



# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

FOUR WEEKS OF EASY ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS TO PRACTICE MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS WITHIN THEIR CLASSROOMS.

## INTRODUCTION

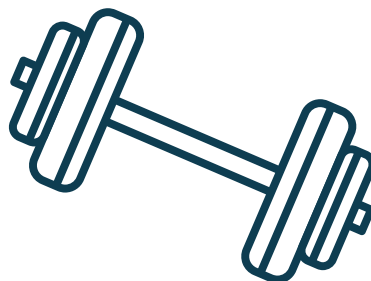
In Canada, only 35.2% of children and youth aged 5-17 achieve the recommended physical activity levels (ParticipACTION, 2018). Data from 15 countries show that children overall are not accumulating enough physical activity to improve their health (Tremblay et al., 2014). Insufficient physical activity 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 (ParticipACTION, 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

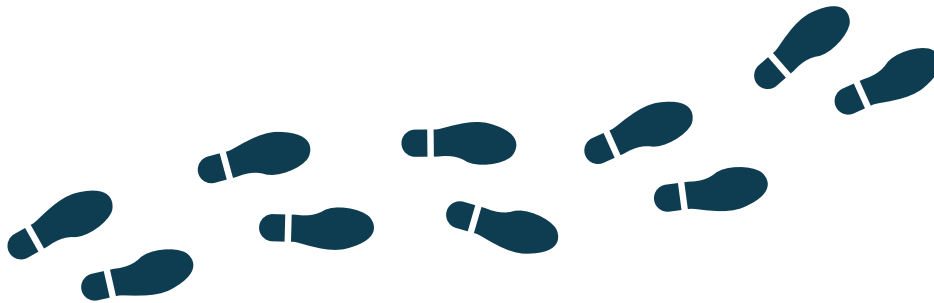
- Canadian children do not get enough physical activity, leading to negative health consequences, including poor mental health.
- Elementary students should have a minimum of 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day.
- The mental health benefits of physical activity include 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 (Mental Health Monday)

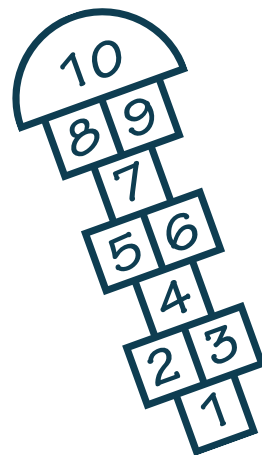
### Week One Announcement:

October is #IWALK month when students around the globe participate in walk-to-school events and celebrate commuting on foot. Join the movement and participate in "Walktober."



### Week Two Announcement:

Do you live too far to walk or wheel to school? You can still get active by getting dropped off a block or two away from school and walking the rest of the way or participate in group walks or other activities during break times at school.



### Book Recommendation

Spunky Little Monkey by Bill Martin Jr. and Michael Sampson  
[Grades JK-SK]



## Week Three Announcement:

It's easy to get active! Find a ball and play catch with a friend. Playing catch will strengthen your arms and legs, while giving your lungs and heart a workout too! Get outside and play!

## Week Four Announcement:

Did you know that being active improves mental health? 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!



### 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 SWPH School Team on Twitter @SW\_PublicHealth, and/or MLHU @MLHealthUnit, so we can share what you are doing \_\_\_\_\_

## Book Recommendation

From Head to Toe, by Eric Carle  
([Youtube Version](#)) [Grades JK-2]

# Activities

- Have your school participate in the 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 neighbourhood and creating community connections. [Grades K-8]
- October is the perfect time to enjoy the outdoors with kids - the colours are beautiful, and the weather is getting cooler. Use these I-spy cards to make the walk fun.
  - IWALK I-Spy Activity [Grades K-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 Recommendation

The Busy Body Book, by Lizzie Rockwell  
(Youtube Version) [Grades JK-SK]