

# THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## HEALTH BENEFITS

The health benefits of regular participation in physical activity have been well documented. The World Health Organization's report (2003a) and the US Surgeon General's report *Physical Activity and Health* (1998) clearly outline the health benefits of regular physical activity. Physical activity can reduce the risk of (or improve outcomes for) a number of conditions, including coronary heart disease, obesity, stroke, diabetes, cancer, depression, hypertension, osteoporosis, and stress as well as some respiratory conditions. Physical activity also benefits cardiovascular and musculoskeletal health.

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

According to the World Health Organization, engaging in physical activity through play, games, and sport gives young people natural opportunities to express themselves, develop self-confidence, relieve tension, achieve success, and interact with others as well as learning about the spirit of solidarity and fair play (World Health Organization, 2003b).

Team games and play foster students' development of social skills and provide opportunities for them to learn group membership and leadership skills, attitudes, and behaviours. Physical activity can build students' character because it provides opportunities to develop values such as dedication, honesty, courage, and fairness.

Participation in a range of physical activities encourages students and young people to take on challenges. Physical activity also offers them opportunities to develop resilience and realise their potential to excel within the scope of their own abilities.

## MENTAL BENEFITS

Research, including that by Shephard (1997), Linder (1999; 2002), Tremblay et al. (2000), and Dwyer et al. (2001), has found that children who are more physically active demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement.

More recent New Zealand research undertaken by Clinton, Rensferd, and Willing (2006) confirms that students who are well nourished and engage in regular physical activity are in a better position to benefit from opportunities to learn.

**TEAM GAMES AND PLAY FOSTER STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO LEARN GROUP MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIOURS.**

physical  
mental  
emotional,  
social,  
spiritual

