

NB PLAYS! *Preschool*

A RESOURCE FOR QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMMING



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Positive Mental Health	6
Healthy Eating	20
Physical Activity	30
Community Connections	42
Outdoor Adventures	48
Learning Experiences	68
Closing	72
Contact Us	75



NB PLAYS! PRESCHOOL

NB PLAYS! has a game plan for creating a healthier, happier province through quality early learning programming.

INTRODUCTION

NB PLAYS! is a New Brunswick-led initiative developed by Recreation New Brunswick. It promotes a blended approach to out of school programming with the goal of healthy, holistic development for children and youth.

NB PLAYS! recommends that positive mental health practices be embedded in programming and time be allocated for physical activity, healthy eating, community connections and learning experiences. NB PLAYS! also considers time outside to be a key element in developing healthy, happy children and youth.

NB PLAYS! Preschool aims to foster healthy and active living at an early age by supporting balanced early learning programming. Early childhood is a critical time for establishing healthy behaviours and patterns that will carry over into later childhood, adolescence and adulthood.



This **Preschool PLAYBOOK** is designed for you, front-line leaders and early childhood educators in early learning and child care programs in New Brunswick. It highlights essential aspects of quality preschool programming and provides you with information, recommendations, resources and activities.

To encourage the healthy development of children and youth, NB PLAYS! promotes a blended approach to programming that fosters overall wellbeing and helps instill lifelong healthy habits. NB PLAYS! recommends placing emphasis on positive mental health, physical activity, healthy eating, community connections and learning experiences. The outdoors is considered an ideal environment to offer enriching opportunities within each of these elements.

For the purposes of this resource, the term early childhood educator refers to all who work with young children and families in early learning and child care programs (e.g. community day care homes, child and family programs, preschool centres, etc.).





POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Positive mental health is our capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.



It's never too early to promote positive mental health. Its foundations are shaped by our earliest experiences. Children undergo tremendous developmental changes before entering elementary school. In addition to physical and cognitive development, they experience great social and emotional — or mental health — gains during these early years. This interconnected development lays the foundation for lifelong learning, healthy relationships and positive contributions to society. As an early childhood educator, you have the opportunity to provide a positive environment. Nurturing and responsive care can guide the development of children's self-confidence, resilience and overall mental well-being.



DID YOU KNOW? Emotional resilience developed during the preschool years is associated with significantly lower levels of anxiety and depression in later childhood.

(Children's Health Policy Centre)

RECOMMENDATIONS

NB PLAYS! Preschool recommends that positive mental health be considered in all early learning and child care programming. Adopting a child-centered approach helps lay the foundations of positive mental health—feelings of competency, autonomy, relatedness and generosity. There is no one way to apply a child-centered, positive mental health approach, but the following principles should be considered:

- All children have unique strengths, knowledge and the right to develop their potential
- The best interests of children are paramount in all decisions affecting them
- The views and voices of children are considered and respected in decision-making
- The engagement and empowerment of children is essential to their positive development
- Positive relationships with children are characterized by respect, trust and compassion
- Positive social environments, including early learning settings, benefit children's mental health

RESOURCES

For more information about promoting positive mental health in your program, check out:

- » Canadian Mental Health Association. *Children*. wmha.ca/mental-health/your-mental-health/children
- » Children's Health Policy Centre. *Children's Mental Health Research Quarterly*. www.childhealthpolicy.ca/the-quarterly
- » GNB Education and Early Childhood Development. *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care*. www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/elcc/content/curriculum/curriculum_framework.html



Take Five Breathing Exercise

Materials:

- Soothing music (optional)

Objectives:

- Manage big emotions
- Calm down before or after an activity
- Build awareness of the breath

Instructions:

1. Find a comfortable seated position.
2. Open one hand and stretch your fingers out like a star. Pretend the pointer finger of your other hand is a pencil and imagine you are going to trace around the outline of your stretched out hand.
3. Start at the bottom of your thumb and slide your pointer finger up your thumb, pause at the top, and then slide your finger down the other side. Now slide your pointer up your second finger, pause, and slide down the other side. Continue slowly tracing your fingers up, pausing at the top before making your way down the other side. Keep going until you have finished tracing your pinky finger.
4. Now you are ready to add some breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Remember to keep it slow and steady. If breathing through your nose is a challenge, imagine you are

smelling a beautiful flower or your favourite food as you breathe in, and then breathe out with a big sigh because it smelt so nice.

5. Place your pointer finger at the bottom of your thumb, and breathe in as you slide your finger up your thumb, pause at the top, and breathe out as you slide your finger down the other side. Breathe in as you slide up your second finger, and breathe out as you slide down the other side. Keep going until you have finished tracing your fingers and you have taken five slow breaths.

Variations:

- Instead of using your hand to slide your finger along, trace an outline of your hand on a piece of card stock and then trace your finger along the outline. You can create a textured outline or cut out the shape, if that works better for you.

Reflection:

- How does your body feel now?
- Do you feel calm or would you like to take another five?



FUN IDEA: Together, lie on the floor facing the ceiling and have everyone place their hands on their tummies. Take deep breaths and watch hands move up and down. Ask children to imagine that their tummies are big waves rising and falling in the ocean.



Mindful Breathing Wands

Materials:

- Toilet paper or paper towel roll; tape, markers, stickers, glitter or other decorative items; and streamers or thin ribbon that is light enough to be moved easily by your breath

Objectives:

- Mindfulness
- Build awareness of the breath

Instructions:

1. Take a toilet paper or paper towel roll, cut off the top (about an inch thick) and set aside.
2. Cut a straight line lengthwise, all the way up the remainder of the roll.
3. Use this cut to tighten the roll. Overlap the two long edges of the roll, making the tube narrower, and then secure with tape on the top and bottom. This will be the wand's handle.
4. Decorate the handle with markers, stickers, glitter or whatever you have on hand.
5. Tape strands of light decorative ribbon along the inside of the small ring you cut off earlier.

6. Tape the ring on top of the thinner roll like an “O” to complete the wand.
7. Breathe into the wand and notice what happens.

Variations:

- Instead of using the suggested materials, get creative and try making a wand with any craft materials you have on hand.

Reflection:

- What do you notice when you breathe into the wand?
- Your breath is one of your body's special clues about how you are feeling inside. What do you think fast breathing means about how you are feeling? What about slow breathing?



DID YOU KNOW? Having children focus on their breathing is a wonderful way to switch off responses to stress. It brings the body back into balance, lengthening and deepening the breath and slowing down the heart rate, while harnessing the need to move with an action that requires focus and provides sensory feedback to our brains. Best of all, breathing is simple, enjoyable, free and you can do it anywhere, anytime!



Simple Yoga Series

Materials:

- Yoga mat (optional)

Objectives:

- Manage feelings
- Build focus
- Increase strength, balance and flexibility
- Enhance body awareness

Instructions:

1. Ensure that you have enough space to move freely and keep in mind that all movements should be gentle and feel comfortable.
2. As you move through a flow of the following five yoga poses, you can pretend to be a surfer, tree, skier, dog and owl. You are also encouraged to state the “I am...” statements that correspond with each pose.
3. To do **Warrior 2 Pose** from a standing position, step one foot back, placing the foot so that it is facing slightly outwards. Lift your arms up so that they are parallel to the ground. From here, bend your front knee and look forward. Pretend to be a surfer and use your strength to catch tricky waves. “I am strong.”
4. To do **Tree Pose** from a standing position, lift one leg and bend your knee so that you can place the sole of your foot above or below the knee of the standing leg. Balance here, raising your arms above your head if possible. Pretend to be a tree and sway with the breeze. Your kindness offers shade to others, cleans the air and provides homes to animals. “I am kind.”
5. To do **Chair Pose** from a standing position, place your feet hip-width apart and bend your knees, like you are sitting into an imaginary chair, keeping a straight back. Lift your arms out in front of you and raise them toward the sky. Pretend to grasp ski poles as you fly down a mountain like a brave and fearless skier. “I am brave.”
6. To do **Downward-Facing Dog Pose** from a standing position, bend down and place your palms flat on the ground in front of you. Step your feet back to create an upside-down “V” shape with your bum high in the air. Gently straighten your legs, relax your head and neck, and look down between your legs. Pretend to be a happy and friendly dog. You can even wag your tail! “I am friendly.”
7. To do **Hero Pose** from a standing position, slowly lower your knees to the ground and come down to rest upright on your heels. Pretend to be a wise owl perched in a tree. You can gently twist your upper body one way and then the other to look out into the night. “I am wise.”
8. Once you are comfortable with the yoga poses and sequence, you can take deep breaths in and out during each pose, to further help calm the body and mind.





Variations:

- Start by practicing only one yoga pose at a time.
- Once you master this simple yoga series, branch out and add more poses to your repertoire.

Reflection:

- How did you feel when you were moving through the different poses?
- How do you feel after having done the whole simple yoga series?
- What does it mean to be strong/kind/brave/friendly/wise?



FUN IDEA: Combine yoga poses and movements with storytelling to actively engage children and immerse them in the experience in a more meaningful way.





Expressing Emotions Through Art

Materials:

- Various art supplies (paint, paint brushes, markers, crayons, pencils, paper, etc.), newspaper, notebooks, and music

Objectives:

- Cope with strong emotions
- Provide an outlet for creativity

Instructions:

1. Line the tables and floor in your art space with newspaper to protect them from any stray paint or marks.
2. Try one of the following ideas to use art to cope with strong emotions. Keep in mind that the purpose of this artwork is not visual appeal, but emotional outlet.
3. Draw a **Feelings Picture** to help express your emotions without words. Set yourself up in front of a piece of blank paper with whatever art supplies you have on hand, and without thinking, just start! Scribble. Draw. Splash. Stamp. Whatever! Allow the emotion to flow out and onto the page.
4. Start an **Art Journal** to record your thoughts and feelings with pictures rather than words. As you start making regular entries, you will be able to reflect upon past emotions that came and went.

5. Ditch colouring books and **Doodle** freely instead. Let your creativity soar and remember that there are no rules. Find a blank sheet of paper and something to draw with to begin soothing your busy mind.
6. If you are having trouble expressing yourself through drawings and pictures, try **Dance!** Again, there are no rules. Try putting on some fun music and moving your body in new and interesting ways for one whole minute to help shake off any negative emotions.
7. Reflect on the artistic process and the work you created.

Variations:

- Take risks and try out any style of art you would like.
- Take art outside and incorporate natural elements into your works.

Reflection:

- How does your picture mean to you?
- How did it feel to create?



DID YOU KNOW? Early childhood mental health refers to the ability of children to experience, control and express their emotions, form close and secure relationships, and learn while exploring their environment. These abilities are fostered and grow within the context of a positive caregiving environment. (Saskatchewan Prevention Institute)



Empathy Bead Bracelet

Materials:

- A variety of beads and pipe cleaners

Objectives:

- Develop empathy
- Build social-emotional awareness and self-awareness

Instructions:

1. Before beginning work with the beads, have a conversation about the feelings we all share. See how many different emotions you can identify.
2. Start sorting through your beads and try to choose a certain size or colour bead to represent each emotion you talked about. This might not look the same for everyone.
3. Once you have assigned a bead to each emotion you talked about, you can begin threading them onto the pipe cleaner to represent all of the ways you feel each day or just once in a while.
4. Continue adding beads to the pipe cleaner until you feel it is complete and can be formed into a bracelet.

Variations:

- Make your bracelet from different coloured threads, instead of beads.
- Try making necklaces, anklets or zipper pulls.

Reflection:

- Do others share feelings similar to yours?
- Do you always show how you are feeling? Why or why not?
- How do you show the feelings you included in your bracelet?



TIP: Help children discover what they have in common with others. Use everyday opportunities to point out the similarities we all share and encourage empathy.





HEALTHY EATING

Healthy eating refers to eating a variety of nutritious foods from all four food groups that give us the nutrients we need to learn, grow, feel good and have energy.



Healthy eating is necessary for healthy development. Offering young children nutritious foods that nurture their bodies and fuel their development helps them form lifelong healthy eating habits. These habits are also influenced by the mealtime experience, as well as other food-related activities like gardening, cooking or visiting a local farm. As an early childhood educator, you can help foster healthy eating routines by offering a variety of nourishing choices for the children in your program, engaging them in food-related learning experiences and setting the stage for positive and mindful mealtimes.



DID YOU KNOW? Infants, toddlers and preschoolers all let us know when they are hungry. The way we respond to their cues will help them be comfortable with eating a variety of foods and respect their own feelings of hunger or fullness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NB PLAYS! Preschool recommends that healthy eating be incorporated into early learning and child care programming as part of a holistic approach. Holistic programming that encourages healthy eating supports the healthy growth and development of children. There is no one way to promote healthy eating, but the following recommendations should be considered:

- Make water available for children at all times and serve it along with meals and snacks
- Include all four food groups in meals served to children
- Include vegetables or fruit and at least one other food group in snacks served to children
- Eliminate sugar sweetened drinks (pop, juice cocktails, sports drinks, etc.)
- Limit processed foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, such as cookies, chips and candy
- Avoid using food as a reward or punishment
- As an early childhood educator, model healthy eating by making nutritious food choices
- Offer children a variety of nutritious food choices
- Give children a choice of which healthy foods they want to eat, and how much of them

RESOURCES

For more information about promoting healthy eating in your program, check out:

- » Dietitians of Canada. *Children*.
www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Children.aspx
- » EatRight Ontario. *How to Build a Healthy Preschooler*.
www.eatrightontario.ca/en/articles/child-toddler-nutrition/how-to-build-a-healthy-preschooler#.V3vA9LgrKUK
- » GNB Education and Early Childhood Development. *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care*.
www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/elcc/content/curriculum/curriculum_framework.html
- » GNB Social Development. *CHEFS!*
www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/social_development/wellness/content/chefs.html
- » Growing Minds. *Cooking with Preschool Children*.
www.growing-minds.org/documents/cooking-with-children-in-li-censed-child-care.pdf
- » Healthy Beginnings for Preschoolers 2-5. *Healthy Eating & Sugar Sweetened Beverages*.
www.healthybeginningspreschoolers.ca
- » Healthy Start.
www.healthystartkids.ca



Colour of the Day

Materials:

- Vegetables or fruits from each colour group (e.g. red, yellow/orange, blue/purple, green, white/brown); paper and markers; and crayons or coloured pencils

Objective:

- Introduce a wide variety of vegetables and fruits

Instructions:

1. With your group, organize the snack menu so that each day of the week features a different colour vegetable or fruit (i.e. red on Monday, yellow/orange on Tuesday, blue/purple on Wednesday, green on Thursday and white/brown on Friday).
 - Red: beets, red apples, watermelon, strawberries, tomatoes, red peppers, etc.
 - Yellow/orange: oranges, apricots, carrots, mangoes, cantaloupes, etc.
 - Blue/purple: purple cabbage, blueberries, purple grapes, plums, etc.
 - Green: lettuce, green beans, cucumbers, peas, avocados, spinach, broccoli, etc.
 - White/brown: bananas, cauliflower, mushrooms, brown pears, etc.
2. Before serving the snack each day, have a discussion about the colour you are about to eat and see if you can come up with other items that are the same colour.

3. Add some blank paper and markers to the mix and draw all of the fruits and vegetables of that colour you can think of.

Variations:

- If children bring their own snack, have them identify the colour of the fruit or vegetables in their lunch bag and see how many colours you have as a group.

Reflection:

- Was it easy to find vegetables and fruits of every colour?
- What is your favourite colour to eat?

Adapted from *Healthy Eating & Sugary Drinks* by Healthy Beginnings for Preschoolers 2-5, 2014.



TIP: Talk about healthy foods — describe them and respond positively to children’s reactions. Show children how to share the responsibility of community food activities like preparing, serving, eating and cleaning up. Children want to learn new things and want to help. Share your enthusiasm for healthy eating, and the wonder and joy of discovering new foods.





FUN IDEA: Offer healthy food or food alternatives at birthdays and group celebrations. On their birthday, let children choose to act as the leader of the day, wear a birthday crown, be a special helper, choose a game for everyone to play or select background music for the group. For group celebrations, instead of feasting on snacks high in sugar, salt or fat, consider creating a vegetable and fruit mosaic, fruit and yogurt parfaits or mini whole grain muffins.



TIP: Encourage children (and their families) to pack a reusable water bottle each day.





TIP: Focus on the positive. Avoid using language like good and bad when describing different foods. Instead, talk about healthy foods that we should eat often, and other foods that we should only eat sometimes.



Chef's Choice

Materials:

- None

Objective:

- Encourage healthy eating choices

Instructions:

1. Open a discussion with children about some of their favourite healthy dishes or individual foods.
2. Select one or two children to start in the middle of the play space as the *Chefs*. Have the remaining children line up at one end of the area.
3. Have the *Chefs* call out one of their favourite healthy foods. If there are two *Chefs*, they can decide on one together or take turns calling.
4. If any of the other children also like this food, they have to run to the other end of the play space without getting tagged by a *Chef*. If they get tagged, they become a *Chef*.
5. Play until almost everyone is tagged and has had a turn being the *Chef*.

Variations:

- If space is limited, set this game up like musical chairs. When the *Chef* calls out a food, everyone who likes it stands up and finds a new place to sit. The last child to find a seat becomes the *Chef*.

Reflection:

- If there were any unhealthy foods called, discuss why they are not healthy choices and why they might be only *sometimes* foods.
- Were any foods called that you have never tried before?
- What is the group's favourite healthy food?

Adapted from *Healthy Eating & Sugary Drinks* by Healthy Beginnings for Preschoolers 2-5, 2014.



TIP: Use food-free rewards for positive behaviour. These might include high fives, extra time for free play or choice of the next activity.



FUN IDEAS FOR HEALTHY SNACKS:

- Quartered grapes and whole wheat crackers
- Cooked and chilled carrot sticks with hummus
- Fruit and yogurt parfaits
- Cucumber slices with cheese cubes
- Frozen bananas dipped in yogurt
- Orange wedges and multigrain cereal
- Fruit smoothies
- Hard boiled eggs and cucumber slices



Mystery Food Box

Materials:

- Cardboard box, hand towel to cover the top of the box, mysterious vegetables and fruit, knife and cutting board

Objectives:

- Encourage children to learn about and try new vegetables and fruits.

Instructions:

1. Choose any healthy food to secretly put into your mystery box. Vegetables or fruit with a hard peel (e.g. avocado, kiwi, melon, squash, etc.) work best.
2. Ask children to come up and one by one and feel the hidden mystery food. Have them describe the shape and texture, and guess what it might be.
3. Once everyone has had a turn, remove the food and observe its shape and colour together.
4. Ask the children to identify the food and see if they know what food group it belongs to. 5. After guessing what it might look like, cut the food in half to observe its inside. Together, check out the texture and colour, and look for its seeds, pit or core.
5. Wash and prepare the food in a dish, serve and enjoy together.

Variations:

- If you run out of vegetables and fruit, try using whole wheat pastas, kidney beans or chickpeas.

Reflection:

- Have you eaten this food before?
- What can you make using this food?
- Are there any other new foods you would like to try?

Adapted from *Healthy Eating & Sugary Drinks* by Healthy Beginnings for Preschoolers 2-5, 2014.



DID YOU KNOW? Chopping, squeezing, spreading and mixing are all cooking skills that help develop a child's fine motor control and hand-eye coordination.



TIPS FOR MAKING WATER EXCITING:

- Make fun shaped ice cubes using store bought molds or thoroughly cleaned household items
- Serve water in silly cups or personally decorated water bottles
- Add slices of lime, cucumber, strawberries or melon for flavour
- Add frozen chunks of fruit for flavour and to keep water cool

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is all about moving our bodies. For young children this may be as simple as climbing a tree, exploring new environments or playing freely with others.



For healthy growth and development, young children should be engaging in a variety of physical activities in diverse environments for at least three hours every day. This will help them maintain a healthy body weight, develop fundamental movement skills, increase fitness, build a healthy heart, boost self-confidence and improve focus. The earlier children engage in regular physical activity and learn its importance, the more likely they will be to incorporate it into their everyday lives in the future. As an early childhood educator, you have the opportunity to provide children with positive physical activity experiences by focusing on inclusion, unstructured and outdoor play, fundamental movement skills and fun!



DID YOU KNOW? The Coaching Association of Canada identifies the following as Fundamental Movement Skills: Throwing; Catching; Jumping; Striking; Running; Kicking; and Agility, balance and coordination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NB PLAYS! Preschool recommends that physical activity be incorporated into early learning and child care programming as part of a holistic approach. Holistic programming that includes physical activity supports the healthy growth and development of children. There is no one way to promote physical activity, but the following recommendations should be considered:

- Ensure that children are physically active for at least three hours each day
- Include at least one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity (activity which increases heart and breathing rates) each day
- Provide a safe and engaging environment for unstructured play
- Offer a variety of settings for physical activity to take place, including the outdoors
- Encourage the development of Fundamental Movement Skills in all physical activity
- Adapt physical activity, when necessary, to include all children
- Focus on participation, not competition
- Use active transportation whenever possible

RESOURCES

For more information about promoting physical activity in your program, check out:

- » Active For Life. *Activities*.
www.activeforlife.com/activities
- » Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. *Physical Activity Guidelines for the Early Years*.
www.csep.ca/cmfiles/guidelines/csep_paguidelines_early-years_en.pdf
- » Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. *Physical Activity in Early Childhood*.
www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/documents/parenting_2011-04.pdf
- » GNB Education and Early Childhood Development. *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care*.
www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/elcc/content/curriculum/curriculum_framework.html
- » Gymnastics New Brunswick. *Active Kids Toolkit*.
www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.201030.Active_Kids_Toolkit__Training_Program.html
- » Physical & Health Education Canada. *Fundamental Movement Skills*.
www.phcanada.ca/programs/physical-literacy/what-physical-literacy/fundamental-movement-skills



Scarf Tails

Materials:

- Two scarves or handkerchiefs per child

Intensity:

- Moderate to Vigorous

Setting:

- Indoor or Outdoor

Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Running; Agility, balance and coordination

Set Up:

- Find or create a large play space free of hazards and create boundaries if necessary.

Instructions:

1. Hand out two scarves to every child and have them tuck the scarves into their back pockets or the waistband of their pants, as if they were tails.
2. Explain to the group that the purpose of the game is to gather as many scarf tails as possible from other children in the group, while trying to keep their own scarf tails attached. If a child catches a scarf tail, they are to run it back to the leader and place it in a pile before

continuing the game. Once a child loses both scarf tails, they are out. The last child with a scarf tail is the winner!

3. Have children spread out around the play space before starting the game.

Variations:

- Start the game with more than two scarves per child.
- To keep the game going, have players who are out complete 5 to 10 jumping jacks to earn back a scarf and re-join the game.
- Instead of placing stolen scarves in a pile, have children add them to their back pocket and see who can collect the most.





Counting Moves

Materials:

- Chalk, paved area to write on and beanbag

Intensity:

- Moderate

Setting:

- Outdoor

Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Throwing; Jumping; Agility, balance and coordination

Set Up:

- With chalk, draw a large circle and divide it into five sections. Label the sections with the numbers 1 through 5.

Instructions:

1. Have children stand along the edge of the circle.
2. Demonstrate how the game works, by tossing the beanbag into the circle and saying the number of the block that the beanbag lands in. Ask everyone in the group to do that many of a movement of your choice. For example, if your beanbag lands on the number 2, you could ask everyone to do 2 star jumps.

3. Repeat this a few different times to demonstrate a few different movements (e.g. sky stretches, toe touches, bunny hops, etc.).
4. Allow children to take turns tossing the beanbag into the circle and calling out their own moves.

Variations:

- In the winter, create the circle in an indoor space using masking tape.
- Once the children have practiced tossing the beanbag into the circle, ask them to take a few steps back to make things more challenging.



FUN IDEAS TO GET CHILDREN MOVING:

- Ask children to act out a story as you read it
- Throw a dance party
- Make up an obstacle course
- March, skip or hop from one activity to the next
- Take stretch breaks during seated activities
- Scan your surroundings and create a scavenger hunt





Freeze Dance

Materials:

- Music player and music of your choice

Intensity:

- Moderate

Setting:

- Indoor or Outdoor

Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Agility, balance and coordination

Set Up:

- Make a list of *Freeze Poses* such as body ball, balance on one foot, make your body into the letter “T” or “X”, touch your toes, etc.

Instructions:

1. Demonstrate each pose and have children practice.
2. Explain to children that when the music begins, they are to begin dancing. When the music stops, they have to stop dancing and do the *freeze pose* that the leader is modeling.
3. Start the music and encourage everyone to dance!
4. After several moments, stop the music. Say and model a *freeze pose*. Everyone should freeze and try to hold that pose.

5. Restart the music, then freeze and strike a new pose.
6. Repeat several times and enjoy the freeze dance party!

Variations:

- Let each child take a turn calling out and modeling the *freeze* poses.
- Have children come up with new *freeze poses* for the group to try.



DID YOU KNOW? Making physical activity inclusive means adapting your environment to provide opportunities for all children to participate in activities. Through inclusive physical activity, children learn to appreciate differences that exist among individuals, and that participating differently in an activity does not lessen its value. (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education)





Walk The Line

Materials:

- Chalk or masking tape

Intensity:

- Low to Moderate

Setting:

- Indoor or Outdoor

Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Agility, balance and coordination

Set Up:

- With chalk or masking tape, make a long straight line on the ground or floor.

Instructions:

1. Have the children line up behind the leader at one end of the line.
 - Explain to children that they are to follow the leader from one end of the line to the other as if it were a balance beam.
2. Start by simply walking along the line from one end to the other.

3. Next, try walking along the line in a variety of ways, for example:
 - with arms out to the side, like a bird or airplane
 - on tippy toes with arms overhead, like a giraffe
 - low to the ground, like a duck
 - on hands and feet, like a bear
 - shuffle sideways, like a crab
4. Continue making your way from end to end for as long as your group would like.

Variations:

- Let each child take a turn leading the group along the line.
- Have children come up with new ways to get from one end to the other.
- Try the same activity on a zig-zag or wavy line.



DID YOU KNOW? Fundamental Movement Skills are very important in the physical development of a child. When a child is confident and competent with these skills, they can develop sport-specific and complex movement skills that allow them to enjoy sport and physical activity.



Balloon Relay

Materials:

- One balloon per child, plus extras in case of popping

Intensity:

- Moderate to Vigorous

Setting:

- Indoor or Outdoor

Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Running; Catching; Striking; Agility, balance and coordination

Set Up:

- Ensure that your play space is big enough for a relay and has a start and finish line.

Instructions:

1. Have children pair up with a balloon buddy.
2. Explain to children that they are to work with their buddy to carry their balloon from the start line all the way to the finish line.
3. Start by lining the pairs up and having them carry the balloon from the start to the finish together as quickly as they can. Remind children to be gentle with the balloon, so that it doesn't pop!

4. Next, ask the pairs to see if they can carry the balloon from the start to the finish in a variety of ways, for example:
 - using only their backs
 - using only their foreheads
 - using only their tummies
 - between their knees while hopping
 - using only the tops of their heads
5. Continue with the relay for as long as your group would like.

Variations:

- If you have a small group, instead of pairing up, give each child their own balloon to race with.
- Have children come up with new ways to get from one the start to the finish line.



FUN IDEA: Blow up some balloons and see how long, as a group, the children can keep them from touching the group. If this is too easy, have children try to keep the balloons in the air using only their feet, heads or knees.





How early learning and child care programs engage with their local community has a significant impact on children. Community connections help children develop feelings of belonging, identity and security. It is valuable for children to feel a part of the community that extends beyond their early learning environment. As they grow, these connections to the outside world help children find their place, understand how society works and celebrate our culture and shared values. Partnerships with local people and organizations can also enrich programming by providing early child care educators with invaluable information, expertise and resources. As an early child care educator, you can help foster community connections by taking the children in your program on local excursions, participating in and contributing to community events, inviting community members and organizations into your program and building partnerships with like-minded groups.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Creating community connections is about fostering quality relations with those around us to build a sense of community where people work together toward common goals.



DID YOU KNOW? Small, day-to-day community connections can be just as meaningful as larger one-time events. As a group, get to know your local postal worker and others in your neighbourhood by name and greet them as they pass by to help build a sense of community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NB PLAYS! Preschool recommends that community connections be incorporated into early learning and child care programming as part of a holistic approach. Holistic programming that encourages community connections supports the healthy growth and development of children. There is no one way to promote community connections, but the following recommendations should be considered:

- Develop partnerships with local organizations, people and businesses
- Take advantage of opportunities to volunteer within your community
- Plan field trips to local places of interest
- Invite community members into your program to share skills, knowledge and expertise
- Incorporate the arts, including music, drama, visual arts and dance into your program
- Include local and First Nation culture and traditions in your program

RESOURCES

For more information about promoting community connections in your program, check out:

- » GNB Education and Early Childhood Development. *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care*. www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/elcc/content/curriculum/curriculum_framework.html
- » The Learning Partnership. *Welcome to Kindergarten*. www.thelearningpartnership.ca/files/download/aa9e3f654d1e539
- » National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program. *Community Engagement*. www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/NQS_PLP_E-Newsletter_No47.pdf
- » New Brunswick Association for Community Living. *Community Connections Support Directory*. www.nbacl.nb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Community_Connections_Support_Directory_R%C3%A9pertoire_de_soutiens_des_liens_avec_la_communaut%C3%A9_email_print.pdf



Serve Your Community

- Regularly visit “grand-friends” at a nearby nursing home or assisted living facility.
- Grow vegetables or herbs and offer produce to neighbours who don’t have enough space to garden.
- Draw special pictures to keep on hand as gifts for helpful neighbours and kind friends.
- Offer water to construction workers or garbage truck drivers in your neighbourhood.
- Put on some gloves and pick up litter at your local playground or green space.
- Welcome newcomers to the neighbourhood with handmade cards or healthy homemade treats.
- Collect and donate extra toys, household items or gadgets to local charities.
- Produce a neighborhood newspaper or art magazine to distribute.
- Make Valentine’s or holiday cards for local seniors.
- Have a garage sale or lemonade stand to raise money for your favourite cause.
- Plant a tree or flower garden that your neighborhood can enjoy.
- Develop a recycling routine for your program.



Build Partnerships

- Approach local businesses about in-kind donations, like cold weather gear or healthy snacks.
- Ask around for natural items to add to your outdoor play space, like unwanted logs, stones or tree stumps.
- Gather used hats, mitts, scarves and gloves from neighbours and friends to create a basket of extra winter gear for children.
- Consider partnering with a transportation service, like a city bus or van rental business to make group outings possible.
- Encourage intergenerational connections by partnering with local senior centres or associations.
- Make use of community assets like local parks, pools, trails, school grounds or green spaces for outdoor play.
- Contact the Government of New Brunswick's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development or other early learning and childcare organizations in New Brunswick to see what grants, resources and training opportunities are available to you.
- Welcome local experts into your program to share their knowledge and introduce children to new activities. Consider inviting chefs, police officers, First Nation Elders, nature guides, parents, artists, farmers, storytellers, fitness instructors, etc.
- Team up with other early learning or child care centres in your area and go on outings or to events together.
- Visit your public library and stick around for story time.
- Connect with other early learning or child care centres in your area to share best practices and resources.



Embrace Arts and Culture

- Gather used clothing and costumes to fill a dress-up box for the children in your program.
- Keep an eye on local calendars and, as a group, attend community events happening near you.
- Recruit parents to help you take children on outings to local historical sites or points of interest.
- Invite local artists to perform for your group.
- Build musical instruments from everyday objects and start a band with the children in your program.
- Use dance to expose children to different cultures. Consider trying out salsa, square, or highland dancing.
- Invite First Nations community members to show children the beauty of traditional arts and crafts.
- Have a storyteller or local Elder share the history of your community with children.
- Create works of art to display around your community.





TIP: Start with what you know. Recognize that you are already an integral part of the community with existing connections to people and organizations. Who do you already know? Who do they know? A parent or guardian who can play guitar or teaches yoga, a grandmother who is a keen gardener, someone who owns a local business—these are all great resources with the power to enhance your program.



OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Outdoor adventures include opportunities for risk, challenge, exploration, discovery and interaction in a natural environment.



Outdoor adventures, great and small, create powerful connections with the natural world. These connections are critical to our health and wellbeing. They nurture vitality and creativity; and foster responsible citizens, who value natural spaces and are willing to care for our planet. Children who regularly play outdoors are fitter, develop stronger immune systems, use more creativity, have more active imaginations, report lower stress levels, and demonstrate greater respect for themselves and others. Despite these benefits, children's time outdoors and contact with nature are in sharp decline and New Brunswick youth are averaging more than four hours of screen time per day. This lack of outdoor adventure is short-changing the health and development of children. As an early childhood educator, you can help reverse this trend by setting the stage for outdoor adventures, encouraging natural connections and engaging children in active outdoor play.



DID YOU KNOW? Connections with nature reduce negative symptoms of ADHD in children. Outdoor play stimulates critical thinking, risk taking skills, cognitive and emotional development and is linked to higher academic achievement. (Canadian Parks Council)

RECOMMENDATIONS

NB PLAYS! Preschool recommends that outdoor adventures be incorporated into preschool programming as part of a holistic approach. Holistic programming that encourages outdoor adventures supports the healthy growth and development of children. There is no one way to promote outdoor adventures, but the following recommendations should be considered:

- Eliminate screen time in your early learning or child care program
- Allocate time each day for unstructured outdoor play
- Spend at least one third of your program time outside
- Incorporate natural elements (e.g. trees, stumps, boulders, long grass, water and sand) into your outdoor play space
- Incorporate loose parts (e.g. pebbles, sticks, rope and buckets) into your outdoor play space
- Allow children to build confidence and learn limits by giving them the freedom to assess and manage their own risk in safe environments (i.e. let kids go sliding on a hazard free hill, climbing on a sturdy fallen tree, use large intact tree branches to build a fort, etc.)

RESOURCES

For more information about promoting outdoor adventures in your program, check out:

- » Alberta Recreation and Parks Association. *Nature Play Flashcards*. www.arpaonline.ca/program/children-in-nature
- » Canadian Parks Council. *The Nature Playbook*. www.parks-parcs.ca/pdf/playbook/nature-playbook.pdf
- » Canadian Parks Council. *Connecting Canadians with Nature*. www.s3.amazonaws.com/s3.arpaonline.ca/docs/Children+in+Nature/ConnectingCanadians-Nature.pdf
- » Forest School Canada. *Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning*. www.forestsonario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FSC-Guide_web.pdf
- » Recreation New Brunswick. *NB PLAYS! Outside: Outdoor Play and Learning Resource*. www.recreationnb.ca
- » Robin C. Moore. *Nature Play & Learning Places*. www.natureplayandlearningplaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Nature-Play-Learning-Places_v1.2_Sept22.pdf
- » Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. *Early Learning and Child Care: Creating Outdoor Learning Environments Resource Booklet*. www.education.gov.sk.ca/ey/outdoor-learning-resource-booklet
- » Young Children. *Quality Outdoor Play Spaces for Young Children*. www.naeyc.org/yc/article/Quality_Outdoor_Play_Spaces_Spencer

“No one will protect what they don't care about. And no one will care about what they have never experienced.”

~David Attenborough







Car Wash

Materials:

- A car or vehicle of any kind, buckets, rags, sponges, biodegradable soap and water

Objectives:

- Teach children how to wash things properly
- Enjoy some active and productive fun in the sun

Instructions:

1. Ensure that children are prepared to go outside and get a little bit wet.
2. Together, fill buckets with water and a little bit of soap.
3. First demonstrate, and then ask children to use the rags and sponges to scrub every inch of the car with soapy water.
4. If you have a hose, use it to rinse the soap off of the car. If not, refill your buckets with water and splash the car until all the soap is gone.
5. Enjoy your sparkling clean car!

Variations:

- If you don't have a car, try washing outdoor play equipment or lawn furniture.
- Ask your neighbours if they would like to have their car washed.
- Forget the soap and see what fun you can have simply playing outside with buckets of water.

Reflection:

- How did you get the dirt off of the car?
- What else around the house needs to be washed from time to time?
- How do you help clean up at home?





CHECK OUT: Recreation New Brunswick's *NB PLAYS! Outside: Outdoor Play and Learning Resource* for more information about connecting children and nature. It highlights key elements of quality out of school programming and provides background information, benefits, best practices, success stories and ideas for incorporating outdoor play and learning into a holistic program framework.



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KNOW? If you are ready and willing to go outside in all weather conditions, the
and youth in your program will be too. Always model a positive outdoors and experiential
ence and explore.



THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

Leaders are Positive Role Models

Share Your Love for Nature

BE A LEADER YOU CAN MODEL A LOVE FOR NATURAL PLACES, and share this love with children by bringing them
opportunities to play and learn. The leader's role is that of a facilitator, one who moves from active sparking of
children's interests into active observation and planning.

PLAYING ENGAGEMENT:

- In modeling enthusiasm for nature play, you can encourage children who might be nervous or new to outdoor environments.
- Encourage the growth of new ideas by making materials, resources and experiences that expand creativity, engagement and exploration available.
- Bring a personal story that sends the children off into stories of their own or ask questions that encourage children to look more deeply into something they have found.

COACHING:

- Once children are engaged in exploration, you can step back to give them space to play and explore.
- Watch children interact with each other and their environment, collect and document these experiences and use the knowledge to enhance future outdoor learning.
- Let children take the lead and follow their own interests.

LEARNING ALONGSIDE CHILDREN:

- Get dirty, make mistakes, build, learn and celebrate alongside the children you work with.
- Make sure your group is physically safe and comfortable.

CONSENTS:

- Make sure children are dressed well for the weather and stay warm and dry.
- Assess the overall safety of your site and the risk management required for specific activities.

CREATING CONNECTIONS:

- Work to make connections with the children, parents, place and community.
- Help children through conflicts and discussions that arise.

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Sound Map

Materials:

- Scrap paper and pencils

Objectives:

- Work on listening skills
- Focus on being observant and mindful in nature

Instructions:

1. Head outside and give each child a scrap piece of paper and a pencil.
2. Have children sit in a circle and start out by asking them how many mouths they have. After they respond with “One!,” ask them how many ears they have, to which they will respond, “Two!”
3. Open a discussion about what this means and why, because we have two ears and only one mouth, we should try to listen twice as much as we talk.
4. Ask children to draw a dot in the middle of their piece of paper to represent themselves.
5. Then, ask the children to sit very quietly. Instruct them to, whenever they hear something, draw a picture of what they think the sound is on their paper (e.g. a bird, a car, a tree, etc.). If the sound is coming from very near, they should draw the picture close to the dot. If the sound is coming from far away, the picture should be far from the dot.
6. After a few minutes of quiet, the children will have a sound maps of all the things they heard.

Variations:

- Instead of drawing pictures of what the sound is coming from, have children draw what it sounds like to them (e.g. soft wavy lines for leaves rustling in the breeze or thick dark lines for a car honking its horn).
- Try creating sound maps in different locations to see the differences between your backyard and a local park or school ground.

Reflection:

- What did you hear?
- What was the loudest sound you heard? What was the quietest?
- Is it sometimes important to be quiet? When and Why?



FUN IDEAS FOR PLAY IN THE SNOW:

- Pack snow onto a tree trunk and carve a funny face into it
- Create giant pictures in the snow using your footprints
- Put food colouring in spray bottles full of water to decorate the snow
- Use loose parts to make art in the snow
- Make a snow buffet with sand buckets or cake molds
- Build a snow maze





Nature Collage

Materials:

- Natural items found outside, construction paper, liquid glue and baskets (optional)

Objectives:

- Explore the outdoors
- Discover hidden treasures
- Use creativity to produce artwork

Instructions:

1. Prepare your group for a walk in nature.
2. As you set out, ask the children to collect some of the small natural items they see on the ground along their way (e.g. leaves, moss, sticks, shells, pebbles, etc.).
3. When your walk is complete and everyone has collected some items, have the children use glue to attach their items to construction paper.
4. They can create a collage or a picture using the materials they found in nature.
5. Have children share what they made with the group.

Variations:

- Have children combine their natural items and create a group collage on a large piece of poster board.
- Attach natural items to a picture frame or shoe box, instead of paper.

Reflection:

- What did you find on your walk?
- What did you create with what you found?



DID YOU KNOW? Canadian preschoolers spend twice as much time being active when play is outdoors.
(ParticipACTION)





Rock Family

Materials:

- Paint, paint brushes and rocks found outside

Objectives:

- Explore the outdoors
- Use creativity to produce artwork

Instructions:

1. Prepare your group for a walk in nature.
2. As you set out, ask the children to collect some rocks of different shapes and sizes.
3. When your walk is complete and everyone has collected some rocks, explain to the children that you would like them to create a rock family.
4. Have children paint faces and bodies on all of their rocks to create a rock family. The family can represent their own, but doesn't have to. The children can also name the rocks if they would like.
5. Let the rock families sit outside to dry before letting children play with their rock families together.

Variations:

- Gather rocks and let the children paint them freestyle!
- Paint letters and numbers on rocks and let the children use them to practice spelling out words or counting.

Reflection:

- Who is in your rock family?
- Does everyone's rock family look the same?
- Does everyone's rock family have the same number of rocks?



FUN IDEA: Find natural items like leaves, sticks, or tall grass to use as paintbrushes and create a masterpiece!





Bird's Nests

Materials:

- Straw, tall grass, leaves, twigs and other bird nest materials found outside

Objectives:

- Explore the outdoors
- Learn about birds

Instructions:

1. Prepare your group to go outside on a mini adventure.
2. As you set out, ask the children to collect items that they think would help them build a bird's nest (e.g. twigs, leaves, straw, grass and sticks).
3. When enough materials have been gathered, have the children do their best to weave and shape them into a bird's nest.
4. The children can leave their nest outside for a bird to live in or take it home.

Variations:

- Instead of a bird's nest, see if children would like to create fairy houses using similar materials.

Reflection:

- What did you use to build your nest?
- What other kinds of homes can you find in nature?



TIP: Include the children in your program in decision making when planning your outdoor activities.





Nature Scavenger Hunt

Materials:

- List of things that can be found in your outdoor play space

Objective:

- Explore the outdoors
- Discover hidden treasures in a natural environment

Instructions:

1. Create a list of items that can be found in your outdoor play space.
For example:
 - Something that smells beautiful
 - A piece of litter
 - Something round
 - A pinecone
 - Two rocks that look alike
 - A straight stick
 - Something red
 - A flower
 - Something that looks like the letter “Y”
 - Something pointy
 - Two different kinds of leaves

2. Prepare your group to go outside on a scavenger hunt.
3. Divide your group up into teams, and ensure that each team has a leader with the list of the items that need to be found.
4. Encourage teams to work together to collect each item on their list.

Variations:

- Use pictures instead of words to make your list of things to find, so that children can understand it themselves.
- Instead of collecting each item, have the team leader take a picture or simply cross each item off your list when your team finds it.
- If you have a small group, send each child out to collect one item at a time, on their own.

Reflection:

- Was it easy to find all of the items on the list?
- Did you discover anything new about the outdoor play space?



TIP: Bring the outside in! Enhance your indoor program space with natural items, like fresh flowers, plants, seashells, rocks or pinecones.



Follow An Ant

Materials:

- Magnifying glasses (optional)

Objective:

- Explore the outdoors
- Learn about bugs

Instructions:

1. Prepare your group to go outside on a mini adventure.
2. Ask children to find an ant or find an ant hill and choose an ant that looks to be leaving its home.
3. Follow the ant! Simply keep your eyes on the ant and stay with it to see where it goes and what it does.
4. After some time, organize your group into a circle and begin a discussion about each child's experience following an ant.

Variations:

- Follow a ladybug, or any critter you can find.
- Simply observe birds and other creatures in nature to learn more about them.

Reflection:

- Where did your ant go?
- What did your ant do?
- Was it difficult to keep track of your ant?



DID YOU KNOW? Risky play, like climbing trees or walking across rocks, may decrease risky behavior later in life by helping children learn about their personal limits and improving their judgement. (ParticipACTION)





LE

Brain development in young children happens at an astounding rate. This process is dramatically influenced by our interactions with people and our surroundings. While children's principal sources of supportive relationships and learning experiences often come from their family and home environment, early learning programs play an important role in supporting learning, development, health and wellbeing. Children grow and learn best in programs where adults are caring, responsive and value children as active and competent contributors to their own learning. As an early childhood educator, you can help foster valuable learning experiences by focusing on experiential, hands-on learning through exploration, play, inquiry and reflection.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Learning experiences include interactions, activities and any direct experiences in which learning, through reflection and meaning-making, takes place.



DID YOU KNOW? As an early childhood educator, you can adopt an inquiry-based approach to learning by encouraging children to ask and genuinely investigate their own questions about the world around them. Spark curiosity by wondering out loud and using open-ended questions when speaking with children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NB PLAYS! Preschool recommends that learning experiences be incorporated into preschool programming as part of a holistic approach. Holistic programming that encourages learning experiences supports healthy growth and development for children. There is no one way to promote learning experiences, but the following recommendations should be considered:

- Value children as individuals and as their own greatest teachers
- Recognize the connection between emotional wellbeing and social and cognitive development
- Support learning through unstructured play
- Provide environments where children can explore and investigate their ideas, and interact with others in play
- Connect with families and support each child within the context of his or her family
- Engage in critical reflection and discussion with others about programming to support continuous professional learning and growth

RESOURCES

For more information about promoting learning experiences in your program, check out:

- » Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. *Statement on Play-Based Learning*.
www.cmec.ca/Publications/lists/publications/attachments/282/play-based-learning_statement_EN.pdf
- » Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. *Early Learning Central*.
www.earlylearningcentral.ca/?page_id=1192
- » GNB Education and Early Childhood Development. *New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care*.
www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/elcc/content/curriculum/curriculum_framework.html
- » Government of Ontario. *How Does Learning Happen?*
www.ascy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/How-Does-Learning-Happen_Final.pdf

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TIPS FOR MAKING EVERY EXPERIENCE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

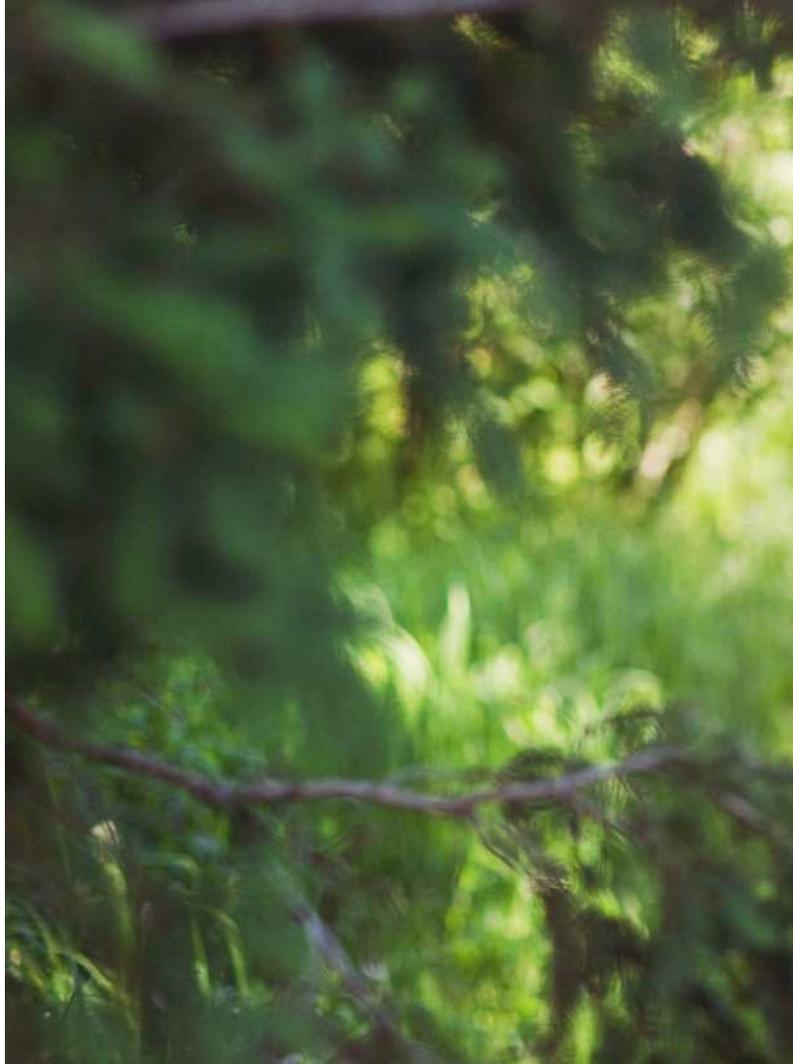
As an early childhood educator, you can turn any activity into a learning experience by going through a *Reflect-Connect-Apply* process. Upon completing an activity, encourage the children in your program to reflect on the experience. Use questions to prompt them if necessary (i.e. How did you feel during the activity? Was it challenging? What skills did you need to use? etc.). Then, ask them to connect their experience to a real life situation, again using questions to prompt them if necessary (i.e. When else do you feel this way? Have you faced any other challenges today? etc.). Finally, see if children can apply the knowledge in their everyday experiences.



CLOSING

As an early childhood educator, you have the potential to foster healthy and active living by providing a positive environment for play and learning experiences. Promoting positive mental health, physical activity, healthy eating, community connections, outdoor adventures and learning experiences establishes healthy behaviours and patterns in children that will carry over into later childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Quality preschool programming can help build a healthier, happier province.

We hope this **Preschool PLAYBOOK** has equipped you with practical information, reasonable recommendations, helpful tips and ideas, as well as additional resources to turn to for more information.







CONTACT US

If you would like to know more about **NB PLAYS!** and our game plan for a healthier, happier province, or have any suggestions you would like us to consider, we would love to hear from you.

Keep healthy and be happy,

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www.recreationnb.ca

www.nbplays.ca

NB PLAYS! *Preschool*

A RESOURCE FOR QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMMING

