily picture a stack of homework in front of your student and their bouncing knee, tapping pencil, subject-changing inquiries and sighs of frustration over the task at hand.

# Cont'd



When your students can't seem to sit still and focus, consider the day they've had sitting on the bus or in the car, or at their desk for hours in a classroom. They've likely been sedentary for too long. In which case, take their lead – encourage them to take a stand or do some yoga poses. This will allow them to return to their work refreshed and recharged. Research shows that active students can stay focused on challenging tasks for longer periods of time than those who are sedentary.

So, the science is in. Equipping your students with access to daily physical activity sessions throughout the day and in the long-term can lead to big changes in the actual structure of their brains. These bigger, better brains will help tap potential they never knew they had, at school and beyond – pretty impressive, right?



Check out the **2018 ParticipACTION Report Card** for more info on how more physical activity can support your student's success in the classroom, on the field and with their friends.

# Blog Article



## The secret to your child's brain health – is in their backpack

The arrival of September after the summer holidays can be equal parts exciting and stressful for parents. Common stressors surround setting children up for success and can include back-to-school shopping for school supplies, and even preparation for new morning and after school routines.

But what if you took a different approach this year; an approach that could single-handedly encourage better achievement success, reduce stress and improve self-esteem?

The secret isn't a new and exciting smartphone app or breakfast smoothie – it's daily physical activity – and the research in **our 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth** states that physical activity's positive impact on brain health can help your child thrive in the classroom, on the school-grounds and with friends.



### Packing for optimal brain health

Although you're not with your child all day to monitor their physical activity, a backpack stocked with items that encourage movement can go a long way towards benefiting their bodies, and their brains too. Here's a few items that might be helpful.



### Activity tracker and comfy shoes

Let your child log the total amount of steps they take in a day and make a game out of getting healthy. You might be surprised by how excited they get about reaching their step goal each day. Ensure good footwear is worn or packed to maximize the activity and steps they take. Parents – why not join the fun to see who gets the most steps at the end of the day!

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## Rubber Ball, Chalk or Skipping Rope

Almost 63 percent of children's free time is spent being sedentary, so send them to school with something to encourage spontaneous, active games with friends. Having a ball on hand can make the difference between playing actively with friends rather than staring at a screen.



## Clothing

Weather is one barrier to active play, so make sure your child is ready for anything by packing a good jacket or warm sweater. Mitts and hats can also be a great accessory even in the spring and fall when temperatures can be unpredictable. Leave an extra pair in your child's backpack so they are always available.



## Sun hat and sunscreen

Children need a sun hat and sunscreen to protect them from the rays. Make sure your children are prepared to take full advantage of the sun without having to worry about a nasty burn.



## Helmet

Did you know that only 55% of children and youth spend 0-20 minutes in active transportation? And, active travellers get as much as 45 additional minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day? Wheeling or walking to and from school will quickly add up to a healthier lifestyle.

Back-to-school is a great time to rethink how to best set our children up for success. In resetting household – and school routines – it's helpful to consider that they need daily physical activity to reach their mental, emotional and intellectual potential. Small tactics, such as helping them pack a backpack with items that can encourage movement, can make a real (and active!) difference.





# Outdoor School Movement Tips



Share the below tips with school staff members, with the purpose of educating them on the importance of physical activity during the school day, and how best to incorporate these ideas to create an active school.



**1** Connect with the provincial Active Schools initiative to provide more opportunities for outdoor play throughout the school day (as students are more active outdoors).



**2** Pick one day of the month where schools will have a mass participation activity outdoors (e.g., Movement Monday) for students to participate in dance or yoga stretches. Better yet get the principal to lead the school in the activity!



**3** Offer a variety of **traditional and non-traditional** activities – something for everyone!



**4** Ensure you incorporate inclusive activities for everybody and offer a welcoming environment for all students. Check out the **Ability Toolkit** for ideas of adapted activities.



**5** Barrier a section of your parking lot during the school time period for active gaming. Paint active games like snakes and ladders, twister or square ball to get students moving.



“While it takes a little time and effort to create the space, it pales in comparison to the hours of enjoyment our students get from being active. They run the obstacle course, play Snakes and Ladders, and also compete in the long jump activities. When we see students stop to use the space at the end of the day before they go home, we know we’ve got a great thing!”

**Leigh-Ann Ryder, Principal**  
Matthew Elementary School,  
Bonavista



# Outdoor School Movement Tips



Encourage students to get to/from school via active transportation (e.g. walking, wheeling, riding or skateboarding) whenever possible. Provide students with this **safe cycling checklist** to make sure they have the proper materials.



Lead by example and encourage staff members to park further away from the door in the mornings. Paint **“Active Teacher”** in parking spaces or place an active teacher parking sign in the back of the parking lot. Making an effort to park in places farther from the door not only frees up space but gives teachers extra active time that over the school year adds up to improving your health.



Have sport and recreation equipment accessible outdoors throughout recess and lunch so students and teachers can spontaneously play unstructured activities.



Add bicycle racks outside of the school so students and teachers know that they can ride their bike to school and have a place to put them. Also keep some bike locks on hand just in case students forget theirs.

Communication Assets

# Backpack Infographic



Download the PDF Version of the **Backpack Must - Haves To Encourage Active Play**. Send it home to parents to encourage them think about active play throughout the school year.

Only **36%** of kids get an average of the **60 minutes** of heart-pumping activity they require every day.

## Backpack must-haves to encourage active play

**RUBBER BALL**

Kids aged 5-17 spend most of their free time being sedentary. A ball, chalk or skipping rope close at hand will encourage spontaneous, active games with friends.

**STEP COUNTER**

Make a game out of getting healthy with a step counter by letting them log the total amount of steps they take in a day. Don't forget to encourage them to leave the house in comfy shoes to help maximize the steps they take.

**SUN HAT & SUNSCREEN**

Kids need a sun hat and sunscreen. Remember to slather them up and send them off with extra sunblock to enjoy outdoor play.

**DON'T OVERPACK!**

Experts recommend that kids carry no more than **10-15%** of their total body weight.

**CELL PHONE**

Parents worry about the safety of their child. A phone can help you stay in touch with your kids while they walk to and from school, or play outside with friends.

**HELMET**

Wheeling to and from school will quickly add up to a much healthier lifestyle. Walking or running are also great ways to travel.

Only 55% of children and youth spend 0-20 minutes in active transportation daily (2014-15 CHMS, Statistics Canada).

**JACKET**

Weather is one barrier to active play, so be ready for rain or shine with a rain jacket.

Always make sure that the clothes your child wears to school are comfortable to move in and suitable to play in.

There are important connections between the health of the body and the brain, connections that must be fostered for kids to reach their mental, emotional and intellectual potential. Bodies need movement, and brains do too.

Source: The ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2018).

participACTION.com









## Communication Assets

# Social Media



ParticipACTION has prepared posts to make it easy for staff to communicate the benefits of physical activity at your school and encourage students and their parents to make it part of their everyday lives.

## Share these posts to your Facebook, Instagram and Twitter followers:

-  Irritated? Stressed? Overwhelmed with schoolwork? Physical activity is a great way to improve your mood, your focus, and help you unwind after a long stressful day. [#FocusBetter](#) [#UnwindBetter](#) [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)
-  Immediately following exercise, problem solving, memory and attention improve. So, try going for a quick walk or run before your next big test. [#FocusBetter](#) [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)
-  Tired of being tired? Get active so you can [#SleepBetter](#) at home...not in class [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)
-  People who get active regularly tend to have bigger social networks and stronger relationships with friends and family. [#FriendBetter](#) [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)
-  Want to [#SleepBetter](#) tonight? It might be as simple as a 30-minute yoga session or a walk around the block. [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)
-  Physical activity: the better way to unwind. Side effects include more energy, less stress, improved sleep and simply feeling great all over. [#UnwindBetter](#) [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)
-  Our school promotes active play during recess and lunch so parents don't forget to pack active items like skipping ropes, balls and other active items for your child to be active tomorrow! [#LearnBetter](#) [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)
-  Tomorrow's weather forecast is calling for a great day so why not grab a few friends and walk, wheel or ride to school in the morning. See you tomorrow! [#FriendBetter](#) [#EverythingGetsBetter](#)

## Communication Assets

# School Announcements



Provide students with the below fast facts to encourage increased physical activity in their day-to-day lives, and raise awareness of the benefits it will provide them. These can be displayed on TV monitors in the office, posted in the halls or classrooms, posted on social media, or even read with the morning/afternoon announcements.

**Did you know...**

that exercise helps boost self-confidence and self-esteem.

**Did you know...**

that physical activity helps us be more organized.

**Did you know...**

that physical activity helps our brains take in new information.

**Did you know...**

that being active can help you meet new friends.

**Did you know...**

that physical activity improves your memory, problem solving skills and improves attention.

**Did you know...**

that physical activity provides us with a natural stress relief.

## Communication Assets

# Posters



To help make your school a more active place for students, we've provided you with two posters to print and display in your hallways, classrooms, etc. These posters are aimed to provide students with the extra nudge of encouragement to sit less and move more, and that Everything gets better when you get active. We recommend displaying these in highly visible areas, inside and outside your school, and that they are accessible to all ages and abilities.

**Download and print the posters here.**





# Movement Guidelines




Print and display the **24 Hour Movement Guidelines** in your school classrooms, hallways or staff room to educate students and teachers on the recommended physical activity levels that children and youth should be achieving for a healthy lifestyle. This can also be printed and provided to students to bring home to parents to continue the message of being physically active after school.


## GUIDELINES

For optimal health benefits, children and youth (aged 5–17 years) should achieve high levels of physical activity, low levels of sedentary behaviour, and sufficient sleep each day.


A healthy 24 hours includes:




**SWEAT**



**STEP**



**SLEEP**



**SIT**

<p><b>SWEAT</b></p> <p><b>MODERATE TO VIGOROUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b></p> <p>An accumulation of at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity involving a variety of aerobic activities. Vigorous physical activities, and muscle and bone strengthening activities should each be incorporated at least 3 days per week;</p>	<p><b>STEP</b></p> <p><b>LIGHT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b></p> <p>Several hours of a variety of structured and unstructured light physical activities;</p>	<p><b>SLEEP</b></p> <p><b>SLEEP</b></p> <p>Uninterrupted 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night for those aged 5–13 years and 8 to 10 hours per night for those aged 14–17 years, with consistent bed and wake-up times;</p>	<p><b>SIT</b></p> <p><b>SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR</b></p> <p>No more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time; Limited sitting for extended periods.</p>
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Preserving sufficient sleep, trading indoor time for outdoor time, and replacing sedentary behaviours and light physical activity with additional moderate to vigorous physical activity can provide greater health benefits.

# Additional Resources



## Active Schools

Active Schools provide students with the opportunity to learn through curriculum-based activities. The Active Schools program has classroom teachers incorporating curriculum-linked activity in the classroom each day. Activities may include a full 20 minute session or other 5 minute activity bursts that may be used as teaching aids. There are other initiatives and opportunities for school wide sessions in which the entire school may be involved in a particular activity.

Teachers may have access to the Active Schools program and initiatives through an online forum called Google Classroom. The classroom is called, “The Active School’s Homeroom”. There are hundreds of teachers from all regions across the province who are active members. All resources are housed in the Active Schools Homeroom along with a stream section where teachers may upload questions or ideas of their own. Teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador may enter the classroom by entering the code bi055k.

The Provincial Active Schools Coordinator, offers personal learning sessions for teachers in all regions throughout the year. Be sure to check out the Active Schools Homeroom for upcoming session dates, or connect directly with the Active Schools Coordinator.

For more information about Active Schools please contact:

**Provincial Active Schools Coordinator**  
Tel: 709-257-2498

## Teen Toolkit

To help teens sit less and move more, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador teamed up with ParticipACTION to develop this toolkit to show teens how the 24-Hour Movement Guidelines can help them lead healthier lives.

## School Health Promotion Liaison Consultants

To facilitate and support the implementation of the “Healthy Students, Healthy Schools (HSHS)” initiative across the health regions and school district, School Health Promotion Liaison Consultants (SHPLC’s) strengthen partnerships, build capacity for school health, and facilitate health promotion initiatives in the school community including physical activity.

**Avalon Regional Consultants**  
709-758-2388 (Avalon East)  
709-229-2096 (Vista/Burin)

**Central Regional Consultant**  
709-256-2547

# Additional Resources



## Western Regional Consultant

709-637-6769

## Labrador Regional Consultant

709-896-2431

## School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador – Participation Nation

Participation Nation is the recreational sport and physical activity-based program within School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador. The PN program encourages students to be active and involved in sports, regardless of their skill-set, engaging students who would normally only take part in the required physical education curriculum to be more physically active and feel good about their participation. Participation Nation includes a variety of programs including its two main programs Primary Achievement and Pin Winners, as well as 5 other physical activity programs designed to engage grades K-12.

## School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador – Varsity

Varsity is the competition-based program within School Sports NL. It is the premier organized sports program in schools across Newfoundland and Labrador, hosting 250 tournaments annually, with 7000+ student-athletes and 575 coach volunteers. Varsity currently offers 10 Official Sports and 6 Foundation Sports to student-athletes.

## Community Healthy Living Fund

The Community Healthy Living Fund (CHLF) is a program that provides funding for projects that specifically target increasing physical activity and/or vegetable and fruit consumption. Schools are eligible to apply for the supportive environment section of the fund.

## Healthy School Planner

The Healthy School Planner is a free on-line tool that schools across Canada can use to assess the health of their school and build a plan for improvements. The Healthy School Planner helps schools evaluate current conditions, validate untapped resources within the community, organize increased support for change, lead the decision-making process to determine action steps, visualize outcomes through shared success stories, and evaluate progress over time.

After completion, schools will receive tailored feedback and a list of resources that will help them take action in areas selected for improvement. From there, schools can decide on priorities for action and develop improvement initiatives based on current capacity.

**For more information on the Healthy School Planner please contact your School Health Promotion Liaison Consultant.**

# Additional Resources



## **A Community Guide to Biking**

This guide is designed to provide information and guidance to communities, schools, groups, and individuals interested in starting a biking program in their community.

## **A Common Vision For Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving!**

Federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation released **A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving** in 2018. The purpose of the Common Vision is to guide and stimulate coordinated and collaborative policies and actions to increase physical activity and to reduce sedentary behaviours among all Canadians across their lifetime. The Common Vision will build on current policies, frameworks and strategies already in place relating to sport, recreation and healthy living, while advancing new and emerging approaches in policies and programming.

## **Universal Design NL**

Universal design is about designing for everyone. It's a way of creating environments and products that are usable for all people, regardless of age, ability or situation. The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities – NL, in partnership with the Disability Policy Office – Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, has created this interactive website to promote and increase awareness of universal design in our communities.

## **The 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth**

Adding more physical activity to a child's routine could be the missing part of the equation to support their success in the classroom, on the field, and with their friends.

To see how children measured up this year, explore all the grades in more detail on the website (link above). And for a deeper look into this year's report, download the Highlight Report or Full Report as well as the Expert Statement in PDF format.

# Additional Resources



## **The ParticipACTION App: The Active App for Everyone**

Want to Sleep Better, Happy Better or even Poop Better? Then get moving! It's easy with the new (and FREE!) ParticipACTION app, designed to help you fit physical activity into your busy life and reward you with great prizes. Get the app and see how everything gets better when you get active.

## **Canadian Public Health Association - Unstructured Play Resources**

The Canadian Public Health Association recognizes unstructured play as a child's right and a critical component to child and youth health and well-being. This website is full of information, best practices and ideas for unstructured play.

## **Ability Kit**

The Ability Toolkit was developed to help parents and guardians support their child or teen with a disability meet the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth. The Ability Toolkit provides information relevant to adapting the guidelines to the unique movement abilities of children or teenagers with any type of disability. Some information may be especially useful for parents and guardians of children and teens with a physical disability.

## **Ever Active Schools**

Ever Active Schools is a provincial initiative designed to create and support healthy school communities. We engage and support schools through a Comprehensive School Health approach, which addresses health and education goals to improve the social outcomes of children and youth in Alberta.

## **Physical and Health Education Canada**

Physical and Health Education Canada (PHE Canada) champions healthy, active children by promoting and advancing quality health and physical education opportunities and healthy learning environments. Supporting community champions with quality programs, professional development services, and community activation initiatives, PHE Canada inspires all to live healthy, physically active lives.



**This toolkit  
is available in  
alternate formats.**

Please contact Ashley Button:  
[ashleybutton@gov.nl.ca](mailto:ashleybutton@gov.nl.ca) | (709) 729-5281

