



NOVA SCOTIA ASK

▪ active smarter kids ▪

Essential Elements to Implementation and Strategies for Champions

A COMPANION DOCUMENT TO THE 2019-2020 ASK EVALUATION REPORT

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List of Acronyms:

ASK: Active Smarter Kids

CCH: Department of Communities Culture and Heritage

CLT – Collaborative Learning Time

COE: Certificate in Outdoor Education

CoP: Community of Practice

DEECD: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

FTE: Full Time Equivalent

HPS: Health Promoting Schools

IPPs: Individualized Program Plans

LGM: Let's Get Moving Strategy

MVPA: Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity

MODL: Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

MPAL: Municipal Physical Activity Leader

MTSS: Multi-Tiered System for Support

NS: Nova Scotia

NSTU: Nova Scotia Teachers Union

PA: Professional Associations

PAL: Physically Active Learning or Physical Active Lessons

PAT: Physical Active Time

PD: Professional Development

PE: Physical Education

RCE: Regional Centre for Education

RPAC: Regional Physical Activity Consultant

SEL: Social-Emotional Learning

SSP: School Success Plan

SSRCE: South Shore Regional Centre for Education

Introduction

Active Smarter Kids (ASK) is a model for curriculum delivery that has been developed and researched in Norway. ASK uses Physically Active Learning (PAL), which consists of fun and active lessons that combine physical activity with academic content as part of instructional time.

ASK was brought to Nova Scotia through a pilot in 2018–2019 in the South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE). Three grade 5 classes in two schools participated in the pilot. In 2019-2020 the ASK pilot was expanded to six schools, six classrooms (grades 4–6), among 13 teachers, reaching 325 students in the SSRCE.

Since bringing ASK to Nova Scotia there has been increasing interest from other Regional Centres for Educations (RCE). This document is meant to provide guidance along with some key considerations for those who are interested in initiating or establishing ASK in other RCEs in the province.

This document is an excerpt and adaptation of the 2019-2020 ASK Final Evaluation Report. As such the following is informed by and includes feedback and thoughts shared by SSRCE ASK pilot teachers, principals, RCE admin and the Health Promoting Schools Partnership. To dig deeper into the project please refer to the full evaluation report and other ASK project documents that can be found at southshoreconnect.ca. **Separate information will be available on ASK delivery as it relates to COVID.**

The results of the evaluation made it clear that early success among teachers and schools is crucial and that both ongoing teacher support paired with a strong partnership approach is needed to sustain integration over time. As each region is unique it is important that any local champion works in partnership with existing collaborative efforts and the RCE and that teachers and principals have a go-to person when needed.

This document provides details and considerations related to planning, introduction of ASK in an RCE, implementation and expansion of ASK. Together these can inform conceptualization and early planning as well as partnership and relationship development. It will also be useful for expansion and planning for sustainability. The document ends with a synthesis of the findings from the evaluation. The conclusions provide overarching guidance for next steps at different levels of implementation and leadership. This guidance is both for the initial years and for building an embedded and sustainable model over time. This guidance is for both collaborative regional efforts and RCE led efforts.

Project Overview

Active Smarter Kids (ASK) is a model for curriculum delivery researched and developed in Norway^(1,2) that involves the incorporation of simple physical activities into the delivery of academic lessons. ASK is low-cost and simple and has been shown to contribute to students' engagement, cooperation, sense of belonging and enjoyment during instructional time.

PAL uses activities or games that are physically active with the curriculum content directly incorporated. Examples of PAL include doing star jumps while spelling need-to-know vocabulary words or running to get a question from the teacher and running back to the team to solve the math problem.

PAL is predominantly delivered by educators in 20–30 minutes and are well suited for math, language and social studies classes. Other subjects can use ASK with simple adaptation. In the NS pilot ASK was most commonly used in math. ASK is mostly used to review content covered in the classroom. ASK is

mainly used to both reinforce and practice concepts and to conduct formative assessment in a playful, low-stress manner. ASK lessons are commonly delivered outdoors, in any type of outdoor space, but are adaptable to any setting.

There are compilations of ASK lesson activities¹ that teachers can use, however once familiar with the model teachers often come up with their own variations or activities to use. ASK lessons are designed to engage all students and encourage collaborative and cooperative learning. Most activities occur as a class in small groups and offer a balance between the challenge of the lesson content and the physical activity. Activities are adapted to meet different needs of students and class dynamics. The Norwegian model saw ASK applied across all grade levels.

The Nova Scotia ASK Pilot Project was conceived in 2016 and was piloted in the SSRCE starting in 2018–2019 and expanded in 2019–2020. The 2018-2019 ASK pilot was a way to test the Norwegian model and its results in a Nova Scotia setting. The NS pilot found that ASK is an effective way to both increase physical activity within the school day while contributing to student engagement with learning and sense of belonging.² The pilot focused on implementation initially in grade 5 and in year two it included grades ranging from 4-6.³



Word Study

The genesis of bringing ASK to Nova Scotia came from the “Education on the Move: Ideas and Inspiration for School-Based Physical Activity”⁴ report written by Britt Vegsund, who travelled to Norway to investigate how physical activity was integrated into Norwegian school days. While the initial motivation for the Norwegian model was to increase physical activity during the school day, early academic research demonstrated that the benefits of ASK went beyond physical activity into the realm of on-task behaviour, cooperation among students and enhanced learning and engagement with curriculum. ASK is also well positioned to enable teachers to meet the Physically Active Time (PAT) requirements⁵ in “Time to Learn”.

For the ASK NS pilot project, teachers attended a one-day professional development session that provided an overview of the research and background of ASK, introduced what PAL is and offered educators time to participate in PAL and practice delivery. The Project Lead then offered those teachers and schools ongoing support for delivery on an as-needed basis. ASK pilot teachers shared with each other activity ideas or variations and videos of ASK lessons in action. In response to COVID, in May 2020

¹ The Norwegian ASK project has an English database. Teachers can upload new ideas and activities to share with other. <https://www.activesmarterkids.com/physicallyactivelessons>

² ASK 2018-19 (Y1) evaluation report: <http://southshoreconnect.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/NS-ASK-Evaluation-Report-Final.pdf>

³ See Appendix A for a full list of schools.

⁴ <http://southshoreconnect.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Education-on-the-Move.pdf>

⁵ “Time to Learn” requires 10 min/day or 50 min/week of unscheduled physical activity during instruction time

the Project Lead developed ten short videos on how to use PAL for home-based learning.⁶ These ten videos are available online alongside a sampling of videos of ASK delivery in the school setting.

Project Partners and Funders

2019–2020 funding support was provided by NS Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, the NS Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Health Promoting Schools Partnership within the South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE), and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg.

ASK Project Team: Britt Vegsund (ASK Project Lead), Anna Haanstra (ASK Evaluation Lead; Physical Activity Consultant – South Shore, Communities, Culture and Heritage); Sarah Murphy/Jennifer Meister (NSHA – Health Promoter for SSRCE), Debby Smith (Regional Manager, Communities, Culture and Heritage)

Program Theory

ASK was introduced to Nova Scotia with the belief, supported by evidence, that PAL consistently offers a range of easily identifiable benefits that can contribute to academic engagement, classroom behaviour management and sense of joy and belonging among students. In turn this enhances teachers' abilities to deliver and meet curriculum outcomes, therefore strengthening student engagement in the subject. The breadth and range of benefits are considered sufficient to motivate teachers to regularly incorporate ASK as a teaching and formative assessment tool and overcome any challenges they face in classroom integration.

The ASK Theory of Change (below) for the pilot in SSRCE outlines the pathway of change and assumptions towards the goal of ASK contributing to well-being in the school setting.

An underlying premise of the ASK program theory is that students who experience ASK in multiple classrooms and as they age through the grades will inevitably have strengthened outcomes. This premise reflects a vision for school-wide adoption while recognizing that schools are complex settings with competing demands. That said, the value and benefits of ASK, even if in one classroom for one year, are expected to be worthwhile with or without school-wide adoption.

⁶ ASK at Home: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAhng1dWOARBWCACeWPM9KA/>

ASK contributes to wellbeing in the school setting

Wellbeing change

Direct Benefits

- Increased Physically Active Time during instructional time to meet provincial requirement (PAT) (50 mins / week)
- Tier 1 support for more diverse & inclusive learning environment to enhance student well-being
- Increase in outdoor time during lessons/ instructional time
- Easier classroom management for teachers: increased cooperation, collaboration & communication among students & among students & teachers
- Innovative tools for formative assessment of students
- Provides a tool to allow teachers to provide a culturally responsive learning environment for their students that promotes movement, a sense of belonging and collaboration
- Enhanced methods for delivering curriculum outcomes to support student success in math and literacy
- Strengthened student engagement in learning
- Enhanced enjoyment of teaching and learning among students & teachers
- Strengthened, developmentally positive relationships between teachers and students

Behaviour Change

- ASK Physically Active Lessons incorporated weekly into class schedule for pilot classes
- ASK Physically Active Lessons occur regularly, both outdoors and indoors (depending on the weather)

Capacity Change

- Increased comfort/capacity of integrating physically active games and activities into academic lessons of teacher's choice
- Increased understanding of the benefits of using physical activity to improve engagement with curriculum & classroom behavior
- Increased understanding of the benefits of teaching outdoors and in various other settings within school
- Increased understanding of how ASK lessons can support curriculum delivery and formative assessment
- Increased comfort/capacity in taking classes outdoors for learning (regardless of weather)

Reach

ASK School Classrooms in SSRCE – Teachers and Students

Services & outputs

Services and Outputs:

- Professional development modules for teachers
- ASK lesson resource binder and equipment kits
- Google drive compiled resources
- Parent info sessions
- Partnership building with RCE
- Curriculum linkage supports developed
- CLT meeting support
- Peer/ASK Info and resource sharing tools
- Communication tools
- On-site and ongoing support for teachers

Assumptions

- Individual teachers sustain delivery over time
- Adequate supports exist for sustained classroom or school adoption
- Enabling policy environment exists

- Schools and RCEs enable sustained integration of ASK
- Range of benefits of ASK for teachers and students are realized
- Teachers value benefits of ASK over effort required
- Teachers can decide to fully adopt ASK in their classrooms

- Teachers can move from interest in ASK to delivery
- Teachers are willing and able to deliver ASK physically active lessons
- Teachers will adopt a productive attitude towards PA and teaching outdoors
- School and peers support delivery

- Admin staff, teaching staff and parents at pilot schools buy-in
- PD modules will resonate with teachers and make sense in NS context
- RCEs support initiative and see alignment with to their goals
- Physical environments sufficiently support delivery

ASK – Conceptualization and Implementation

Year one 2018–2019 — Summary Observations

The 2018–2019 school year pilot evaluation results show:

- ASK teachers were able to increase their students’ weekly physical activity by 42-60 minutes on average,
- teachers averaged two ASK lessons per week with the variation explained in challenges like weather or individual teacher approaches, and
- ASK lessons were delivered both indoors and outdoors, with most outdoor sessions being delivered in fall and spring and the indoor lessons taking place over the winter months.



Figure 4.0 Together Word Study

ASK teachers reported:

- seeing a perceptible increase in the physical health and stamina of their students,
- witnessing an increase in student engagement in learning via an increased ability to focus and concentrate both during and after ASK lessons,
- seeing an increase in their students’ motivation to attend school because of ASK lessons, and
- that they understood ASK lessons to be a contributor to an inclusive learning environment in which students of all abilities were able to experience a feeling of success in their learning.

ASK students reported feeling:

- healthier as a product of ASK lessons,
- that ASK lessons are a “better” and “easier” way to learn,
- more “ready to learn” following ASK lessons,
- more motivated to learn, and
- excited to come to school on the days when they had ASK lessons.

Year two 2019-2020 — Evaluation Findings

The 2019-2020 evaluation reports on the range of benefits of ASK as reported by teachers, principals and the SSRCE administration and HPS partnership. The full 2019-2020 evaluation report provides more detail and discussion of these benefits.

Benefits of ASK

- Benefits of Physical Activity during Instructional Time
- Teaching and Learning Quality
 - Teaching Quality
 - Formative Assessment
 - Learning Quality
- Social-Emotional Well-Being
 - Inclusive Learning
 - Reduction of Stress and Anxiety

- Relationship Building and Connection
- Enjoyment and Fun During Instructional Time
- Learning Outcomes and Targets

ASK is a Good “Fit”

In asking about why piloting ASK was a good choice for teachers, schools and for the RCE, the notion of “fit” came up from each data source. There was emphasis on how ASK fit with what was already underway at a school level and aligned with existing goals of the SSRCE and priorities of the DEECD. For teachers, it was noted by many that for a teacher to successfully adopt, integrate and sustain ASK it had to fit with their comfort levels related to being outdoors and active during instructional time as well using diverse environments for learning. Teachers did note that some teachers for whom ASK might not be an obvious “fit” may slowly warm to the method when they see their fellow teachers using ASK and can observe or hear about the benefits and/or when they are exposed to ASK through PD opportunities.



Snip-Snap Multiplication

Challenges and Adaptations

Overall there were minimal challenges or barriers identified. When principals and SSRCE and HPS respondents were asked about challenges they instead spoke about its potential and how best to scale ASK at their school and in the RCE.

Similarly, for teachers there were few challenges presented. When challenges were shared teachers were quickly able to name a workaround. Below are some of the adaptations shared. The adaptations are listed in descending order of general importance.

Weather: Some teachers would opt for an indoor ASK lesson while others went out in most weather unless there was ice covering all surfaces. One teacher noted that even if ASK is done indoors, as long as kids are moving and not sedentary there are benefits.

Use of indoor space: Teachers used a variety of methods to address lack of space or access issues. In some schools where it was possible they claimed fixed access to the gym so they could use it if they didn’t go outside for ASK. Others used hallways throughout the school for ASK. With a supportive principal other classes were prepared and mostly accepting of students being in the hallway during class time.

Improper clothing: In early days of ASK teachers needed to remind students to dress appropriately for the weather. One teacher would do ASK multiple days a week whether students were dressed properly or not. As students wanted ASK and learnt they were going outside no matter the weather, they started to come prepared for cold or wet weather.

Team dynamics: One teacher who had a competitive spirit in their class chose to do mostly individual activities rather than team activities. A common adaptation for ASK is to start activities with “start when you are ready” in lieu of the more competitive tone of “ready, set, go!”

Storage: For those with storage issues it meant they did not add on many items to the ASK equipment kit. For others who were PE teachers or had access to the gym they interchanged PE equipment to be part of the ASK lessons and simply used the PE storage.

Resistance among school staff: This was not seen as a substantial challenge; however, ASK teachers were clear that support and leadership from the principal was a key mitigator to resistance among peers. Some offered the idea of an all-staff presentation on ASK including the research behind it and benefits and results to date in the SSRCE.

Resourcing ASK

School-based⁷ project costs for two schools and three classrooms in 2019–2020 totalled \$4183 and for six schools and thirteen classrooms in 2020–2021 were \$11,228. These costs include full ASK equipment kits⁸ and do not include ASK Project Lead HR or travel costs or ASK promotion and outreach costs.

With a partnership-based and embedded model for expansion to other RCEs, RCE and/or school level investment would be related to basic equipment and sub-codes and possibly costs for in-person training days. It is possible to create a low-cost DIY equipment kit. Teachers did indicate a high use of the high-quality ASK number and letter bean bags. One set could be purchased and be either classroom based or school based at a cost of approximately \$350.

Essential Elements of Implementation

A primary focus of the 2019-2020 evaluation was to identify the essential elements of implementation of ASK across the classroom, school and RCE settings. The purpose of this was to both inform recommendations for expansion of ASK in Nova Scotia and to also provide new ASK teachers, schools and RCE with guidance on what is important to put in place as part of ASK.

The essential elements of implementation are put into three categories; i) Essential; ii) Important; iii) Helpful.

For each category there is a sub-grouping of elements that relate directly to delivery of ASK lessons by teachers. These elements are separated, as they are under the direct control and influence of teachers.

Each element is linked with the setting or level for implementation for that element. Put another way, it helps identify who is directly involved or responsible for that element.



Estimation with 4 Digit Numbers

⁷ School-based costs include full ASK equipment kit, CLT meeting mileage, training costs.

⁸ Full ASK equipment kits include: bean bag letters (to match scrabble set), bean bag numbers (multiples), dodge ball set (6), laminated class team sheet, hula hoops (6), laminated true and false cards (4), 12-sided dice (4), adjustable skipping ropes (6), multi-colored crazy cone set (16+), fabric gear bag.

Table 1.0: Essential Elements to Implementation

Essential Elements to Implementation	Level of Implementation			Rationale	Data Source		
	Teachers	School/Principal	RCE		Teachers	Principals	SSRCE Admin & HPS
ESSENTIAL							
Community of Practice (CoP) for ASK teachers	X	X		Providing various opportunities and forum (in-person or virtual) for ASK teachers to connect and share info was important to all. SSRCE Teachers and principals found the CLT model for an ASK CoP challenging and would prefer a different approach.	X	X	X
Professional Development (PD) for new ASK teachers	X	X	X	PD was important for both learning and application as well building the foundation for the ASK CoP.	X	X	X
Ongoing support for implementation for all ASK teachers	X	X	X	Established ASK teachers have a high level of confidence once ASK is established. Principals and admin want a go-to resource for ASK to ensure energy and commitment remain high.		X	X
Ongoing support for implementation for new ASK teachers	X			Early success with ASK was deemed very important for sustained use. Ongoing support was seen as essential by all.	X	X	X
Online platform for sharing examples of ASK lessons including videos	X			ASK pilot teachers shared videos via Facebook. The ASK project has a shared Google drive and a YouTube channel as well.	X	X	
Equipment – basic ASK kit	X			Specialized and high-quality ASK bean bags were highly utilized and unique to ASK. Cost is ~\$350.	X	X	X
Alignment of ASK with existing RCE goals		X	X	Alignment with existing efforts increases likelihood of success and potential for sustained integration		X	X
Alignment of ASK with existing school SSP goals and efforts		X		Alignment with existing efforts increases buy-in and likelihood of adoption and acceptance of ASK among teachers and RCE.		X	X

Essential Elements to Implementation	Level of Implementation			Rationale	Data Source		
	Teachers	School/Principal	RCE		Teachers	Principals	SSRCE Admin & HPS
Teacher comfort with being outdoors, active and flexibility in teaching	X			Early success is crucial to sustained integration. Early adopters are likely those with comfort with being outdoors and active. Over time it is important teachers see ASK as being an option for all teachers.	X	X	
Access to indoor space (hallways, gym, shared space)	X	X		If teachers don't have ready access to indoor space (it doesn't exist or isn't available), ASK can fizzle out during winter months and/or when weather is bad.	X		
Access and use of the school's outdoor space	X	X		Using outdoor spaces allows teachers to diversify the learning environment and provides some well-being benefits to students. A larger space for learning also lends itself to more physically active lessons and sounds of laughter and fun amidst learning.	X	X	X
Movement (non-sedentary) or physical activity as part of ASK lessons	X			ASK is both a way to break up sedentary behaviour and get kids moving during the school day. Both offer benefits to students.	X	X	X
Principal support for teachers and leadership for expansion	X	X		A supportive principal can both support adoption of ASK and address any resistance to ASK among staff team. Principals can also identify other teachers for whom ASK would be a good fit.	X	X	
ASK Lesson Delivery – Essential Elements							
Use of fun and playful ASK lessons	X			The fun tone to ASK means students have decreased stress, increased enjoyment during instructional time and also return to in-class learning with more on-task behaviour.	X	X	X
Using ASK activities that are simple and straightforward	X			Especially early on, complicated activities may reduce early success and cause students to be discouraged. Over time more complicated activities can be introduced once students buy-in.	X		
Scheduling ASK into weekly timetable	X			Most ASK teachers used this practice for planning purposes.	X		
Have a set of go-to activities that the class become familiar with over time	X			This way transition times are reduced and it increases the student comfort and ownership of ASK.	X		

Essential Elements to Implementation	Level of Implementation			Rationale	Data Source		
	Teachers	School/Principal	RCE		Teachers	Principals	SSRCE Admin & HPS
IMPORTANT							
Access to school's PE equipment	X	X		Good to have access to varied equipment at no cost	X	X	
Fixed scheduling of indoor space for ASK	X	X		In schools where fixed gym or open space booking is an option, this is very helpful. For schools in which indoor space is highly utilized, hallways and outdoor spaces are used.	X	X	
Integration of ASK into school SSP goals or strategies		X		Seeing ASK as tool to meet SSP goals increases the traction of ASK in the RCE. Some principals used ASK as a strategy while others wanted to wait until the whole school adopted it.		X	X
Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA) as part of ASK lesson	X			All see the inherent value of students being more physically active during the school day. MVPA is an important part of ASK but not essential to every lesson to obtain the benefits.	X	X	X
Having two or more ASK teachers at one school	X	X		There is an ease of integration and adoption when two ASK teachers can use each other as resources, to problem solve and share enthusiasm and commitment to ASK.	X	X	
Students learning to come prepared for ASK with proper outdoor clothing for the weather	X			Many grade 5–6 students don't commonly dress appropriately for cold or wet weather. This can hinder some teachers in delivery. For others, they said if you go outside whether students are prepared or not, students will soon come prepared because they want to do ASK.	X		
Storage for ASK equipment	X			Ensure teachers have adequate storage space for equipment, especially when shared among more than one teacher. In some schools this may be the PE storage unit, in others their own classroom or storage room. It is important that equipment is organized and specific items readily available (when not in use) for planned lessons.	X		

Essential Elements to Implementation	Level of Implementation			Rationale	Data Source		
	Teachers	School/Principal	RCE		Teachers	Principals	SSRCE Admin & HPS
ASK Lesson Delivery – Important Elements							
Doing ASK lessons outside as much as possible	X			Outdoors generally offers more space for physical activity and MVPA. Fresh air and diversifying the teaching and learning environment are also very beneficial.	X		
Doing ASK lessons in the middle of a long teaching block	X			This helps students remain engaged throughout the teaching block. Teachers also noted more energy for teaching when ASK was included.	X		
Doing ASK lessons that require teams or teamwork	X			Supporting social-emotional learning was seen as an invaluable by-product of ASK.	X		
Using ASK activities that incorporate cooperation/team building skills	X				X		
HELPFUL							
Celebration of milestones and achievements for ASK teachers or ASK schools	X	X	X	Acknowledging milestones or achievements in ASK could enhance teacher and school energy and commitment to ASK. T-shirts, certificates and bonus ASK equipment items were some of the suggestions.	X		
Full ASK Equipment kit	X	X		The other items noted are the 12-sided dice and hula hoops. Other than the bean bags (seen as an essential element) most other items can be sourced locally.	X		

Essential Elements to Implementation	Level of Implementation			Rationale	Data Source		
	Teachers	School/Principal	RCE		Teachers	Principals	SSRCE Admin & HPS
Ask Lesson Delivery – Helpful Elements							
Assigning student teams ahead of time	X			Having established teams for dividing the class in two or into groups of four is a strategy shared by the Norwegian ASK project. These teams are colour coded in advance so students know if they are on the red, blue, yellow or orange team or on Team 1 or 2. Teachers formulate teams that are balanced, often balancing physical and academic skills. Teams are often changed over the course of the semester to address dynamics or provide variety. Teams are not used for every ASK lesson – this approach simply streamlines the instructions when teams are used.	X		
Scheduling ASK before or after recess/lunch to minimize transition time	X			Some teachers find this useful to minimize transitions. For other teachers the impact and benefit of ASK means they use it when it makes most sense and don't worry about transition time.	X		
Using a variety of ASK activities to deliver curriculum – mix it up	X			Some days it is good to infuse ASK with new ideas as part of the toolbox. Other days students might want a familiar go-to PAL.	X		
Doing an ASK lesson debrief with students to support social-emotional learning	X			This enables student ownership of ASK and supports social-emotional learning as part of the ASK lesson.	X		

Introducing and Expanding ASK

While the best approach to regional expansion will vary from region to region, at the classroom level ASK pilot teachers see ASK as an obvious choice. They believe that for teachers comfortable with the outdoors and basic physical activity, once they try ASK and achieve early success, it will be adopted. Overall, ASK pilot teachers see ASK as a teaching tool they will continue to use and rely on. Most ASK teachers are highly committed to using ASK because of the array and depth of benefits it brings to the teaching and learning quality in their class in addition to the socio-emotional benefits they observe among all students. The fact that ASK is able to reach most students in a very inclusive and beneficial way across learning and socio-emotional well-being stands out to teachers as both significant and unique to ASK.



Forest Multiplication

Areas of Emphasis

Repeatedly, the concept of “early success” was identified by all data sources. For respondents, early success was seen as essential to quality and sustained integration among teachers. At the classroom level there was emphasis on the importance of *“early success [among teachers] before they get discouraged – it is important that we support them up front so that there is success and then they can move from there.”*

Principals identified three essential elements of early success. One was teacher buy-in with the model and in particular a comfort with being outdoors and active. A second was for teachers to have a strong understanding of the spectrum of benefits of using physical activity during instructional time. Lastly, there is the need for ongoing regional support of ASK to sustain the success. Teachers similarly noted the importance of early success. In addition to buy-in from the teacher, they noted that connecting with other ASK teachers via conversation, sharing, or videos or by having other ASK teachers at your school is important.

Ongoing regional support for ASK was seen as essential regardless of the expansion model. On the one hand, this was seen to be support for an ASK Community of Practice among teachers. On the other hand, it was seen to be a regional staff or multiple staff acting as go-to support for teachers who are interested in ASK or using ASK. One complementary model suggested was the establishment of a school-level ASK champion. The staff would also promote and support the expansion of ASK as a teaching and learning tool. Another model is to integrate ASK into existing instructional positions within the RCE administration to support all schools. ASK would act as a tool for these positions to help teachers use active learning as a way to achieve academic outcomes and social-emotional wellbeing.

Areas of Debate

Some core themes arose related to implementation. The three areas where there was debate were i) Voluntary or required expansion model, ii) Using ASK to deliver new content, and iii) If and how to use PE teachers to champion ASK.

For teachers, there were two points of emphasis related to expansion. First, they were unanimous that expansion of ASK should remain voluntary and not imposed. They expressed concern about it not fitting with all teachers, resistance to any sense of obligation and ASK losing its momentum and positive reputation as a result. Second, in the teacher focus group it was almost unanimous that ASK suits review and reinforcement or practice but that ASK is not well-suited for new content. One teacher noted that while it is not yet used for new materials, in the context of COVID, ASK teachers may need to be more innovative and expansive in how ASK is used to enhance learning and teaching. When teachers were asked whether they used ASK more as a teaching tool or as an assessment tool, the question did not solicit a strong response. This seems to have been in part because teachers see “teaching” as occurring across the three phases of the workshop or three-part lesson model used in elementary schools. While most applied ASK to the third stage, “review and practice,” ASK is still seen to be firmly in the realm of a “teaching” even while it allows them to also assess the depth of learning among students.

Among administration, two suggestions solicited varied positions. The first suggestion was to require ASK and make it an expectation in the SSRCE. This position was strongly predicted on worry that ASK might not be scaled up fast enough and the initiative may not be sustained or students might miss out on its benefits. Some administrators reflected back the position of teachers that a voluntary model, while slow, might better maintain the positive momentum and energy around ASK.

The second suggestion was to better utilize the Physical Education Teachers (or an aligned designate) as champions for ASK in each school. The emphasis was having an in-school champion that had the skills and tools to deliver active learning lessons. The idea was not for ASK to remain in the domain of PE teachers but rather for the champion role to be an additional support for adoption, integration and early success. As new teachers felt comfortable with the model, the PE teacher, or champion, would no longer be needed and/or seen as resource when needed. Other potential champions that were identified were existing ASK teachers and teachers who have achieved the Certificate in Outdoor Education (COE) through St. FX University. Some concern was expressed that non-PE teachers may inadvertently see ASK as a PE initiative, i.e., one that required a PE skill set or active lifestyle, and either hesitate or resist participation as a result. Both positions reflected a desire for ASK to reach as many students as possible and as such be delivered by a cross-section of teachers and integrated into a variety of subjects.

The below table outlines suggestions on how to champion and establish ASK in an RCE. All strategies are presented and a few may conflict. The strategies align with who is directly involved in implementation and categorized under i) Expansion of ASK, ii) Delivery of ASK and iii) Sustaining ASK. While these strategies reflect the input of the SSRCE, many are transferable to other RCEs.

Table 2.0 Strategies to Champion ASK

Strategies to Champion ASK	Level of Implementation				Data Source		
	ASK Project Team	Teachers	School/Principal	RCE	Teachers	Principals	SSRCE Admin & HPS
<i>Championing ASK</i>							
Present ASK as a voluntary model for teachers to adopt – be responsive, promote as appropriate	X	X			X	X	X
Over time determine if expansion is best kept voluntary or if it should be required in the RCE	X	X					X
Apply ASK to any grade level. Expansion models of ASK need not be tied to a specific grade.	X	X	X	X	X		X
Promote ASK as teaching tool for learning in any subject.	X	X			X	X	
Consider ‘whole school’ model for small school. Consider progressive adoption over multiple years or when appropriate initiate ASK for as a whole-school approach.	X	X	X			X	
In larger schools, expand ASK through adoption grade by grade over time.	X	X	X			X	
Present ASK at a principals’ meeting. Include an existing ASK principal or local examples in the presentation. Ensure alignment with RCE and SSP goals are well articulate. Share SSRCE results.	X		X	X		X	X
Find ways to offer ASK as part of RCE PD options.	X	X		X			X
Promote ASK as a learning/PD opportunity throughout the year – consider spectrum of virtual intro sessions to more in-depth PD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Collaborate with principals to identify and approach teachers for whom ASK is a good fit.		X	X		X	X	
Be responsive to interest expressed by a teacher.	X	X	X				
Find ways for established and new ASK teachers to share its application and benefits with peers.		X	X		X	X	
Support ways for ASK teachers/ASK champion to present (separately or together) locally	X	X			X		
Encourage ASK teachers to share ASK model at CLT/staff meetings.		X				X	
Consider all-staff school ASK presentation that include academic research and SSRCE results.	X	X	X			X	
Consider how school CLTs can be used to share the ASK model and support expansion.	X	X	X		X	X	
If schools have an interest in outdoor play explore how ASK can contribute that.			X			X	
Explore ASK as a tool for Behaviour Support Teachers.	X	X	X				X

Strategies to Champion ASK	Level of Implementation				Data Source		
	ASK Project Team	Teachers	School/Principal	RCE	Teachers	Principals	SSRCE Admin & HPS
<i>Delivery of ASK</i>							
Use ASK for any grade level. Expansion models of ASK is not tied to a specific grade.	X	X	X	X	X		X
Position ASK to advance integrated-learning models.	X	X	X	X		X	X
Consider how ASK can be used to deliver new content. Establish alignment of ASK with workshop/three-part lesson model in elementary.	X	X					X
Consider initiating ASK early in the school year and after breaks to help students transition back to school.		X					X
Use ASK as a way to bring more teaching outdoors under COVID.	X	X			X	X	X
<i>Sustaining ASK</i>							
Establish an ASK Community of Practice (CoP) model for new and established ASK teachers. Use this time for sharing and problem solving. Rely on virtual platforms.	X	X	X		X	X	X
Determine how to establish ongoing and sustained support and resources for ASK at the RCE. Find ways to establish ASK as a strategy to deliver on the RCE goals.							
Determine how to provide ongoing sustained support for new ASK teachers. This HR support could be an existing regional staff or integrating it into existing RCE positions.	X	X		X	X	X	X
Ensure there is ongoing sustained support for established ASK teachers. This HR support could be an existing regional staff or integrating it into existing RCE positions.	X	X		X		X	X
Explore the use of an internal school-level ASK champion as an additional support for implementation.	X	X	X				X
Find ways to celebrate and acknowledge ASK teachers and schools who reach certain milestones.	X	X	X	X	X		
Support and encourage principals to include ASK in their School Success Plans.			X			X	X
Position ASK as a contributor to social-emotional learning (SEL) and to learning quality.	X	X	X	X			X
Support and encourage school-wide adoption in small schools.	X	X	X	X		X	X
Find way to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy into the delivery of ASK.	X	X		X			X
Use ASK to advance integrated-learning models.	X	X		X		X	X
Use an adaptation of the ASK model as a response to teaching under COVID.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Getting Started – Conclusions from the SSRCE Pilot

A synthesis of the findings from the 2019-2020 evaluation is presented here as conclusions. These conclusions offer overarching guidance for different levels of implementation and leadership. This guidance is both for the coming years and for building an embedded and sustainable model over time.

The conclusions are intended for further discussion by various audiences to determine how they will proceed. Some conclusions provide guidance on early planning, introduction and sustaining ASK over time. Establishing strong commitments to sustain ASK in Nova Scotia may require both formal and informal marshalling and championing of ASK. Some of the conclusions are beyond the responsibility level of certain stakeholders and thus would require partnership building or adaptation.

Introduction and championing of ASK in the regions and RCEs should be guided by the essential elements for implementation and strategies for expansion outlined in this document.

RCE Introduction and Expansion Model

- Support application of ASK across all grade levels
- Support application of ASK across all subject areas
- Support voluntary uptake of ASK by teachers and schools
- Support the establishment of a school-level ASK champion model
- Enable and align inclusion of ASK in SSP strategies
- Consider and enable ASK PD in the RCE both to train teachers and as a promotional channel
- Work in partnership with existing collaborative efforts related to physical activity or health promotion in the region
- Lean on existing regional positions⁹ committed to physical activity to advance ASK in the region in collaboration with the RCE
- Facilitate PD in ASK for established positions in the RCE administration that support teaching and learning quality
- Work towards integration of ASK into established regional or RCE administration positions
- Promote and marshal expansion of ASK through inclusion of ASK on principal meeting agendas and/or RCE Administrative agendas
- Work collaboratively to integrate Culturally Responsive Pedagogy components into ASK delivery and make it part of the ASK model going forward

Collaborative Regional Introduction and Expansion

- Take a collaborative approach to expanding ASK within the region
- Pursue a relationship or participation with the existing HPS model in the RCE
- Consider the role of existing regional positions committed to physical activity to advance ASK
- Wherever possible, work early and closely with a champion within RCE administration to introduce ASK even if to one classroom or school
- Prototype an implementation model that suits the dynamics and partnerships in place in the region; work towards sustainability over time

⁹ Some examples include Municipal Physical Activity Leaders (MPAL), Regional Physical Activity Consultants (RPACs), Active-Healthy Living Consultants, Health-Promotion School positions.

- Establish alignment of ASK with the current RCE System Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Work collaboratively to integrate Culturally Responsive Pedagogy components into ASK delivery
- Work towards integration of ASK into established regional or RCE positions

School-Level Introduction and Expansion

- Consider ASK as a model for all grade levels
- Consider ASK as a model for all subject areas
- Wherever possible, support establishment of two or more ASK teachers in a school
- In small schools, after initial integration consider whole-school adoption of ASK
- In large schools, support class-by-class expansion of ASK; consider a goal of whole-school adoption over time
- Formulate and initiate the establishment of an in-school ASK champion model
- Initiate ASK throughout the school year when timing is right; request school or RCE level PD
- Consider the role and contribution of ASK to SSP
- Ensure all teachers see ASK as an option; if the ASK school champion is a Physical Educator set tone that ASK is not specific to PE, and support all teachers in gaining skills and confidence to delivery ASK across all subjects

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