

Physical Activity Framework Presentation Recording

Hello, everyone. Today I will be sharing the Physical activity framework for Nova Scotia schools with you, as well as some of our background information and resources for doing this type of work within your schools.

The Physical Activity Framework is really part of some of the current priorities of the Nova Scotia government. When our new Conservative government came into power in 2021, they had some mandate items related to personal fitness opportunities, and as part of that was the Physical Activity Framework as well as the annual Healthy School Grants that started in the 2021-2022 school year and have continued annually since then. A more recent priority than the Physical Activity Framework is linked to the Nova Scotia Action for Health, which has six solutions to addressing issues with healthcare in Nova Scotia and the 6th solution focuses on addressing the factors affecting health and well being. So, this would include health promotion and public health initiatives and we see the Physical Activity Framework as fitting really well here, knowing that schools are ideal settings for health promotion, given that children spend a lot of time there. And they are quite ideal from an equity perspective because, again, we're able to reach almost all school age children and youth through our through the schools in our province.

So as I go through the Physical Activity Framework today, I'll remind you as you're listening, feel free to stand up and move around as much as you need.

During this presentation and any others, the specific action for the Physical Activity Framework comes out of something called Let's Get Moving Nova Scotia, which is an action plan for increasing physical activity in Nova Scotia and this action plan was released in 2018 and it's got a couple of goals. The second goal is about reaching Nova Scotians, where we learn, work and access health care.

So there's some background information in there that outlines that most Nova Scotian children and youth spend a large part of their day at schools.

Children need opportunities to move while at school, and these could include physical education, recess and lunch breaks, school and classroom design before and after school programs, active transportation initiatives, organized sport and recreation programs, and lessons that have movement integrated within them.

And one of the specific actions within that goal was to develop and implement a Physical Activity Framework for the education system based on the principles of Health Promoting Schools, which has been implemented in Nova Scotia since 2005 as a partnership between education and health systems.

We also know that when kids are active, they're healthier. In Canada, we have the 24 hour Movement Guidelines and there are similar guidelines around the world and what we know from the best available research is that when children are active for at least 60 minutes a day and they limit the amount of time they spent sedentary to less than two hours a day, we know that this can help children do better in school, improve self esteem and confidence, maintain a healthy body weight, improve their fitness, grow stronger, have fun playing with friends, feel happier, learn new skills and sleep.

Schools as a place where children spend time every day is an ideal setting to promote these healthy behaviors. And another reason we know we want to target

these behaviors is because we see that the levels across Canada, and worldwide, are generally quite low. So for example, we only see about 28% of Canadian children are meeting the physical activity guideline of 60 minutes a day, and only about 20% of children are meeting the sedentary behaviour guideline of less than two hours per day. And what we saw from research across the pandemic is that these activity levels actually got worse and we don't have good evidence yet to know if they've recovered. But I think arguably we can say that they haven't recovered. We weren't starting off in a great spot, so we see them go down, really focuses the energy on trying to improve these healthy behaviors.

When we look at how much activity children and youth in Nova Scotia report doing, we can do so through the Student Success Survey, which was administered with 60,000 students in May 2022. And keep in mind that this only includes students from grades 4 to 12, so we don't have information from the students in primary to grade 3. But when we look at the activity, we can see starting here with Off-Blocks which is in grade 7 to 12, only 37% of children reported getting any activity and any activity could be them reporting one minute or more. So, it could be quite low for some students. We see, again, not very many students getting activity during class time (39%), at school before classes begin (47%) and then we do see levels a bit better on the way to and from school, during recess, immediately after school, during lunch and in the evenings when we break down the data that we get from the Student Success survey. When we look at it a bit more between elementary junior and Senior High students, we think some of the key opportunities include on the way to and from school for all grades, at school before classes, begin during class time for all grades with a focus on Senior High (knowing it's a more difficult in some of those Senior High classes but still an opportunity), as well as during lunch breaks and off blocks for Senior High students.

So now we'll dive into what the Physical Activity Framework is. So this is what it looks like. We have it both in English as well as in French, and really what this framework is about is creating a culture of movement in schools. What we hope to achieve is that we're creating conditions for students to move more and sit less in schools, and this is rooted in a Health Promoting Schools approach, which means we're looking at a whole school, whole day approach to building healthier environments for students. So we want to provide equitable and inclusive opportunities for all students to reach their potential for learning, development and well being. And all students will be provided opportunities to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior throughout the school day.

So in terms of what these conditions would be, what we want to see when we are creating these conditions for students to move more is that we want to see increased opportunities for energetic movement. So, this is that moderate to vigorous physical activity, where students are moving around, they might be getting sweaty, their heart rates are going up.

We also want to see increased opportunities for structured and unstructured light activity. So that's activity that's a bit of a lower intensity than the energetic movement, but still extremely important throughout the day.

We want to reduce extended periods of sedentary behavior for all students. Ideally, at least every 30 minutes in elementary school and at least every 60 minutes

in Senior High. And we also want to see increased opportunities for all students to be outside during instructional time, knowing there are some unique benefits when students are outdoors, learning and generally with the outdoors brings more space and more opportunities for movement. So collectively, what we want this to achieve is that all students will be provided opportunities to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior throughout the school day.

To achieve this goal, we have 4 Focus Areas within the Framework: Inclusive, Physically Active School Communities, Movement during the School Day, Movement Before and After School, as well as Leadership, Collaboration, Capacity and Accountability.

So in terms of **Inclusive, Physically Active School Communities**, we have two main actions in here. The first would be ensuring that all students and school communities are included in being physically active, moving and reducing sedentary behavior. So this is where we think about those inclusion and equity pieces. How do we make sure every single student and school community member has those opportunities to move? I include here a link to a guide for creating inclusive playgrounds. In Nova Scotia, we have our inclusive education policy. Here is a guide for improving access to physical activity for newcomer youth. Our second action here is to engage community students, families, and school based teams, including teachers and school leaders, in designing, implementing and evaluating policies and programs to be physically active, moving more and reducing sedentary behavior. So thinking about those partnerships with schools, with community groups, and how they can help. In Nova Scotia, Kids Run Club partners with almost every elementary school to organize a running club every year as well as we have the UpLift Partnership, which works with engaging youth in Health Promoting Schools projects.

Our second Focus Area is **Movement During the School Day**. We want to look at creating opportunities for students to move more while learning indoors in all subject areas, as well as opportunities to move outdoors while learning in all subject areas. And we can do this through building and making use of outdoor classrooms. We have the Nova Scotia ASK project which is called active Smarter Kids, which is physically active learning primarily outdoors, but also can be done indoors. We can also look at some school-based screen time guidelines that remind us that screens in schools should be meaningful mentally and or physically active and serve a specific pedagogical purpose that enhances learning compared to alternative methods. So just because we have the option to use screens for many activities, doesn't mean we need to. We want to use them when they're the best tool for the job.

In addition, when we're looking at **Movement During the School Day**, we also have an action around creating opportunities for students to move more outside of instructional time as well as ensuring support for physical education. So while this Framework is focusing on the whole day and much more beyond physical education, we'd still want to see quality physical education that is inclusive and accessible to as many to all students in the school, and that they're getting as much time in that subject as is feasible and possible for them to ensure students are not only getting an opportunity to move and visit, but learning about movement, how to move, and why it's important for them, their bodies, and their lives. So a couple of

resources that can support this are a national position paper on recess on how we can make recess an idea time of the day for physical activity. We have a guide here about quality physical education from UNESCO, another guide about welcoming and engaging school physical education opportunities for girls, knowing that girls are traditionally less active than boys, as well as some cold weather recess planning for those winter months.

Our third area focus is **Movement Before and After School**. So here's where we really want to focus on students having the opportunity to move more through active school travel. So this would be walking, biking or wheeling to school, as well as providing opportunities for extracurricular activities and before and after school care that focuses on moving more. So thinking about innovative ways to get students walking and biking to school; it could be something like a walking school bus, or a bike bus. This idea, called Drive to 5, is where students may be dropped off 5 minute walk from school rather than right at the door so that they're still getting in some activity time. We can look at quality intramural programs, so making sure we're having intramurals that are inclusive and accessible to as many students as possible, and that we're running activities that lots of students want to be engaged in. Ideally, students are engaged in choosing what those activities are based on their current interests.

Our 4th theme is **Leadership, Collaboration, Capacity and Accountability**. We want to ensure sufficient intersectoral school community and system level support to implement the framework. Knowing this won't happen alone in each school without the support of the broader community, building supportive relationships within the education system and with partners from other fields of government and non government sectors to support schools, as well as improving our student physical activity, data monitoring, evaluation and research. Some ideas that could address these goals might be shared use agreements where schools are used for recreation after hours or on weekends. This is a guide out of the United Kingdom about Creating Active Schools, and it's a whole framework about sort of creating these active school communities. Partnering with researchers for physical activity surveillance. Consider adding the Physical Activity Framework to Student Success Planning or your System Improvement Plans or Well-being goals, whatever the goals, your school or region is using, thinking about how you can make the Physical Activity Framework a priority in there so that it's something all partners can recognize of importance to your school.

Some additional considerations with the Framework are the Nova Scotia inclusive Education Policy, so this framework aligns with the inclusive education policy and that all students should feel they are being that they belong in an inclusive school, accepted, safe and valued so they can best learn and succeed any activities being done need to be as inclusive and accessible as possible. We also have a consideration in there about learning with Wskitqamu, so this refers to what we previously referred to as land-based learning. So when students are outdoor, we want it to be quite meaningful that they're embracing authentic learning opportunities to connect the heart, body, mind and spirit to the gifts the Earth provides. And our last consideration is around the Pre-Primary program. So some of the pre primary requirements in terms of being outside exceed those goals of the framework. Those

would take precedence in this age group.

Moving forward with our Physical Activity Framework, we have an excellent resource page on the Nova Scotia curriculum page that can be accessed with resources about general physical activity, funding opportunities, the Physical Activity Framework and general Health Promoting Schools, we're doing lots of knowledge exchange presentations like this one to quite a few school community partners, as well as working on some evaluation. School principals are filling out a survey this fall, and they'll do it again in the spring for us to see what types of physical activity opportunities are getting offered and also hoping to do some interviews or story sharing with schools and regions about how this framework might be changing.

And this is a screenshot of what our Physical Activity Framework resource page looks like, and once you're on it, you'll be able to scroll through and look for different resources and that fit within the different goals and focus areas of the framework. And we have the page available both in English and in French.

So when you're done listening to this presentation, what I want you to think about are what might be the immediate next steps for your school across the four focus areas that we have. How can your school create more opportunities through inclusive, physically active school communities, movement during the school day movement before and after school, as well as leadership, collaboration, capacity and accountability? And I urge you to take a couple of minutes right now to write down what those immediate next steps are.

What is it you think that you can do for your school or what are some immediate ideas that would work well for your school? Knowing each school is a little bit different, and each school's needs and readiness are also different. Think about what might work best for your school.

Thank you for listening today.

Feel free to reach out to me at hilary.caldwell@novascotia.ca should you have any questions or looking for any more support.