



Making the Link: Physical Activity and Mental Well-being

For more information on resources and professional development opportunities within the School Physical Activity and Physical Literacy project, visit our website: www.schoolpapl.ca

Benefits

Students who regularly engage in physical activity have the potential to better communicate, socialize, increase self-control and maintain focus – leading to a healthier, higher quality of life.

To support mental well-being, children and youth should be encouraged to include daily moderate to vigorous physical activity. The Canadian 24-Hour movement guidelines recommend 60 min per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity⁴.

Remember, some physical activity is better than none, and if you and your students do a little every day you are well on your way. Incorporating it into your classroom's daily routines will help everyone – students and teachers!



Mental well-being impacts how we think, what we feel and the way we act. It also affects how we manage difficult situations, handle stress, relate to others and make choices¹. Mental well-being is a Curricular Competency in the British Columbia Physical and Health Education Curriculum² and leads to the development of emotionally and intellectually strong and engaged students.

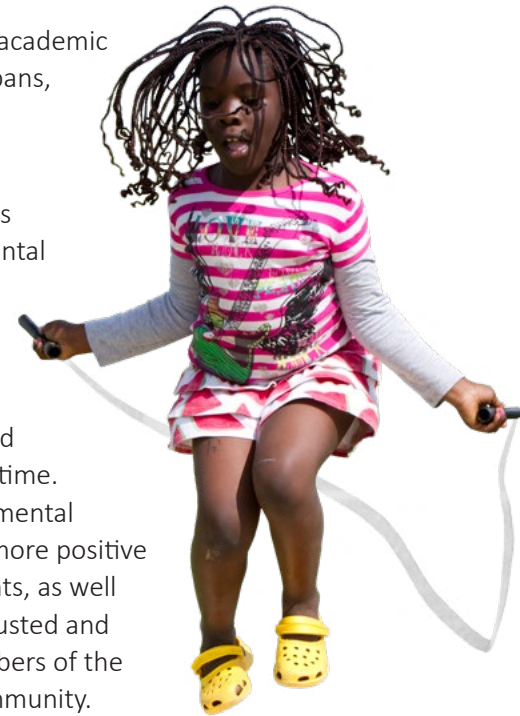
Mental well-being is intrinsically linked to a holistic view of personhood, one that balances and respects the four components of humans³:

1. Emotional
2. Mental
3. Physical
4. Spiritual

Being physically active, even for short amounts of time throughout the day, has been shown to have positive

effects on students' academic abilities, attention spans, physical health and mental well-being.

Physical activity helps students to build mental capacity, manage emotions and develop adaptive coping strategies for the classroom and throughout their lifetime. Supporting student mental well-being leads to more positive learning environments, as well as fostering well-adjusted and more engaged members of the school and local community.



Physical activity is critical to the development and maintenance of student and teacher mental well-being

Increased self-esteem

Improved attention

Improved sleep

Reduced stress

Increased Resiliency



Reduced anxiety

Improved social / emotional well-being

Increased confidence

Increased autonomy



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¹ www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase/mental-health

² curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/physical-health-education/core/introduction

³ www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-and-the-first-nations-health-authority/first-nations-perspective-on-wellness

⁴ Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, csepguidelines.ca/children-and-youth-5-17

⁵ www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/learning-toolkit-blog/teach-math-themed-twist-rock-paper-scissors.html

⁶ sportforlife.ca/physical-literacy

Physical activity at school should be safe, fun, engaging, and equitable

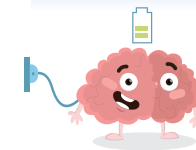
in order for the positive benefits to be recognized by all students. Activities should be both **structured** (e.g., in a safe and supervised environment), **free** (e.g., exploratory, playful, inclusive, non-evaluative), and **done throughout the day**. Consider joining in. Play a little! Reminder: It is important to follow public health guidance related to COVID-19 (e.g., safe physical distancing, frequent hand washing, and following cleaning protocols for equipment and facilities).

What does physical activity look like in my classroom and school?

Examples of activities for you and your students that are **cooperative, fun, and inclusive**:

Classroom/Curricular

1. When interest and energy levels start to dip, encourage students to have an active moment (e.g., a big stretch, raising their hands above their head, free movement).
2. Play “Rock Paper Scissors Math⁵” when learning new skills. This interactive game brings movement to math class by having students use their whole body to show their selected sign and use their skills to add and subtract numbers. Add and subtract classmates across the room instead of using numbers on paper.
3. Encourage students to create living book reports and act out scenes instead of writing them down.
4. Go for a walk and take your lesson outside the classroom (e.g., land-based learning, outdoor spaces, vacant rooms, or an open gymnasium) to provide opportunities for developing physical literacy⁶.
5. Give the students the option to stand or change positions during lessons, when they’re able and it’s appropriate.
6. Consider how to create a safe space where students of all abilities can move (e.g., allow students to choose their own movements, rather than following a set plan).



Active moment cards can help students develop awareness of their mental well-being and how physical activity impacts how they feel. Distribute the included cards to your students, or have them available in your classroom for movement breaks throughout the day.

Active Moment Tips



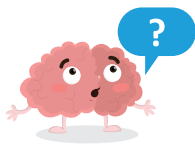
Need suggestions for specific ages? Or do you want your class to develop specific skills? Visit:

www.schoolpap.ca/resources-home/playbuilder

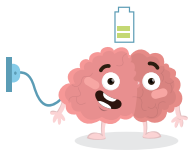
School/General

7. Develop non-competitive scavenger hunts. Encourage students to explore their environment and use it to deepen their understanding of the learning material.
8. Active announcements: start the day with an active movement (e.g., body writing) and take time to bring them back (e.g., calming through breathing and mindfulness). Body writing is a great activity where students use their bodies to either make letters to spell words, or move their body as the “pencil” to write words on the ground.
9. Activate the body in teaching content and supporting review. Have students move to reinforce learning when being taught and when reviewing content, so they may act out the process of photosynthesis as they learn it, and go for a walk to reinforce the learning. Incorporating movement can help to reinforce memories and teachings.
10. Provide brain breaks with fun, rhythmic beat-based movement activities to encourage laughter.
11. Take the long route between class locations.

Whatever you do, make sure you move more!



How are you
feeling right now?

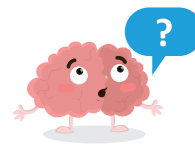


Active moment:

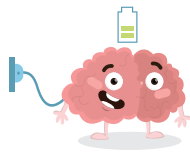
Stand up and reach to the sky. Take a deep breath and bend over to touch your toes. Repeat this three times.



Ask yourself again –
How am I feeling now?



How are you
feeling right now?

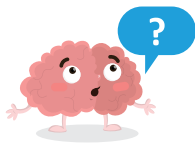


Active moment:

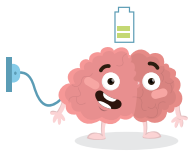
Find three things in your area that are each colours of the rainbow, and move to each item.



Ask yourself again –
How am I feeling now?



How are you
feeling right now?



Active moment:

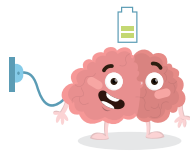
Make up a dance move to teach to your friends at recess. Practice it three times.



Ask yourself again –
How am I feeling now?



How are you
feeling right now?

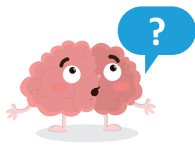


Active moment:

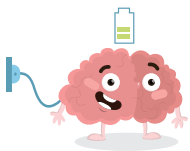
Spell some words with your body. End with an exclamation point jump!



Ask yourself again –
How am I feeling now?



How are you
feeling right now?

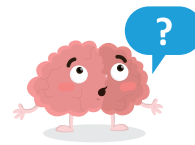


Active moment:

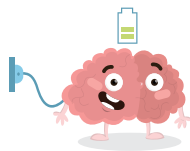
Go for a walk around the school. Focus on your surroundings and try to notice three things you haven't seen before.



Ask yourself again –
How am I feeling now?



How are you
feeling right now?



Active moment:

Go for an active recess! Focus on being physically active and try different movements.



Ask yourself again –
How am I feeling now?

Download and print more active moment cards at www.???.com/???