

Physical Activity for Schools

Public Health Nurses are available to provide schools in York Region with consultation, support, programs and resources on physical activity for staff, students and parents. Find out how to contact the York Region Public Health Nurse for your school by calling Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653. The resources below are available to support schools that identify physical activity as a priority.

[Active Tools for Schools](#)

Active Tools for Schools is designed to help elementary schools make active choices with user-friendly resources promoting increased levels of physical activity.

[Active Tools for Schools](#) breaks down the broad concept of physical activity into five different topics with strategies that support and influence physical activity in schools. Review the different topics as well as the suggested ideas and activities to support the development and implementation of the Healthy Schools Action Plan. The [Active Tools for Schools Checklist and Prioritization Tool](#) is a great way for your school to get started.

School-Based Interventions to Promote Physical Activity

- [Active Play](#)
- [Daily Physical Activity](#)
- [Active School Travel](#)
- [Active Fundraisers, Celebrations and Rewards](#)
- [Positive Role Modelling and Reinforcement](#)

[Active School Travel](#)

The Active School Travel program supports elementary and secondary schools with education and initiatives that encourage families to choose active and sustainable travel to and from school which includes walking, cycling, wheeling, taking the school bus (if eligible) as well as parking and walking a block.

Why the concern?

- Fewer children are walking and wheeling for their school journey
- Canadian children are not getting enough physical activity
- We need to take action to help the environment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Poor air quality has a negative impact on a child's health and cognitive development
- School site traffic is a growing burden
- Increased car use makes school zones congested, polluted, and a hazard for pedestrians

Benefits to active travel to and from school:

- Physical activity is associated with both physical and mental health benefits
- Increases alertness and attention during the school day
- Brain process like focus, memory, and recall is enhanced after single or repeated bouts of physical activity (ParticipACTION, 2018)
- Active school travel reduces stress, depression and anxiety

Walking to School Has Many Social Benefits



Use the resource [Active School Travel: Activities for Schools](#) to support your school with activities and initiatives that encourages active modes of travel to and from school. This resource will give you access to step-by-step information to use throughout the year.

For more information or to get started, please contact: SchoolServices@york.ca

If you have any issues or concerns with on-site infrastructure, please contact your school board for assistance. If you have issues or concerns with off-site infrastructure, please contact your local municipality.

Resources for Teacher Champions/Educators

Students learn about the built and natural environment through exploration.

These lesson plans can help teachers to engage students in classroom lessons:

Grade 1: [Science and Technology](#)

Grade 5: [Social Studies](#)

Grade 9: [Health and Physical Education](#)

Teach road safety for children and youth <http://ontarioroadsafety.ca/en/>

You'll find:

- Learn tips
- Lesson plans
- Community engagement kits
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Printable posters
- Grading rubrics
- Sample achievement charts

Modify and use for your classroom!

Videos:

- [Walking to School](#)
- [Making Tracks](#)
- [Pedestrian and Cyclists Visibility at Night](#)
- [Pedestrian Safety - Running](#)
- [Pedestrian Safety - Eye Contact](#)
- [Pedestrian Safety - Crosswalks](#)
- [How to Cycle Safely Through Intersection](#)
- [Winter Cycling](#)
- [Be Back to School Safe](#)

Links

- [York Region Traffic Safety Program](#)
- [Ontario Active School Travel](#)
- [Active and Safe Routes to School – Teacher’s Kit](#)
- [Eco Schools Canada](#)
- [Helmet safety](#)
- [ParticipACTION](#)

Active Play

Active Play, also called unstructured play, contributes to overall physical activity in children. According to the [Canadian Public Health Association Children’s Unstructured Play Positional Statement](#) (2019), unstructured play provides a variety of benefits for children and youth health and well-being including:

- Physical health and gross motor skills
- Mental and emotional health
- Social health and team work
- Learning and attention at school
- Resiliency and risk management skills

For more information on Active Play visit york.ca/activeplay.

One of the main barriers to active play is the weather. It is important to consider weather precautions and dress appropriately for outdoor play. Refer to the [York Catholic District School Board Extreme Weather Policy #221](#) or the [York Region District School Board Extreme Hot and Cold Weather and UV Protection Guideline](#) for more information.

Fact Sheets

- [How to Dress for Outdoor Winter Play](#)
- [How to Dress for Outdoor Fall Play](#)
- [How to Dress for Outdoor Summer Play](#)
- [How to Dress for Outdoor Spring Play](#)
- [Have your kids played today?](#)

Prolonged exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun is a leading cause of skin cancer. According to the [Canadian Cancer Society](#), there are 6 ways to be sun safe:

- Check the UV index every day
- Seek shade, especially between 11am and 3pm when the UV rays are the strongest
- Cover up using wide brimmed hats and clothing

- Wear sunglasses with UVA and UVB protection
- Use sunscreen properly

For more information on sun safety, visit [the Canadian Cancer Society](#).

DPA (Daily Physical Activity)

Daily Physical Activity (DPA) was mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education in 2005 (P/PM 138) and requires all elementary students to have a minimum of twenty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day during instructional time.

[Active Tools for Schools – Enhancing DPA](#) supports schools in planning and implementing DPA by introducing the concept of creating a healthy, active school environment.

Resources

- [DPA resources for schools](#)
- [Daily Physical Activity Resources | Ophea Teaching Tools](#) (login required - contact Ophea)

PLAY Program (Peer Leadership for Active Youth)

The PLAY program offers leadership training for students in grades five to eight who, once trained, teach interactive and co-operative games to students in kindergarten to grade three at recess. This program promotes positive spaces for learning and play by enhancing student leadership skills, promoting inclusivity of all students on the playground, increasing physical activity opportunities and enhancing social skills and overall mental well-being.

The Handbook for PLAY Leader Champions is made up of five sections to guide leaders and junior students through a half day training session. There is also a Handbook for PLAY Program Student Leaders that provides information and skill building through interactive activities where students learn about leadership, teamwork, conflict resolution, communication and respect. Following the training, student PLAY leaders implement their new skills while they lead active and fun games on the playground. To request PLAY resources for your school, please contact your York Region Public Health Nurse or call York Region Health Connection at 1 800 361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933.

York Region Public Health's PLAY program links to elementary school curriculum expectations and supports the development of positive climates for learning in the [York Region District School Board](#) and the [York Catholic District School Board](#).

Physical Activity in Secondary Schools

Opportunities for secondary students to engage in physical activity are important for academic success and physical and mental well-being. A variety of resources and initiatives are outlined in a [Physical Activity Framework for Secondary Schools](#).

pause to PLAY

The annual spring *pause to PLAY* Challenge encourages students to put their TVs, gaming devices, smartphones, tablets and computers on “pause” for one full week and become more physically active through play. Parents can also join in with their kids at home!

Teachers and instructors can register their classrooms for the *pause to PLAY* Challenge with the chance to win prizes. Public Health Nurses will support classrooms, students, schools and parents with *pause to PLAY* posters, scoresheets, and tips during the challenge.

Check out these tips on reducing screen time at home:

- Place limits on screen time
- Avoid using screen-time as reward or punishment
- Role modelling by following these tips yourself
- Create screen-free bedrooms
- Turn screens off during meals
- Offer fun alternatives to screen time
- [Know how often you should be moving](#)
- Improve your [physical literacy](#)

Fact Sheets

- [pause to PLAY](#)
- [Tips to Reduce Screen Time](#)
- [Tips for Active Play](#)

For more information on the *pause to PLAY* challenge, please email York Region Public Health School Services at: schoolservices@york.ca