

# ADD IT UP!

## Fact Sheet 1 | Why Care?

### Why advocate for more physical activity and healthy eating opportunities in schools?

Students who are active and eat well perform better in school.

#### FACTS

- The school is a key setting where we can help children to eat better and be more active.
- Physical activity helps children to think and process information, concentrate and behave appropriately in class, leading to improved performance <sup>2</sup>
- School based physical education has been shown to improve school performance, even when less time is spent by children on other school subjects <sup>2</sup>
- The largest impacts of physical activity on school performance are in math, IQ and reading <sup>2</sup>
- Studies show that students who maintain a healthy diet have improved memory, problem solving skills, and creative abilities <sup>18,19</sup>
- School based interventions such as breakfast programs can improve nutrition in children and also academic performance <sup>2</sup>
- Physical activity and healthy eating provide a vital foundation for healthy growth and development <sup>3</sup>
- Physical activity and healthy eating contribute to improved health and reduced risk for chronic disease <sup>7,8,9,10,11,13</sup>

#### CHALLENGES

- Vegetable and fruit consumption among Nova Scotia youth is alarmingly low. On average, 80 per cent of grade 7 and 11 students – and almost 90 per cent of grade 11 girls are not meeting the recommended daily servings <sup>1</sup>
- In Nova Scotia, physical activity levels are disturbingly low. Less than 30 per cent of grade 7 students and 5 per cent of grade 11 students (and less than 1 per cent of grade 11 girls) now meet the minimum guidelines. The decline in activity from grade 3 to 7 appears to be growing, especially for girls <sup>1</sup>
- Less than 20 per cent of students walk or bike to school in good weather <sup>3</sup>
- Health behaviours that form in childhood often last into adulthood <sup>1</sup>
- In our province, vegetable and fruit consumption is lower and rates of overweight and obesity are higher than the national average. Nova Scotia has among the highest rates of chronic disease in Canada <sup>1</sup>

#### IMPLICATIONS

- Not all children and youth in Nova Scotia are reaching their full academic potential
- Today's generation of children and youth carry an unprecedented high risk of preventable chronic disease. They will join a population of adults who are already at very high risk of developing preventable chronic conditions <sup>1</sup>

#### REFERENCES

