Evidence-Based Continuous Improvement

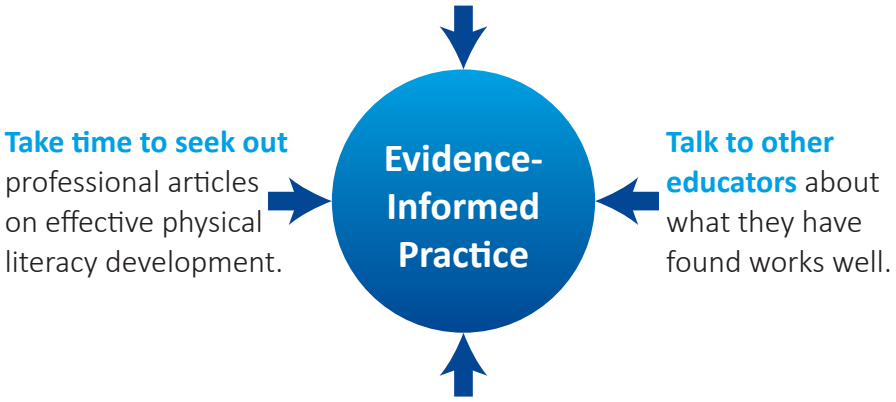
Evidence-based practice in achieving the goals of education has become increasingly important as schools strive to offer a world-class education to the students of British Columbia.

Evidence-Based School Practice

Is based on professional agreement about improving student outcomes based on the results of multiple, well-designed, and well-executed experiments using similar aged students to those the educator is working with.

This means evidence-based teaching of nine-year-olds would be based on systematic research into the response of nine-year-old students to different styles of teaching, with each nine-year-old randomly assigned to an experimental or control group.

This rarely happens in the fields of physical education, physical activity, or recreation; since it is just too expensive and too time consuming. Because of this we go to the next best thing.



"No research without action and no action without research."*

Evidence-Informed Practice

Since there is very little truly evidence-based research, most real life approaches to delivering physical activity use the next best approach which is evidence-informed practice. Evidence-based practices are typically backed by multiple studies and considered "well-supported". Evidence-informed practices often don't have multiple studies to back them up, instead using the best available research to guide implementation. Educators should seek out:

- **High-Quality Research:** This means reading peer-reviewed material on child and youth development, the response of the body to activity, and the optimum strategies for teaching your students.

  Since educators rarely have sufficient time to read the original research, educators should rely on unbiased professional journals that translate the research theory into practical recommendations.
- **Trial and Error:** Systematically try different teaching approaches, assess student outcomes, reflect on the results, and incorporate into your teaching.
- **Experience and Expertise:** In addition to your own experience and expertise, talk to colleagues about what works for them. Professional networks are another common way to share best-practice.
- **Incorporating feedback:** Evidence-informed teaching also requires seeking out feedback from colleagues, mentors, students, and parents, and making changes based on the feedback received.

*Kurt Lewin, Social Scientist and Researcher

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement requires an ongoing commitment. It is an active process, not something that "just happens." There are several approaches to improving teaching, and one of the most common is the Five A's.

Ask: Constantly question whether the way you are delivering physical activity and physical literacy programming is the best it could be.

- How could I get students more heavily involved in different activities?
- How could I improve student competencies in skills, knowledge and understanding?
- How could I develop greater student competence and confidence in fundamental movement skills?
- How could I create more positive attitudes towards taking part in physical activity?
- How could I get students to take more responsibility for their own engagement in physical activity?

Acquire: Pull together all relevant research and expert opinion on these topics.

Appraise: Study the research, discuss it with your professional colleagues, consider its applicability to your situation, and plan how you will use conclusions you have drawn.

Apply: Determine if change in the way you teach would be appropriate. Apply the changes in a systematic manner.

Assess: Monitor implementation and collect and track appropriate data. Analyze the data, and share results with other educators.

Kaizen

The process of continuous improvement comes from the Japanese philosophy and practical approach to continuous improvement called Kaizen. At its heart it promotes the idea that everyone in an organization is responsible for taking the initiative to seek improvement. It also recognizes that however well a person is teaching, their teaching could be improved; and that technological change and societal demands on education will continue to make changes in teaching inevitable.

Research findings will continue to shed new light on the development of children and youth, and on how best to teach them. Students themselves will change as they bring new technology, new attitudes and new preferences into the classroom. Continuous improvement, as described with Kaizen, is the only way to stay ahead of the game.