

A Balanced School Day

The Balanced School Day will consist of two nutritional/activity breaks in which children have time to eat and time to play. The new schedule has replaced the system of recesses and one lunch break. Schools that currently use this schedule have reported an increase in concentration levels of students; more positive play time, more physically active students, and better opportunities for learning through uninterrupted blocks of teaching/learning time.

Benefits

Students receive many benefits from the balanced school day schedule including:

Academic Performance – Studies on brain compatibility have found support for a balance of learning, physical activity, and nutrition throughout a school day. In most studies it was found that students are better able to focus on their schoolwork for the full day rather than running out of energy towards the end of the day.

Balanced Nutrition – Health authorities indicate that children need frequent food breaks each day. This schedule provides two opportunities during the school day when students sit down to eat together, rather than eating on the run at recess. Students who are nutritionally satisfied can concentrate better and learn more effectively.

Physical Activity – At a time when physical inactivity and obesity are of increasing concern in school-age children, this schedule will give students two opportunities every day to take part in 20-25 minutes of uninterrupted play. Currently, much of the 15-minute recess is taken up with washroom breaks, eating snacks, and dressing, particularly during the winter months. Children often have little or no time to play. The quality exercise time energizes students, helps them to concentrate better on schoolwork, and promotes a healthy lifestyle.

More Time for Learning – To maximize learning for children the new schedule provides a significant block of intensive teaching/learning time without interruption. Under the old schedule, each of the three breaks during the school day results in at least 10 minutes of dressing/undressing. With two scheduled breaks, students will spend less time entering/exiting the classroom.

A growing body of research is telling us that well-nourished students perform better and are more active in the classroom, something that teachers have said for many years,” Bjornson said. “A student’s health and wellness has an important connection to academic success. Our government would like to ensure Manitoba students get the best possible start in school.”

Snacking

Healthy snacking is part of a heart-healthy diet.

While eating between meals used to be discouraged, experts now say healthy snacking may help you get all the nutrients you need to protect you from heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases. Nutritious snacks also keep you feeling energized throughout the day, especially helping you beat mid-morning and afternoon fatigue. Snacking can stave off hunger and keep your metabolic rate up, which makes it an integral part of maintaining a healthy weight.

Snacks are meant to tide you over, not replace a meal, so it's important to keep portion sizes small.

Fun and Fitness the Name of the Game

With childhood obesity rates soaring, experts agree it is more important than ever to get our children moving. Consider this:

- Over half of children and youth aged 5 to 17 are not active enough for optimal growth and development.
- Rates of childhood obesity in Canada have almost tripled over the past 20 years.
- Leading causes of climbing obesity rates include a combination of physical inactivity, an unhealthy diet, and genetic factors.
- Health Canada recommends that children and adolescents should increase the time currently spent on physical activity, starting with at least 30 minutes more per day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.