

# Daily Physical Activity Policy

**Division:** Programs

**Policy Name:** Daily Physical Activity Policy

**Effective:** September 2023

**Approved:** February 2023

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## Policy Statement:

NLSchools and the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (CSFP)<sup>1</sup>, are committed to providing students, staff and other members of the school community with an active, healthy school environment. Schools will support reducing sedentary behaviour of students (K-12) by increasing daily physical activity opportunities during the school day. Schools will also promote additional opportunities outside of the school day to encourage an active, healthy lifestyle for students.

School administrators and educators will provide thirty (30) minutes of light, moderate and/or vigorous physical activity during the school day for students (K-12) during instructional time. An additional thirty (30) minutes of light, moderate and/or vigorous physical activity will also be encouraged during non-instructional time. This may be offered at school, in collaboration with community recreation, sport, and/or health providers (e.g., before/after school, recess and lunch).

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## Background:

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (GNL) supports the creation of healthy school settings using a Health Promoting Schools (HPS) approach. As part of the HPS approach, GNL uses the Comprehensive School Health (CSH) framework as a planning tool to support “improvements in students’ educational outcomes while addressing school health in...an integrated and holistic way” ([Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health](#), 2023).

The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (2020) notes that CSH:

- Recognizes that healthy students learn better and achieve more;
- Understands that schools can directly influence students’ health and behaviours;
- Encourages healthy lifestyle choices, and promotes students’ health and wellbeing;
- Incorporates health into all aspects of school and learning;
- Links health and education issues and systems; and
- Needs the participation and support of families and the community at large.

Schools that adopt a CSH approach:

- Limit extended periods of sedentary time during the school day by incorporating active learning strategies in the classroom;

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<sup>1</sup> This policy pertains to schools operated under NLSchools and Conseil scolaire francophone provincial. Schools operated by bands or Indigenous Education Authorities, as well as private schools should follow their own policy for physical activity.

- Create supportive environments that encourage enjoyment of movement and a positive physical activity culture; and
- Create linkages with community recreation, sport, and health providers to assist in facilitating opportunities for students to be active.

Research shows that physical activity rates among school aged children 5-17 in Newfoundland and Labrador is the lowest in the country ([Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institution](#), 2018) and that, overall, Canadian children and youth are spending more than half of their day sedentary during school hours ([ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity of Children and Youth, 2018](#)).

The Department of Education, in collaboration with the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation and Health and Community Services, are engaged in improving student mental health and wellness. This work includes incorporating the comprehensive school health framework, continued implementation of Healthy Students, Healthy Schools, which supports the creation of healthy school environments for students to learn and foster healthy lifestyles, and the implementation of province-wide healthy eating and physical activity policies.

In 2016, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) released the [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth aged 5-17](#) which state that for optimal health benefits, children and youth should achieve high levels of physical activity, low levels of sedentary behaviour, and sufficient sleep each day.

According to the Guidelines, a healthy 24-hours for children and youth includes:

- Limited sitting for extended periods;
- Several hours of a variety of structured and unstructured light physical activities;
- Alternating indoor time for outdoor time;
- No more than two hours per day of recreational screen time;
- An accumulation of at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity involving a variety of aerobic activities;
- Vigorous physical activities and muscle and bone strengthening activities should be incorporated at least three days per week; and
- Uninterrupted 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night for those aged 5–13 years and 8 to 10 hours of sleep per night for those aged 14–17 years, while implementing consistent sleep and wake times.

Greater health benefits can be achieved by replacing sedentary behaviours and light physical activity with additional moderate to vigorous activity, trading indoor time for outdoor time and preserving sufficient sleep (CSEP, 2016). Each hour spent outdoors, is associated with seven more minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, 762 more daily steps and 13 fewer minutes of daily sedentary time (ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity of Children and Youth 2018).

As stated in the [Children’s Unstructured Play Position Statement by the Canadian Public Health Association](#) (2019), “Outdoor play and play at recess have also been

shown to strengthen problem solving and conflict resolution skills, while providing opportunities for social and emotional learning, such as the ability to control aggression and regulate feelings of anger and frustration”.

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**Scope:**

The Daily Physical Activity (DPA) Policy will support school-aged children and youth within the NLSchools and the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, to reduce sedentary behaviour by increasing indoor and outdoor physical activity opportunities at school and beyond the school day to positively impact their overall health and well-being.

School administrators and teachers will limit or break up the amount of time students are sedentary during instructional time by incorporating active learning strategies in the school day, which allows students to learn better, solve problems more creatively, and focus and concentrate on a task for a longer period of time ([Expert Statement on Physical Activity and Brain Health in Children and Youth, 2018](#)). This will also provide a safe and welcoming environment for students to learn and develop physical literacy skills at an early age, so they can continue to be physically active as they move into adulthood.

Through the DPA Policy, education on and promotion of reduced sedentary behaviour and active, healthy living, should be incorporated into school development plans and integrated into all aspects of curricular and co-curricular programs. Schools should prioritize making indoor and outdoor facilities and equipment available for students’ physical activity during and after school hours, as a means to continue to promote the importance of being active beyond the school time period. Schools should collaborate with community partners to offer no or low-cost community-based physical activity opportunities for children and youth. Shared-use agreements or partnerships that provide use of facilities and equipment between schools, municipalities or community groups is encouraged to support increased opportunities for students to be active.

Providing opportunities to be physically active at school, not only enhances students’ physical well-being, but also enhances their sense of belonging and connection to the school community. School administrators and teachers can embrace an inclusive school culture by inviting students and their families to share their culture about popular physical activities that take place from their community.

School administrators and teachers will also keep families informed on the importance of being active at home and in the community, outside of school hours. Schools should regularly promote physical activity opportunities to students and families, in collaboration with community partners. This may include encouraging active travel to and from school and making indoor and outdoor school facilities and equipment available for community-based physical activity programs, as a means to continue to promote the importance of participating in physical activity beyond the school day.

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## **Definitions:**

**Accessibility** - As defined in the Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology, accessibility is the quality of an environment that enables a person to access it with ease (NL Disability Policy Office, 2024-2026).

**Comprehensive School Health** – An internationally recognized approach to address school health in a planned, integrated, and holistic way in order to support improvements in student achievement and well-being (Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, 2023).

**Health Promoting School** – A health promoting school can be characterized as a school constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working (World Health Organization, [2023](#)).

**Healthy Students, Healthy Schools** – A province-wide initiative supported through the Departments of Tourism, Culture, Arts, and Recreation, Education, and Health and Community Services, with a mandate to support the creation of healthy schools for students to learn and foster healthy lifestyles by using a Comprehensive School Health approach.

**Inclusion** - The involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people (persons with disability, newcomers, racial or cultural minorities, etc.) are recognized. All people are valued for their differences, and the unique talents that they bring (Ferris State University, 2022).

**Instructional Time** – Instructional time for K-12 students, is determined by the Department of Education, NLSchools, and the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial for teaching and learning. Each school day is comprised of 5 hours or 300 minutes including all scheduled class activities, while excluding recess and lunch periods.

**Intercultural Understanding** - Involves learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognize commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect (Australian Curriculum, 2022).

**Light Intensity Physical Activity (LPA)** - Light intensity physical activities do not result in sweat production or shortness of breath. "Incidental activities" are typically light-intensity physical activities such as slow walking and mild stretching (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2020).

**Moderate Intensity Physical Activity (MPA)** – Moderate intensity physical activity is intense enough to elevate the heart rate. A person can talk but not sing during activities of this intensity. Examples: a brisk walk or gardening (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2020).

**Non-Instructional Time** – The time during the school day allotted for before and after school, as well as recess and lunch time.

**Physical Activity** – Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure, and increases heart rate and breathing (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2020).

**Physical Literacy** – The motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge, and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life (Physical Literacy Consensus Statement, 2015).

**School Community** – The students, school councils, parents and guardians, school administrators, staff, members of the broader community and partners including community recreation, sport, and health providers, as well as others who support the local school and students success.

**School Day** – The time that the first bell rings for class (inclusive of instructional time, recess, and lunch), until the last bell rings to go home.

**Sedentary Behaviour** – Any waking behaviour characterized by a low energy expenditure, while in a sitting, reclining or lying posture. Common behaviours that individuals typically engage in while sedentary include watching television or using other screen devices (e.g., computers, phones, iPads), sitting at a desk or on a couch, driving to work, or reading a book (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2020).

**Sedentary Time** – The time spent for any duration (e.g., minutes per day) or in any context (e.g., at school or work) in sedentary behaviour (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2020).

**Vigorous Intensity Physical Activity (VPA)** – Vigorous intensity physical activities will increase heart rate substantially, increase body temperature, and a person cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Examples: swimming or jogging (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2020).

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### **Policy Directives:**

- 1) School administrators will ensure that the recommended/required physical education and health time allocation, as outlined in the Department of Education Program of Studies, is incorporated into the school schedule.
- 2) Teachers will deliver the prescribed physical education and health curriculum as outlined in the Department of Education Curriculum Guides.
- 3) Teachers will interrupt extended amounts of sedentary time students (K-12) have by integrating movement activities in blocks of 10 to 15 minutes after every 60 minutes of being sedentary.
- 4) School administrators should incorporate strategies to limit sedentary time by incorporating more physical activity and movement concepts into school development plans, under the wellness and positive relationships determinant, to ensure that physical activity is valued and integrated into all aspects of curricular and co-curricular programs.

- 5) Teachers will use active learning strategies, to integrate thirty (30) minutes of light, moderate, and/or vigorous physical activity during instructional time each school day for all students (K-12). A thirty (30) minute or more physical education class could be used to meet the Daily Physical Activity Policy (instructional time) requirement on that day.
- 6) It is recommended that school administrators integrate thirty (30) minutes of a combination of light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity opportunities during non-instructional time periods (e.g., before/after school, recess and lunch) for all students (K-12). This may include providing students with opportunities to participate in outdoor active play during recess, offering an after school recreation program in partnership with a community recreation, sport or health provider, or offering an intramural program during lunch.
- 7) Schools will not use any reduction in physical activity or physical education time as a form of discipline for students or as a means to have a student complete school work (this includes not participating in active field trips).
- 8) Schools will promote messaging about reducing sedentary behaviours, increasing physical activity, and achieving good quality sleep to all members of the school community. This may include promoting the 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth to parents and caregivers to encourage movement at home (i.e., through newsletters or digital media) or by promoting the use of bicycle racks at the school to encourage active and safe modes of transportation. Schools will review [Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Inclusion and Accessibility Policies](#) for ways to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all communication materials.
- 9) School administrators will support the development and maintenance of indoor and outdoor school environments that provide inclusive, accessible, welcoming, safe, and developmentally appropriate physical activities for all students.
- 10) Administrators and teachers will consult with Service Delivery Teams, parents/guardians, and appropriate health professionals, when required, for additional guidance on ways to enhance meaningful participation of all students in physical activities throughout the school day.
- 11) It is recommended that teachers should avail of outdoor spaces and places to teach all areas of curriculum to support increased movement opportunities for students throughout the school day.
- 12) It is recommended school administrators collaborate and build partnerships with community recreation, sport, and health providers, to facilitate and provide physical activity opportunities for students to be active. This could include partnering with community providers to offer skating, swimming, cross-country ski programs, offering [School Sports NL Participation Nation programs](#), or offering special events such as International Walk to School Week or Terry Fox Runs.
- 13) School administrators and teachers should engage student voice in the planning process to determine the types of physical activity opportunities students would like

to see offered at school. The engagement process should be cognizant of cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, gender diversity, as well as the interests and abilities of all students, when offering physical activity opportunities at school.

- 14) School administrators and teachers will adapt and modify activities as needed, to ensure that all students have the ability to fully participate in meaningful activity. Community partners may be able to assist with accessing equipment through adaptive equipment loan programs or providing modification ideas to teachers and staff on ways to best accommodate the student(s).
- 15) It is recommended that schools offer and communicate ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers and students that will support increased knowledge and skills about physical activity and physical literacy, such as [Physical and Health Education Canada \(PHE Canada\) training and certification programs](#) and/or [National Coaching Certification Program \(NCCP\) Fundamental Movement Skills Course](#).
- 16) Schools will offer culturally relevant physical activity opportunities to ensure that all students have the ability to fully participate in meaningful activity, based on their ability, culture or religious backgrounds.
- 17) It is recommended teachers introduce a wide variety of activities performed in varying environments and contexts to help make physical activity and movement a life-long pursuit. Students will not be expected to bring physical activity equipment to school in order to participate in an activity. Activities will be centered towards what is accessible to students and no or low cost for students to fully participate in.
- 18) It is recommended that schools actively promote and offer school-wide and classroom based activities that instill a life-long commitment to active, healthy lifestyles.
- 19) It is recommended that schools make school facilities and equipment accessible for physical activity programs for students to participate in during non-instructional time, holidays, professional learning days, etc. as a means to continue to promote the importance of physical activity beyond the school day. Please refer to NLSchools' [Community Use of Schools Policies](#).

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**Resources:**

[Active Schools](#)

[Department of Education Program of Studies](#)

[Health Education Special Interest Council](#)

[Healthy Students, Healthy Schools](#)

[Inclusion and Accessibility Policies \(Government of Newfoundland and Labrador\)](#)

[Recreation NL](#)

[Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health](#)

[ParticipACTION](#)

[Physical and Health Education \(PHE\) Canada](#)

[Physical Education Special Interest Council](#)

[School Health Promotion Liaison Consultants](#)

[School Sports NL](#)

[Sport NL](#)

**Related Documents:**

[2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth:  
Canadian kids need to move more to boost their brain health](#)

[24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth \(5-17\)](#)

[A Common Vision For Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in  
Canada: Let's Get Moving!](#)

[Canadian Public Health Association Children's Unstructured Play Position Statement  
\(2019\)](#)

[Community Use of School Policy](#)

[Safe and Caring Schools Policy](#)