

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



**FOUR WEEKS OF EASY ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS  
TO PRACTICE MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS WITHIN THEIR CLASSROOM**

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Adapted with permissions from Middlesex-London  
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**Health and  
Social Services**  
Haldimand and Norfolk

# Introduction

In Canada, only 35.2 % of children and youth aged 5 - 17 achieve the recommended physical activity levels ( Particip ACTION, 2018 ). Data from 15 countries show that children overall are not accumulating enough physical activity to improve their health ( Tremblay et al., 2014 ). Insufficient physical activity is linked to adverse health effects such as injury, as well as chronic diseases including cancer, type II diabetes, and stroke. It is also linked to poor mental health ( Tremblay & Willms, 2003; Janssen & Leblanc, 2010; Warburton et al., 2006 ).

Research suggests that physical activity is associated with a wide variety of physical benefits, such as healthier measures of blood pressure, blood glucose, and better arterial and bone health. Physical activity also improves cognitive functioning and self-esteem, and lowers anxiety and depression ( Particip ACTION, 2018 ).

Incorporating daily physical activity in school is essential to ensure that students have a healthy place to learn. Academic achievement improves when the physical health and well-being of students is supported. [The Ontario Daily Physical Activity Policy \(PPM 138\)](#) requires school boards to ensure that all elementary students have a minimum of 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day ( Ministry of Education, 2022 ).

## Key Points

- Canadian children do not get enough physical activity, leading to negative health consequences, including poor mental health.
- Elementary students should have a minimum of 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day.
- The mental health benefits of physical activity include opportunities for socializing, increased concentration, better academic scores, improved self-esteem, and lower stress.
- [Studies by Active Living Research](#) show that physically active kids have [increased brain activity](#), and improved test scores as well as grades.



# Weekly Announcements (Wellness Wednesday)

## Week One Announcement:

You may be wondering how much physical activity you need. You need at least 60 minutes of activity each and every day. It doesn't even have to be 60 minutes all at once. You can break it up throughout the day. Before school you can walk to school or the bus stop or even have a dance party with your family. At recess you can play with friends or swing on the monkey bars. After school you can walk home or play any extracurricular activities

## Week Two Announcement:

You know how it's really, really hard to sit still sometimes? YEAH! When you're a kid, your body wants to move! Moving more can give you a boost. More energy, self-confidence, easier to relax and improved grades. It's true, physical activity can actually help you do better in school.

## Week Three Announcement:

Physical activity should be fun for you. Being active can help you feel better and boost your mood. It's simple: Get yourself moving. Any physical activity will work. You could walk, wheel, run, bike, dance, skip or do yoga

## Week Four Announcement:

Did you know that being active improves mental wellness? Physical activity releases chemicals in the brain which improve your mood, make you more alert, decrease stress, help you sleep, and boost your self-esteem. Get active to feel your best!



# Activities

- **Walking challenges don't have to wait until October.** Celebrate walking to school with your students this month and all months! Here's an example: [International Walk to School Month \(IWALK\)](#). This is an annual mass celebration of active transportation taking place around the world every October. Walking/wheeling to school is healthy, environmentally friendly, and great for getting to know the neighborhood and creating community connections. [ Grades K- 8 ]
- **Any day is the perfect time to enjoy the outdoors with kids** - Nature is always changing, so get outside and check it out! Use these I-Spy cards to make the walk fun.
  - [IWALK I-Spy Activity \[GradesK-3\]](#)
  - [IWALK I-Spy Activity \[Grades 4-6\]](#)
- **Create a Kilometre Club.** Challenge another class to track the number of kilometres they walk or wheel for the week. The winning class could receive a "Golden Shoe" award! [ Grades K- 8 ]
- **Go for a walk in the neighbourhood** and read the signs you see. Talk about what the signs mean. [ Grades K- 5 ]
- **Create an indoor or outdoor golf course** using hula hoops or tied ropes/ribbons as "golf holes." Use beanbags, foam balls or tennis balls to throw towards the holes. Keep track of the number of throws it takes to "sink your ball." [https://activeforlife.com/activity/outdoor- golf-toss\\_50/](https://activeforlife.com/activity/outdoor- golf-toss_50/) [Grades K-8]

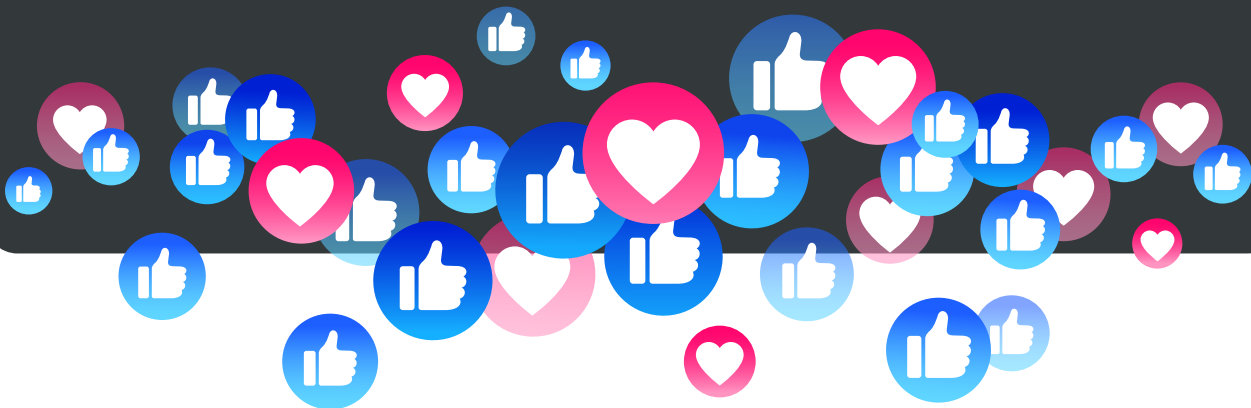


# Book and/or Video Recommendations

- Check out [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#) for mindfulness, yoga and relaxation for kids.
- Spunky Little Monkey by Bill Martin Jr. and Michael Sampson  
[YouTube Version](#) [Grades JK-SK]
- ABC Yoga by Christiane Engel  
[YouTube Version](#) [JK-Grade 1]
- From Head to Toe, by Eric Carle ([Youtube Version](#)) [Grades JK-2]
- Bounce by Doreen Cronin  
[YouTube Version](#) [Grade K-2]
- The Busy Body Book, by Lizzie Rockwell  
([Youtube Version](#)) [Grades JK-SK]

## For Educators Who Use Social Media

- Post your photos/videos on social media with #IWALK2School to qualify for prizes. Tag @OntarioAST #IWALK #JourneyOutside
- Tweet photos of your school community participating in activities
- Tweet at other classes or schools to challenge them to take part
- Tag HNHU ON TWITTER @HNHealthUnit or @HNSchoolHealth and be sure to use #HNHHealthySchools





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