
Polar Bear Recess

green
ACTION
centre

Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS)

ASRTS is a set of programs and services coordinated by Green Action Centre to reverse the trend of driving children to school.

WHAT WE DID IN 2019 – 2020

Through innovative programs and support of local champions, more kids are biking and walking to school. Here are some of our accomplishments from this past year.

22

**NEW BIKE RACKS DISTRIBUTED
TO SCHOOLS**

146

**SCHOOLS REGISTERED FOR
WALKING AND BIKING
INITIATIVES**

750

**STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN
CLEAN AIR DAY**

Benefits of Active School Travel

- Healthier, happier students
 - Cleaner air
 - Calmer streets
 - Better learning
 - More cohesive communities
 - Lower CO2 emissions
-

Polar Bear Recess

Outdoor recess, everyday!

Policies vary across the country



Often, it's not the kids that want to stay in...

Too cold?: student wants to revive 'polar bear' recesses

Saskatoon / 650 CKOM

Chris Vandembreekel

January 14, 2018 06:56 am



Kira Mathies, 9, holds a petition she started to revive Lakeridge School's "polar bear club" to allow frigid outdoor recesses.

(Chris Vandembreekel/650 CKOM)

<https://www.ckom.com/2018/01/14/too-cold-student-wants-to-revive-polar-bear-recesses/>

“You’ll find even on blizzard days, if the temperature reaches -50C with the wind chill - they’re outside playing.”

Doug Workman, Iqaluit District Education Authority

Why play in the snow?



Better mental and physical health

Children aren't getting enough physical activity

Physical Activity

- Grade: D+
- 39% of 5- to 17-year-olds in Canada meet the physical activity recommendation within the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth (2016-17 CHMS, Statistics Canada).^{Custom analysis}
- 41% of 5- to 19-year-olds take at least 12,000 steps daily on average, which approximates the physical activity recommendation within the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth (2018 CANPLAY, CFLRI).³



D +

Children aren't getting enough physical activity

Active Play

- Grade: F
- 21% of 5- to 11-year-olds in Canada spend several hours (> 1.5 hours) a day in unorganized physical activity, according to their parents (2016-17 CHMS, Statistics Canada).^{Custom analysis}
- Children and youth in grades 6 to 10 in Canada report playing outdoors for 15 minutes per day, on average (2018 HBSC, PHAC).^{Custom analysis}



Children aren't getting enough physical activity

Sedentary Behaviours

- Grade: D+
- There is considerable variability by dataset and age group in the proportion of children and youth in Canada who meet the screen time recommendation made by the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth:
- 76% of 5- to 11-year-olds (2016-17 CHMS, Statistics Canada),^{Custom analysis} with more girls than boys in this age group meeting the recommendation (80% vs. 71%) (2016-17 CHMS, Statistics Canada)^{Custom analysis}
- 28% of 12- to 17-year-olds (2016-17 CHMS, Statistics Canada),^{Custom analysis} with more girls than boys in this age group meeting the recommendation (30% vs. 25%) (2016-17 CHMS, Statistics Canada)^{Custom analysis}



Why play in the snow?



Better mental and physical health

Better learning and academic success

Time outdoors and physical activity are linked to concentration and academic success

“Even 15 minutes of recess a day can contribute to better classroom behaviour and empathy for peers”

- Canadian Public Health Association

Why play in the snow?



Better mental and physical health

Better learning and academic success

Healthy independence

There's more...



Teaches dressing for the weather

Healthier, happier kids

Lays the foundation for walking to school year-round

How

Step 1: Choose a model

INFORMAL RECESS

School-wide recess, at discretion of administration

- e.g. temperature is below -27 with windchill, but wind is minimal and it is very sunny
 - recess can be shortened on very cold days
-

How

Step 1: Choose a model

FORMAL CLUB

Opt-in programs with parent permission

- tied to specific temperatures (e.g. below -27, only polar bear kids can go out)

How

Step 2: Communication and Education

Communicate with parents and guardians

Educate students about:

- proper clothing
 - benefits of being outside
 - potential risks
-

Case Study: Recess

Lord Selkirk School Division

St. Andrews School

Parent permission required

Staff support and capacity for the club

Students educated on benefits/ risks

Students can choose to stay in or go inside at any time

Students checked for appropriate clothing

Cancelled at -40, with or without windchill

Case Study: Club

Pembina Trails School Division

Pacific Junction School

Parents opt in through Permission Click software

Limited to grades 1+; biggest uptake in grades 3+

Kids can choose to stay in or go inside at any time

Kids checked for appropriate clothing

Cancelled at -40, with or without windchill

Case Study: Club

Pembina Trails School Division

Pacific Junction School

Communication:

Students designed posters to share new program with parent and guardians

Information on school website



Polar Bear Club

In the month of February we will be starting up the "Polar Bear Club" at Pacific Junction. The Polar Bear club is a program that allows students to continue outdoor recess in cold temperatures. Between the temperatures of -27 and -40 degrees Celsius, schools across Canada have started the Polar Bear recess, or a Polar Bear club, that recognizes how valuable outdoor play is for student health and their readiness to learn. In order to participate, students are required to have appropriate clothing and parent permission. Students must have the following items:

1. A warm toque
2. Snowpants
3. A warm, insulated jacket
4. Mittens
5. Warm, insulated Boots

A Permission Click form will be sent out next week. Once you have agreed to have your child participate, your child will be able to go out with the supervising teacher/s during temperature that are below -27 degrees Celsius.

Please refer to this link/file below for additional information about Polar Bear Club. <http://greenactioncentre.ca/at-school/polar-bear-recess/>

Club or Recess, the goal is the same

More kids playing outside, more often!

**Ask us for guidance and support.
asrts@greenactioncentre.ca**

