

## Nurture with Nature!



How can parents help:

- Start slow and make it a family goal to have at least 15 minutes of “green time” a day, even if that just means a walk together outside. Role modeling is essential to fostering a child’s positive connection to nature.
- Advocate for more time outside for your children at school, be it through extra gym classes outside or making outdoor learning a part of the other class lessons.
- Don’t let the cold or snow stop you in Alberta! Many communities have free access to a variety of outdoor activities – Just make sure to bundle up!

Nurturing your child with nature is an easy way to improve their entire well-being. For more information and ideas, visit the Children and Nature Network at [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org).

Reconnecting kids with nature has been shown to help children focus in school, boost a positive attitude and increase physical activity. Children are certainly losing touch with the outdoors—a Canadian study shows that the number of kids who play outside at school decreases from 87% to 17% between grades 3 and 11. Seventy percent of youth spend an hour or less outdoors daily.

The effects of exposing and connecting children to nature are widespread and valuable. School grounds made greener by planting trees, building ponds and fostering gardens increases physical activity in elementary school children. Even having green space nearby has been shown to temper stressful life events in younger kids. Just 20 minutes walking in a park could ease ADHD symptoms and significantly improve concentration.

### Does your child's school have an AMA Youth Run Club?

The Alberta Medical Association (AMA) and Ever Active Schools have brought a free, award-winning program for school-aged children to Alberta schools. We can provide your school with resources and support – from scratch or to enrich an existing run club. Learn about how to get your child's school involved at [www.everactive.org/alberta-medical-association-youth-run-club](http://www.everactive.org/alberta-medical-association-youth-run-club).

## Physical Literacy and Safe, Healthy, Active Kids

We’ve all heard that becoming literate in reading, math, writing and science is essential for children to be successful in life but did you know that it is just as important for your child to be physically literate. Physical literacy means children are competent and confident with movement and sport skills such as running, throwing, catching, skipping, balancing and jumping.

Sport and recreation injuries account for 40% of all injury related emergency room visits in school aged children. We can help reduce that rate by promoting physical literacy education in schools. Research shows that children who are physically literate are much less likely to be injured while playing sports. Children who stay safe while being active are also more likely to continue to have energetic, healthy lifestyles in adulthood.

Children learn to be physically literate in much the same way they learn to read and write. It’s a process of learning and developing skill over time with concepts building on one another other at each grade level. Just like other school subjects some children will find the concepts easy to grasp while others may require longer periods of time and extra help to become skilled.

School physical education programs offer all children the opportunity to learn movement and sport skills necessary to become physically literate. Curriculums are specially designed to ensure fundamental skills, knowledge and attitudes are developed. Provincial safety guidelines for physical activity have been developed to provide teachers with resources necessary to keep children safe during instructional practices. Talk to your child about how important gym class is and follow their progress with their teacher. The skills they learn in physical education class will keep them safe, healthy and happy for a lifetime.