

Brief Instructional Samples - Be in Nature

Instructional Sample #1:

- Grade/subject(s): 2/Physical and Health Education
- Big Ideas: Our physical, emotional, and mental health are interconnected.
- Competencies - Identify and describe opportunities to be physically active at school, at home, and in the community; Identify and apply strategies that promote mental well-being
- Content - how to participate in different types of physical activities, including individual and dual activities, rhythmic activities, and games
- Core Competencies:
 - Personal Awareness and Responsibility: Well-being
 - Personal and Cultural Identity: Relationships and cultural contexts
- First Peoples' Principles of Learning:
 - Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
 - Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Description:

Be In Nature allows students to have regular opportunities to go outdoors to explore, learn and connect with nature. This practice is scheduled during instructional time to increase opportunities and time to be and to learn outdoors. Students go outside together. Each team goes into pairs and are asked to find 1 plant or animal that they'd like to imitate. They then make up a motion that imitates that animal or plant (e.g. standing tall for a tree, crawling quickly for an ant). After each student makes their motion, all the other students make the same motion and/or sound.

Through this practice, students will be able to regularly:

- be outdoors (school grounds on short walks around the school),
- breathe fresh air,
- practice physical health,
- interact with their peers (social learning),
- and self-regulate (calm) by being outdoors.

Destinations and the length of time in nature will vary depending upon the school, class, and weather conditions.

Instructional Sample #2:

- Grade/subject(s): 6/Physical and Health Education
- Big Ideas: Healthy choices influence our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
- Competencies - Develop, refine, and apply fundamental movement skills in a variety of physical activities and environments; Identify, apply, and reflect on strategies used to pursue personal healthy-living goals.
- Content - how to participate in different types of physical activities, including individual activities
- Core Competencies:
 - Personal Awareness and Responsibility: Well-being
 - Personal and Cultural Identity: Relationships and cultural contexts
- First Peoples Principles of Learning:
 - Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
 - Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Description:

Students, parents, and teacher go together on a nature hike followed by free play. During the hike, they identify plants or animals that they haven't seen before and are invited to ask questions about Indigenous usages of the plants, ways they or their families have experienced those plants, etc. After 20-30 minute of hiking, allow student time within a bounded area to play and explore the natural environment.

Before and/or after the hike, students are asked a few questions (e.g. I was able to focus in class today, I was able to relax in class today, I got along with my classmates today).

Be In Nature allows students to have regular opportunities to go outdoors to explore, learn and connect with nature. This practice is scheduled during instructional time to increase opportunities and time to be and to learn outdoors. Through this practice, students will be able to regularly be outdoors (school grounds on short walks around the school), breathe fresh air, practice physical health, interact with their peers (social learning), and self-regulate (calm) by being outdoors.

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Additional Tips and Information for Teachers

- The concept of “mental health” is often confused with “mental illness”. The Physical and Health Education curriculum focus on “mental well-being” recognizes that everyone falls somewhere on a continuum between optimal mental health and poor mental health, independent of the presence or absence of a mental illness¹. From this perspective, classroom-based and whole-school strategies can be geared to enhancing the positive mental health and well-being of all students, including those with and without identified mental health challenges.
- Teachers have an important role to play in fostering the mental well-being of their students, though they do not require specialized or expert knowledge to do so (ie. they are not expected to play the role of psychologist or counsellor). As a guide, teachers may understand their role to include:
 - supporting students to understand how to foster and maintain positive mental health and well-being, and thereby enhance their readiness to learn;
 - creating a welcoming and safe classroom/school environment;
 - highlighting methods to enhance both physical and mental well-being such as adequate sleep, physical activity, healthy eating and stress management techniques;
 - helping students to recognize the signs of common mental health concerns;
 - guiding students to trustworthy information and resources related to mental health;
 - supporting students to know how to seek assistance when needed; and,
 - challenging common stigmas related to mental health.
- There are a number of simple, everyday practices that teachers can use to supplement their instructional approaches to mental well-being. Examples include:
 - increasing opportunities for physical activity
 - taking students outside, even for a short time, to help them to restore readiness to learn
 - leading a circle check-in, where every student has a chance to voice their perspective
 - intentionally strengthening their relationship with students through personal conversations
- For students who are experiencing a problem related to their mental health, sources of support include:
 - talking to a school counsellor
 - Kids Help Phone #1-800-668-6868 ([KidsHelpPhone.ca](https://www.kidshelpphone.ca))
 - [Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#)
- Teachers are encouraged to think about their own mental well-being, and what strategies may be required to support it. A number of helpful health and wellness resources can be found on the [BC Teachers' Federation website](#).

¹ Consider that “mental health” and “mental illness” can be viewed as two separate but related concepts. From this perspective, someone could have optimal mental health (feeling good about and functioning well in life) while experiencing a mental illness. Conversely, someone without a mental illness could have poor mental health.