



OTTAWA INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD  
MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE  
INITIATIVE DE LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES NOURRISSONS  
ET DES JEUNES ENFANTS D'OTTAWA



# FOSTERING PHYSICAL LITERACY

An activity booklet from the IECMH-  
Education & Awareness Task Group for  
ages 0-6 years.

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physical skills, confidence, and love of  
movement to be active for life. This  
encourages a healthy and balanced  
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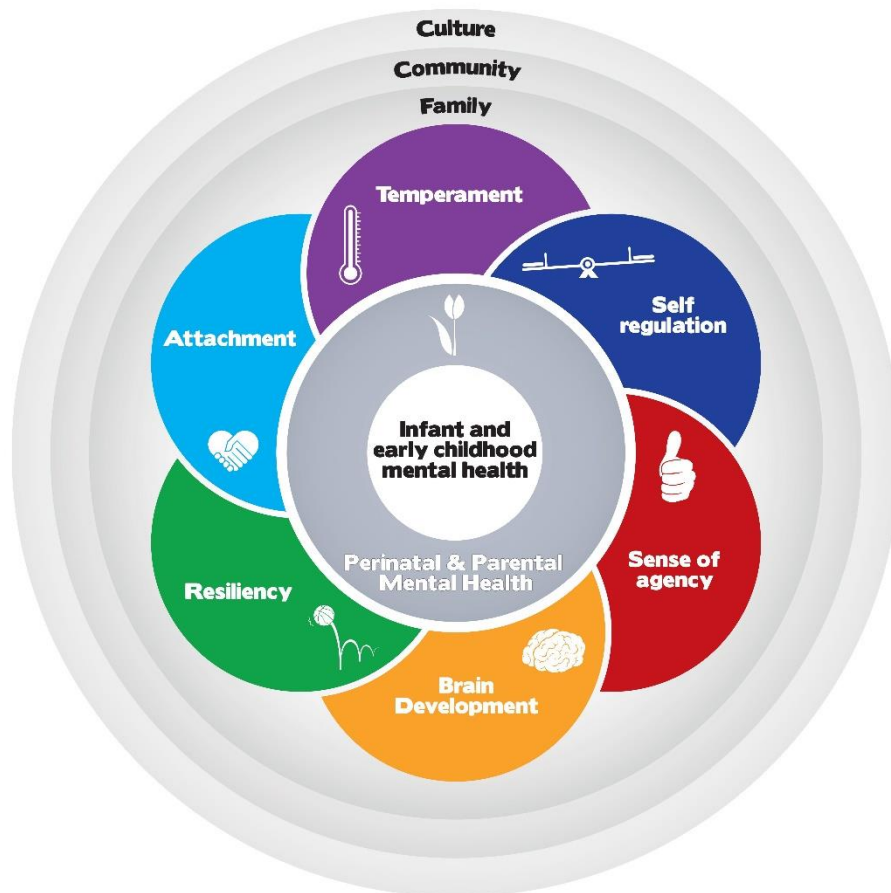
## Fostering Physical Literacy

In 2022, the Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health-Education and Awareness Task Group of the Ottawa Child & Youth Initiative considered how to promote mental health for children ages 0-6 years over the summer. As child-based service providers and practitioners, we want the best for the young children and communities we serve. We introduce the children to books, nursery rhymes, and songs to start developing their literacy – reading and writing – and vocabulary. But what about movement and physical skills? Physical literacy is about having the physical skills, confidence, and love of movement to be active for life. This encourages a healthy and balanced mental health. To become physically literate, children need to develop these skills and have the opportunities to do so. We asked our community to share some of their favourite activities to promote physical literacy. In these pages you will find the activities and resources valued by our Ottawa community.

For more information on the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Education and Awareness Task Group, please [visit our website](#).

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### Activities from the OCYI Community

- Geocaching website: where you can either find treasures using the GPS on your phone or an actual GPS. When you find the treasure replace it with another one. A good idea for something to hide is to paint messages or pretty pictures on rocks. When the child finds the treasure make up a story about it, who hid it, why, etc. [Bookmark of Ottawa locations](#). Submitted by Carolyn at Bethany Hope Centre.
- Neighbourhood Scavenger Hunt: download a list from <https://childhood101.com/neighborhood-scamenger-hunt-printable/>. This is a scavenger hunt that can be done by just walking around your neighborhood! Families can take this list and set out in search of the items listed. Children can easily take the lead on this activity with support from the adult. It can make a great activity for a Saturday afternoon or even an evening walk after dinner (instead of sitting and watching TV). It is a great way to get the whole family out of the house and exploring the outdoor environment. To adjust for different groups and ages, consider:
  - shorten the list
  - look for things of interest in the neighborhood (vehicles, construction, animals, etc.)
  - be more specific and looking for numbers or colours of items
  - you can allow for space for descriptions and have them describe the items they have found
  - including children in the neighborhood to join with their families
  - best if accompanied by an adult

Submitted by Katrina at Andrew Fleck EarlyON.

- Outdoor Obstacle Course: Allow older children to use their creativity and make their original obstacle course. This game is a great way to activate young bodies and minds. The children will follow the order of the obstacle course and stay in correct order trying best to successfully complete each obstacle and make it to the finish line. Use anything you have on hand!
  - Pool noodles
  - Orange cones
  - Hula hoops or 12 inch rings
  - Balance beam or long pieces of wood
  - Bean bags/blocks/buckets
  - Beach balls or other balls

Example course:

- Step 1: Have a “starting line” using orange cones.
- Step 2: Have hula hoops or large rings set up two by two so that children have to run with one foot in each hoop.
- Step 3: Then have pool noodles resting on chairs or elevated using ground stakes to be hurdles that kids have to jump over.
- Step 4: Next, have bean bags that a child has to spin and then toss as far as they can (like shot put) ahead of them into the area where there are cones.
- Step 5: Then, have a beach ball that a child has to make 2 shots into a basket bucket or hoop.
- Step 6: Then, the child must kick the soccer ball around the cones and make a shot into the goal.
- Step 7: Lastly, the child must walk across the balance beam to the end and cross the finish line.
- Step 8: You can make medals for each child to wear at the end. You can even have a little ceremony with music

Submitted by Shaista at OCDSB Bayshore LINC/ESL Childcare.

- Planting and gardening: “Recently, I discovered growing my own produce feels/tastes rewarding! My journey started during the lockdown, this helped me to stay focus on family and family oriented activities. My family of 4 loved it and promised to do this every year. We even included our neighbours and their children and they loved it! We now own our small garden where we plant all the herbs, tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, turnips, corn. This year the children wants to expand the garden to include as much as possible. We had so much extra last year that we shared with the food banks in Ottawa!”  
Items needed: Outdoor space, rake, hose, shovel, sprinkler -- knowledge of how these tools work! Talk with the children about which tools are need for different crops.  
Submitted by Joanne from OCDSB.

### **Additional Resources**

- Children’s Inclusion Support Services Newsletter has many ideas for incorporating inclusive movement: <https://cissnewsletter.ca/>
- Chez Marie-Eve Beaudry-Fiches pour les parents (\$5): in French only, tip sheets about the value of getting outdoors all year round, and the skills associated with playing in different kinds of weather, <https://chez-manon-et-marie-eve-beaudry.myshopify.com/products/fiches-pour-les-parents>
- Benefits & Guidelines: The Early Years (0-4) from ParticipACTION: <https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/benefits-and-guidelines/early-years-0-to-4>
- Have a Ball Together from Best Start: <https://haveaballtogether.ca/>
- A Hop, Skip and a Jump: Enhancing Physical Literacy (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) from Early Years Physical Literacy: [https://www.earlyyearsphysicalliteracy.com/files/ugd/05c80a\\_166260a29b374b3ab376b264419bb5c4.pdf](https://www.earlyyearsphysicalliteracy.com/files/ugd/05c80a_166260a29b374b3ab376b264419bb5c4.pdf) and <https://www.earlyyearsphysicalliteracy.com/a-hop-skip-and-a-jump-enhancing-phy>
- Planning Manual for Child Care Centres from Early Years Physical Literacy: [https://www.earlyyearsphysicalliteracy.com/files/ugd/05c80a\\_352ba432de8b41f99fa0cd80e5198ffc.pdf](https://www.earlyyearsphysicalliteracy.com/files/ugd/05c80a_352ba432de8b41f99fa0cd80e5198ffc.pdf) and <https://www.earlyyearsphysicalliteracy.com/early-years-physical-literacy-plann>
- Fundamental Movement Skills Game Cards for Preschoolers from NSW Health Hunter New England: <https://www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/media/1071/i-move-we-move-games-cards.pdf>
- Ready...Set..Wonder! from Humber College and Back to Nature Network: request the PDF guide at <https://www.back2nature.ca/ready-set-wonder/>
- Sport for Life: <https://sportforlife.ca/physical-literacy/>
- Collection of recommendations from Grey Bruce Public Health: <https://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Your-Health/Active-Living/Physical-Literacy> and [https://greydocs.ca/urm/groups/public/documents/communication/gc\\_259178.pdf](https://greydocs.ca/urm/groups/public/documents/communication/gc_259178.pdf)

**This summer, First Words invites you to...  
Get moving and get talking!**

Summer is the perfect time to go outside, explore and get active. Involving your children in physical activities during the warmer months is not only good for their health but can also be a great opportunity to help them build their early language skills.

First Words is the Preschool Speech and Language Program of Ottawa and Renfrew County. We focus on the prevention, early identification and treatment of speech and language problems in young children.

This summer, First Words would like to combine physical fitness and language development. We invite all families to activate their neurons and muscles to promote language, be active and have lots of fun. So why wait?

**Get moving and get talking!**

Children are naturally active, curious and ready to learn. To get started, here are some simple and fun ways to help children's language grow along with their good health:



**At the park:**

You can improve your child's understanding by using words to describe actions (verbs) and by talking about spatial concepts. While children are physically active, use precise action words (e.g., "You are climbing. You are sliding") and words for spatial concepts like "in, out, on, off, over, under". When your child is on the play structure, you can ask: "Are you **on** or **under** the slide?"

**In the garden:**

While watering, weeding and digging in the garden, talk about your actions. Add specific action words for what you and your child are doing (e.g., digging, watering); this will help your child learn those words more easily and more quickly. Describe what your child is doing ( e.g., "Johnny is digging the weeds.") or ask simple open questions ( e.g., "I am watering the tomatoes. What are you doing?"). Adding these important action words to your children's vocabulary will help them make sentences.

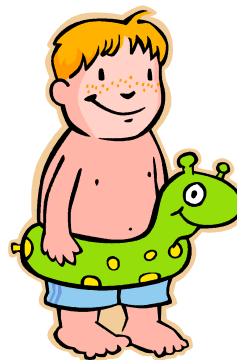


**On family walks:**

While you are walking together have a nature-themed treasure hunt. You and your child can find different items together. Ask your children to look for interesting things as you walk: a dandelion, a pinecone or a caterpillar (naming words); a *smooth* rock, *coarse* bark or a *wet* leaf (describing words). This is a great activity for vocabulary development. At home, give your children plenty of time to name and talk about the treasures that you have found. This will help add even more words to their vocabulary.

**By the pool or at the beach:**

Play beach hockey with pool noodles and a beach ball or pool basketball. During these cooperative games, encourage children to wait for and take their turn with the ball. The ability to take turns in play helps children take turns in conversation. You can also cue turns by using key words such as “your turn”, “my turn” or “it’s Paul’s turn”.



**In the yard:**

Play a game of follow the leader to work on imitation skills. Let your children be both the leader and the follower. Take turns imitating actions and gestures to illustrate action words like: jumping, running, and hopping on one foot. Make sure you name the actions while you are playing. Ask the children to imitate you. Then, let children initiate this physical imitation game by being the leader. Even young children can be part of this game. Imitating gestures and actions usually comes before imitating words.

**Go ahead, have fun and remember to talk to your children during physical activities!**

First Words Preschool Speech and Language Program  
Ottawa and Renfrew County

Early identification makes the difference. **Recognizing speech and language problems early on is the best approach!** Check out our First Words Communication Checkup tool to know if your child is meeting communication milestones. Refer online if necessary.

For more information, visit [www.firstwords.ca](http://www.firstwords.ca) or call Ottawa Public Health at (613) PARENTS.



## Creating a Physical Literacy Toolkit from the Parent Resource Centre



What could or do you have in your program to support physical literacy? Consider:

- Loose parts, moveable equipment, permanent equipment
- Child led, adult led
- Promoting curiosity, exploration
- Promoting locomotor, non-locomotor, manipulative skills
- When, where, how will you use these items?

### Equipment

- Trampoline
- Stepping stones
- Hula hoops
- Assorted balls of different sizes
- Scarves
- Apple baskets, assorted baskets
- Sock balls
- Ball in sock with tail
- Wood blocks
- Wave balance beam
- Riding toys
- Wood boat
- Bean bags
- Beach balls
- Rocking horses
- Streamers
- Boxes
- Wood pieces (logs)
- Cardboard pieces
- Chairs
- Bubble wrap
- Pool noodles
- Large box converted to carwash
- Yoga mats
- Musical instruments

### Activities

- Nature walk
- Obstacle course- tunnel and blocks
- Sportball
- Bean bag activities- balance on head, throw in basket
- Scarves – wave in air to music, use as tails
- Yoga – Pinterest animals
- Mac Tac on wall, throw paper balls
- Handprints on wall
- Circle activities involving movement
- Nursery rhymes – e.g. Jack jumped over the Candle
- Dancing
- Marching band
- Parachute
- Family Fun Day
- Stationary running, exercises at circle
- Bubbles
- Shapes with j